WI
Δ
Emp 2.
6/2:
C 35

The CHERRY INDUSTRY ...IN... DOOR COUNTY

Wisconsin Historical Library

OCT 1 8 1961

Government Publications

Published by
WISCONSIN CHERRY COMMISSION
in cooperation with
WISCONSIN STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

WISCONSIN STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

HARRY LIPPART, *Director*

APPRECIATION

We wish to express sincere appreciation to the Door County Chamber of Commerce, the Wisconsin Agricultural Extension Division, the Wisconsin Conservation Department, and the many cherry growers and processors who were helpful in the preparation of this brochure. Pictures were taken by personnel of the Wisconsin State Employment Service, or furnished by the above groups.

June 1950

JUL 10 1961
WI
D
Emp 2.
6/2:
C 35

GENERAL INFORMATION

This brochure is prepared by the Wisconsin Cherry Commission and the Wisconsin State Employment Service to present a picture and work description of some of the operations for which local and out-of-area labor is sought each year, and to give some idea of the conditions of work in the cherry industry. The pictures do not represent a continuous sequence of the complete cherry picking and processing operations. Most of the jobs illustrated are of an unskilled nature where little training is required. Workers may be placed at any of the jobs illustrated, depending on the needs of the particular employer.

The cherry industry in Wisconsin is concentrated on the Door County peninsula, and the northern ten miles of Kewaunee County. In recent years, the production of tart red cherries from the 1,000,000 tree plantings in the area has varied between 20,000,000 and 50,000,000 pounds per season, to place the Door County area third in U. S. production of this type cherry. These are grown by about 600 growers. A further increase of 10 percent in bearing trees is anticipated over the next five years. It is impossible to predict what production will be from year to year, since yields are strongly affected by such factors as winter injuries, spring frosts and unfavorable weather during blossom time. On the average cherries are picked and processed somewhere between the dates of July 10 and August 20 each year, with the length of the picking season depending on the crop condition and yield.

There are nine processing plants in the area of which three hot and cold pack cherries, one processes maraschino cherries and one processes cherry juice. About 95 percent of the cherries are processed by producers themselves through their own plants or through cooperatives.

