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Local Cannery Has Enjoyed Excellent Growth in 3 Years

Pack During This Season Four Times That Put up in 1923. Manager Koozer Sees Limit of 150,000 Cases for Local Plant. Pack This Year Worth \$200,000. Product is in Demand.

Total pack of fruit and vegetables in 1923—15,000 cases.

Total pack of fruit and vegetables in 1924—35,000 cases.

Total pack of fruit and vegetables in 1925—75,000 cases.

This is the record of the three year advancement of the Bagley Canning company's local plant in Ashland.

The old Ashland Preserving company plant was operated successfully for many years by C. H. Pierce, well known business man of this city. However, in ill health, Mr. Pierce decided several years ago to give up the venture, and the cannery laid idle for some time.

Then it was taken over by M. C. Lininger, now a prominent Ashland merchant, and operated in a small, but profitable way for several years.

During these years of operation, the plant was operated as a co-partnership but in 1920, Mr. Lininger decided to cease operations at the plant.

For three years the cannery laid idle, but in 1923 the old Ashland Preserving company was reorganized, and stock in the corporation was sold throughout the city. That year, approximately \$12,000 was spent in building operations, and the first unit of the present plant was constructed.

The plant was operated very successfully that year, a pack of slightly more than 15,000 cases being turned out.

In 1924, the Bagley Canning company, which was already operating a canning plant at Talent, leased the property from the Ashland Preserving company, with an option to buy.

The Bagley Canning company had been organized in 1916 and had operated since that time very successfully throughout the lower end of the county, especially at Talent, where a huge pear pack was handled each year.

Although lacking in storage space, the first year of operations under the Bagley Canning company regime was a success. The pack that season was double the pack of the year before, almost 35,000 cases of fruits and vegetables being packed and shipped.

Immediately following the close of the season of 1924, work was started on the second unit of the plant. At a cost of \$4,000, a new warehouse was constructed. The work was completed this year, just in time to start the season's run. All canning equipment was moved into the new unit, and the old space, where the canning equipment had heretofore been operated was used as warehouse space.

In dollars and cents, the pack this year, means to the fruit growers of Ashland and vicinity approximately \$200,000. This figure was set by Ralph Koozer, manager of the plant, who declared that it might run slightly over that. The pack last year was worth \$100,000, and the pack in 1923 was sold for slightly more than \$50,000. Thus a gain of \$150,000 has been shown during the three year period that the cannery has been operating under the new Ashland Preserving company's and the Bagley Canning company's management.

According to Mr. Koozer, it is planned this winter and spring, to erect a new unit at the plant. Thus, adequate space will be provided for warehousing and for the canning operations.

"We cannot expect to continue doubling our pack from year to year indefinitely. There is a limit, and I think our limit will be about 150,000 cases. We will not reach that mark next year, but in 1927. I would not be the least bit surprised to see our pack total that amount," Mr. Koozer declared.

The cannery season extends from June to about Christmas, or a period of about seven months. During that time, almost every fruit or vegetable grown in the Rogue river valley in any quantity is packed. However, the big run of the season is on pears and tomatoes Mr. Koozer explained.

During the rush season, more than 150 persons find employment in the canning plant, and in the warehouse. This number varies throughout the season,

slightly more being on the company payroll during the peak of the season.

"We purchased fruit from growers throughout the Valley, as far North as Grants Pass," Mr. Koozer stated. "We handle almost every fruit or vegetable grown in the Rogue River Valley in a quantity, packing and shipping cherries, blackberries, string beans, tomatoes, pears, apples and other such fruits and vegetables. However, our big pack is of pears and tomatoes. Pears are found here in abundance, and if we expect to reach our peak of 150,000 cases, we will be forced to concentrate more on pears. However, we have more and better cold storage facilities before we can reach that mark. Pears must be ripened in cold storage, after being picked green, and the facilities necessary are not available at the present time," he continued.

Blackberries are becoming one of the mainstays of the local canning plant, it was stated. In addition to packing the berries grown by local farmers, wild blackberries were harvested this summer in the Applegate country and packed here. Slightly more than 100 tons of berries were harvested there this summer, and at least that many more tons went to waste, simply because it was impossible to secure pickers, Mr. Koozer declared.

"We tried in every way possible to secure pickers for these berries. The farmers themselves aided us as much as possible, for the purchase of the berries was a windfall to them, since they were realizing on a crop which required no attention, but we were unable to secure workers," Mr. Koozer explained.

Each year is becoming easier to recall the local canning plant product, Mr. Koozer declared. Where, early in the operations of the company, it was necessary to recall the pack each year, now it is only necessary to fill the orders which are sent in voluntarily.

The tomato pack finds a ready market in Portland, which is the natural market for that product, it was stated. This season, five carloads were shipped into Portland.

The H. G. Enders wholesale grocery house here also handles and immense volume of business in local canned goods.

"This year we are going to fall short on our pear orders and on our tomato orders. On apples, however, we are going to be able to be able to fill 100 per cent.

(Continued on Page Seven)

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