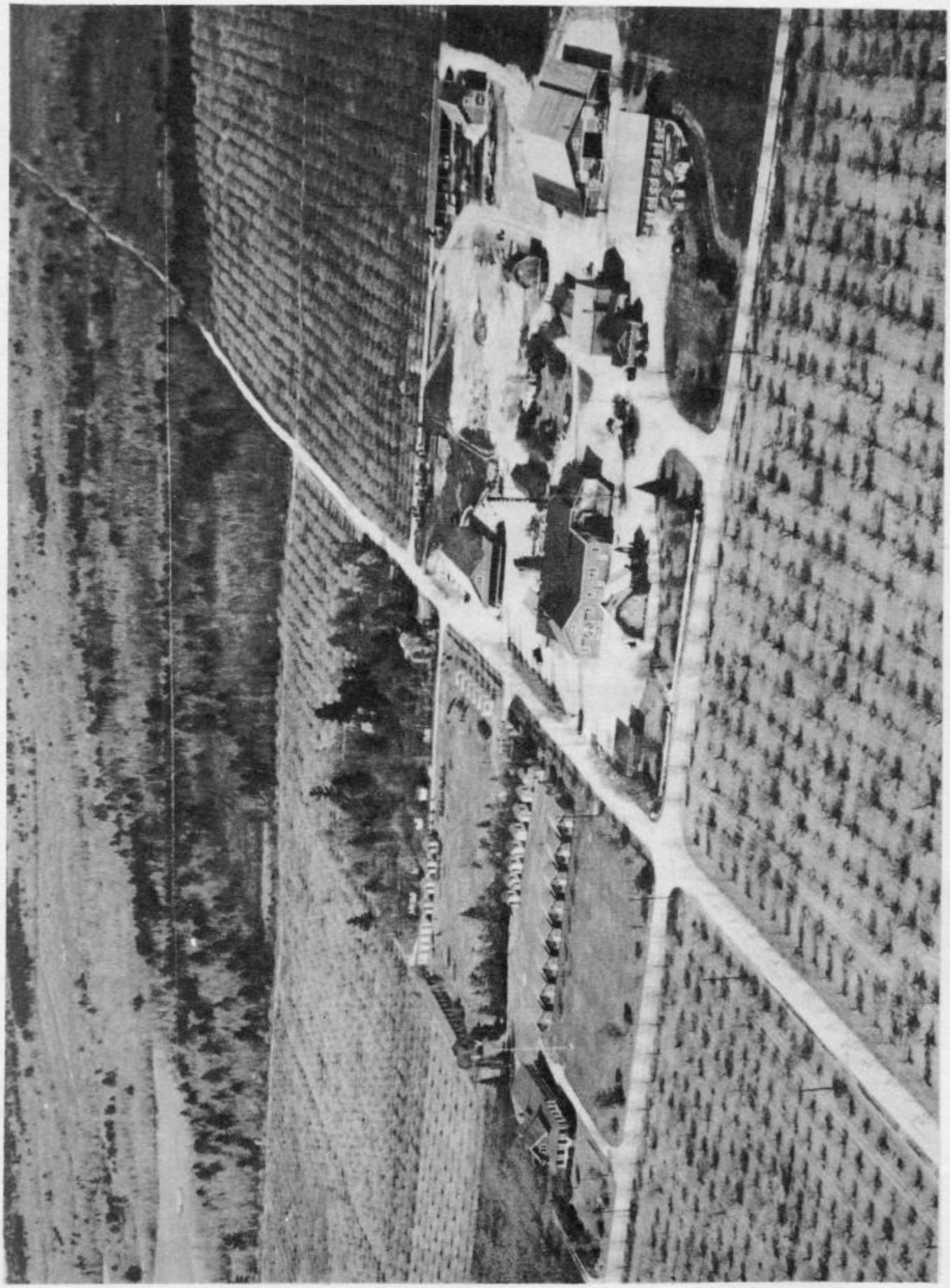
During the 1948 and 1949 season approximately 10,000 seasonal workers were employed at picking and processing cherries. There has been an increasing trend toward hiring of migrant family groups who provide their own cooking equipment and require only shelter and a stove. All types of workers, including single girls and boys, men and women and family groups, however, will continue to be needed each year.

The general age range for cherry pickers is from 8 to 60 years of age with whole families frequently picking together. For in-plant work, however, a general age range of 18 to 60 applies, with some workers hired at 16 and 17 years of age. Persons under 18 who wish to work in-plant must show proof of birth and physical condition, and have consent of parents to obtain a Wisconsin labor permit.

Wages for picking are paid on a per pail basis. The price per pail is established each season by the growers of Door County through the Door County Wage Committee. Wages for in-plant work are usually on an hourly basis.

A variety of housing is available including large camp buildings with double bunks for boys or girls; small cabins for girls and women, boys and men, and some family groups; and barracks and tents with wooden floors for migrant family groups. In general, workers must furnish their own toilet articles and all bedding except the mattress. In large camps housing for girls is in a separate section of the camp and is patrolled by night watchmen.

ORCHARD VIEW



Cherry Orchard, Camp and Canning Plant

RECRUITING WORKERS

The Wisconsin State Employment Service in 1949 established a seasonal branch office in Sturgeon Bay which opens shortly before cherry picking and processing begins and operates a week or two beyond the close of the season each year.

The office provides a central clearing house for local and migrant workers in obtaining employment throughout the cherry growing area and for the recruiting and direction of migrant workers to other agricultural and food processing jobs in Wisconsin and other states after the cherry season is completed.

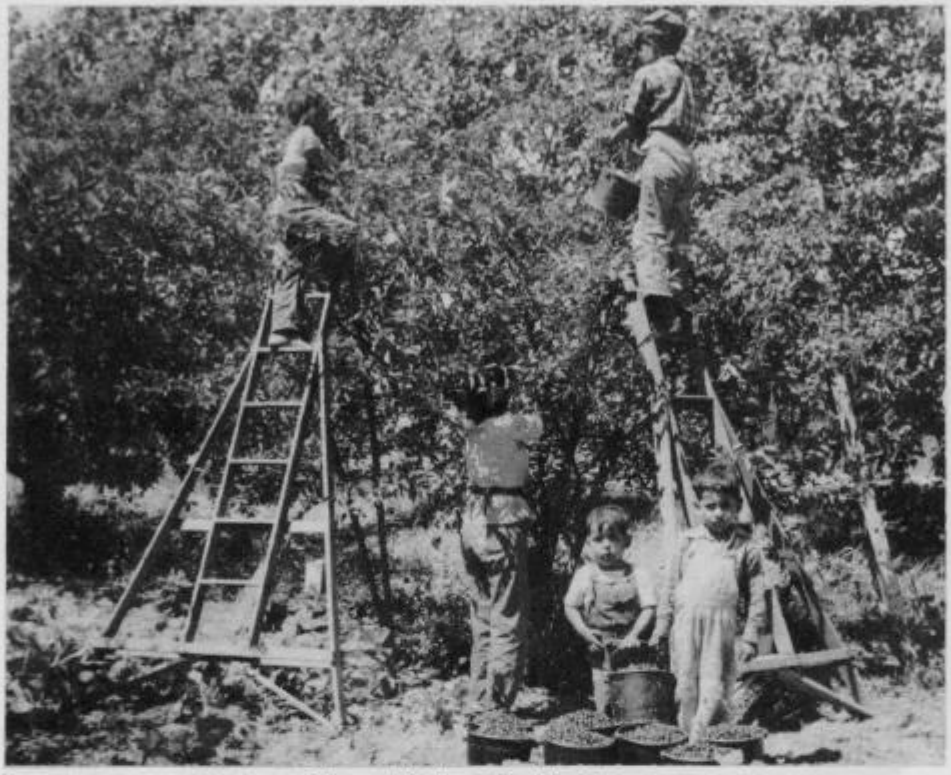
The office depends on the voluntary cooperation of cherry growers and processors who are encouraged to place orders for pickers and other labor. In turn, the WSES office clears these orders throughout Wisconsin, neighboring states, and to other supply areas in and outside the U. S., depending on the labor needs in any particular year and the general supply of labor available.

Workers entering the Door County area for the cherry season are encouraged to stop at the Employment Service office for information as to the location of orchards needing help and for specific referral instructions. There is no fee charged for obtaining jobs. When cherry picking is completed in one orchard, workers contact the Employment Service for referral to other orchards still in need of help. When all cherries have been picked and processed, workers are referred from Door County to other areas.

In 1949 there were approximately 110 worker camps open in Door County ranging from those accommodating ten persons, to the camps of large processors which housed several hundred. The WSES office placed a total of 4,000 workers during the season and referred and routed several thousand persons to other areas at the close of cherry operations.

A total of 29 states was represented by migrant workers coming into and leaving the county, ranging from California and Washington in the West, to Texas in the South and Massachusetts in the East. Among the nearly 10,000 workers in 1949 were 3,500 Texas–Mexicans, about 2,500 white pickers, mostly from Wisconsin, several hundred American Indians, and some Southern Negroes.

ORCHARD OPERATIONS



Texas–Mexican Family Group

The planting, cultivating, pruning and spraying of the orchard trees is usually done by the families who own the orchards or by regular year-round workers in the case of larger orchards. The picking of cherries, however, requires a large number of seasonal unskilled persons, including men, women, girls and boys, for a period from three to six weeks, depending on the condition of the crop.

Workers are transported to and from the picking areas daily by orchard trucks or by trucks belonging to migrant workers as illustrated on next page. Pickers are usually under the supervision of either the orchard owner, or a crew leader who shows pickers how to pick most efficiently. In the case of nationality groups, a member of the group may be designated to direct the picking. The pickers are assigned to trees in an orderly fashion to facilitate clean picking of all trees in the rows being worked on.

The typical worker (illustrated) stands on a 7, 8 or 9 foot step ladder and reaches out into the tree with both hands, palms upward, and strips or pulls the cherries from the stems and drops them into a 4-quart metal pail which is hung from the picker's shoulder by a leather or canvas strap. The lower cherries on the trees are picked by standing on the ground and reaching up to about head height. Extreme care must be exercised to pick the cherries clean, including the pit, without removing leaves, stems or spurs, which would result in additional labor at the factory and would injure the fruit-bearing capacity of the trees in subsequent years. The trees must be stripped of all cherries before the worker moves on to the next tree. Filled pails of cherries are set in the shade under the tree until several pails have accumulated for checking in.

ORCHARD OPERATIONS

The average picker, working fairly steadily, picks from 20 to 30 pails of cherries per day. Fast workers average 40 to 50 pails a day with the top pickers going as high as 70 pails. The speed with which cherries can be picked is partly determined by the condition of the crop and the ripeness of the cherries. Unripe cherries are more difficult to pick.

Pickers perform their work out in the open under excellent weather conditions in a temperature averaging 75°. Picking usually is curtailed during moderate or heavy rains. Work usually begins at 7:00 A.M. and continues to 4:30 or 5:00 P.M., with little work performed on Sundays. In some orchards workers can pick up to 10 or 12 hours a day if desired.

Younger Girls

Migrant Transportation

Elderly Family

Picking work requires the ability to climb, stand and maintain a proper balance on the ladders for long periods of time. Workers must have free use of the hands and arms to reach out and strip cherries rapidly and must be able to shift and carry ladders weighing about 40 pounds from one tree to another. When checking in cherries, pickers usually are required to carry two pails of cherries weighing about 10 pounds each to the nearby checking station.

ORCHARD OPERATIONS

then directed to dump the pails of cherries into wooden boxes for delivery to the processing plant.

Checking work is performed outdoors, sometimes under a canopy to protect picked cherries from the sun. Temperatures average 75°. Work usually begins when picking begins at 7:00 A.M. and continues to 4:30 or 5:00 P.M. with little work on Sundays. No heavy lifting is involved. Some mental and clerical ability is necessary to keep record cards straight and to answer questions asked by pickers. Considerable standing is involved.

Checking-in stations are located at convenient spots in the orchards where considerable picking activity is going on. When several pails are filled, pickers carry the filled pails to the station. Checking work is usually performed by girls under the supervision of the orchard boss.

The typical checker (illustrated) receives the filled pails of cherries, looks them over to be sure they are full and uses a hand punch to punch the correct number of pails picked on a company record card and on a duplicate card which the worker carries with him. These cards are then used to determine the amount of money earned by each picker each day. The picker is

ORCHARD OPERATIONS

Loading of filled boxes of cherries onto trucks is performed at the checking-in stations. Truck and tractor drivers make regular stops to pick up the filled boxes and return empties.

The typical worker (illustrated) drives a light stake truck or a tractor which hauls a flat truck behind it. Duties at the checking-in station include unloading empties and stacking them on the ground in orderly fashion, and loading filled boxes of cherries onto the truck, often with the assistance of a helper. After a truck is filled, the driver delivers the cherries to the processing plant receiving station where he helps unload the boxes.

Work is performed under a variety of weather conditions including driving through muddy orchard lanes at times. When tractors are used, drivers are out in the open. Work usually begins at 6:30 to 7:00 A.M. and continues until all cherries are brought in, usually by 5:30 P.M. Fairly heavy physical labor is involved in lifting and moving full boxes of cherries which weigh 30 to 40 pounds.

Noon lunch is served to pickers out in the orchard, usually near the checking-in station. Trucks deliver the rations to the orchard and usually girls from the cafeteria or company kitchen accompany the truck driver and pass out meals cafeteria style with orchard workers getting in line for service. The lunch hour usually lasts from one-half to one hour.

PLANT OPERATIONS

The receiving station of a cherry processing plant handles the unloading of wooden boxes of cherries from trucks which come from the orchards and the dumping of cherries into receiving tanks. Work in this department is for men only.

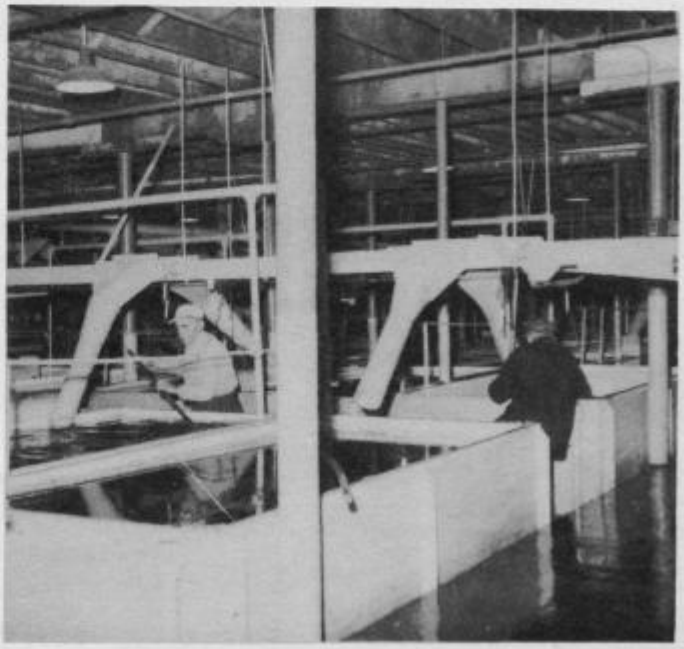
The typical worker (illustrated) unloads wooden boxes of cherries and dumps them into the receiving tanks and returns the empty boxes to the delivery trucks. In general, simple records are kept of the number of boxes of cherries received and the truck delivering them in order to identify shipments from various growers.

Receiving work is usually performed under a canopy which protects from the rain, but allows outdoor air to circulate. Temperatures follow outdoor readings. Work begins about 8:00 A.M. when cherries arrive from the orchards, and continues until all picked cherries are processed. When cherries are coming in heavy, receiving activity may go on until 3:00 A.M., or 16 to 18 hours a day. Fairly heavy physical labor is involved in lifting and carrying full boxes of cherries weighing about 40 pounds. Work is generally done under fairly dry conditions.

The washing department consists of a series of large tanks in which cherries are agitated and washed clean. The cherries are piped in water from the receiving tanks to washing tanks by hydraulic pumps. The operations of the washing department are staffed entirely with men, usually old hands who know how to handle the large flow of cherries.

The typical worker (illustrated) turns various valves to allow cherries to flow into and out of the tanks and to fill the tanks with additional water. A long rake is then used to stir up the cherries to promote uniform washing. Judgment must be used in timing the various washing tanks so that a uniform flow of cherries is available to the picking-over line. The washer men must also keep pipes from clogging and clean the tanks after each batch has gone through.

The washing work is usually performed on the first floor inside the plant under fairly wet conditions. Cement and wood floors are usually very wet and workers wear rubber boots. The work involves a large amount of walking between tanks. During heavy runs of cherries work continues from 8:00 A.M. to 3:00 A.M., or 16 to 18 hours per day.



PLANT OPERATIONS

The picking department of the cherry processing plant consists of several conveyor belts which carry the cherries from the washing tanks between double rows of women who pick out any foreign matter. The belts move continuously, and after picking over is completed, the cherries flow into the pitting machines. The general foreman supervises the department and trains the women to pick over cherries according to company quality standards.

The typical workers (illustrated) stand or sit on either side of the conveyor belt. The picking operation consists of running the fingers over the flat belt of cherries, and by careful observation picking out and discarding leaves, stems and spurs of the trees and any mashed-up, undergrade or off-color cherries, or any other foreign matter which has passed the washing operation.

Because of public health laws, women must wear some type of head covering while working with food. Warm, humid conditions prevail due to nearby cooking operations and continuous work with wet cherries. Hands are wet most of the time. Some noise is present from operation of nearby machinery. Work begins about 8:00 A.M. with the first shift of women working approximately nine hours, except in emergency situations. Physical activities are not strenuous, however, constant use of the eyes, arms, hands and fingers is necessary to weed out foreign matter as the cherries flow by.

PLANT OPERATIONS

The cherry pitting operations are performed by a battery of automatic machines which contain revolving drums having rows of holes into which the clean cherries drop from the conveyor. As the drum revolves, a row of punches move up and down to punch the pits out of each row of cherries. The battery of machines is attended by two or three men.

The typical attendant (illustrated) stands in front of or walks around the battery of pitting machines checking to see that cherries are flowing into the machine correctly and that the machines are operating properly. When pits become jammed in a hole or a punch breaks, the attendant must stop the machine and make the necessary repairs.

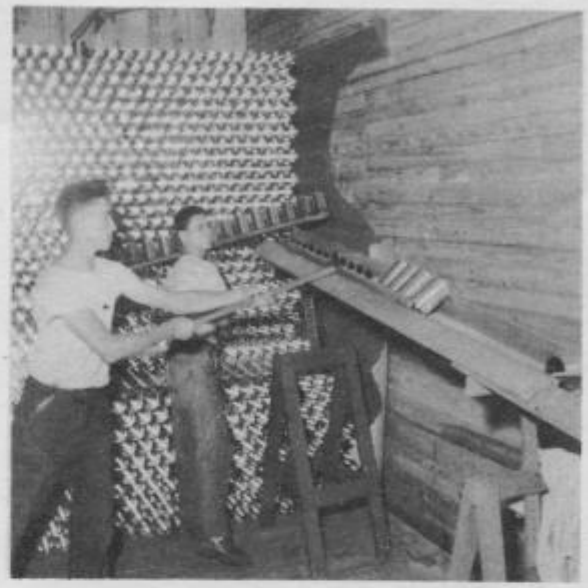
The work is performed inside under warm, humid conditions. Some noise is present from operation of processing machinery. Floors are usually wet around the machines. Work begins about 8:30 A.M. and continues until all cherries are processed. During rush periods hours may be from 16 to 18 per day. Physical activity is not strenuous, however, considerable standing and walking is involved in addition to close observation of machines.

* * *

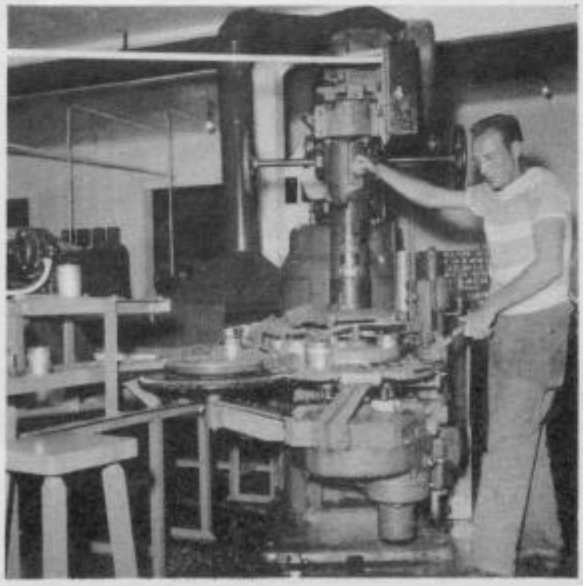
Following the cherry pitting operation, cherries may flow into one of four different processes, depending on the size and condition of the cherries and the types of products processed by the particular plant. Most cherries are either canned for use as sauce or for baking pies, or are put up in 30 pound cans for deep freezing or delivery to the fresh market. Undersize, undergrade, and surplus runs of cherries may be pressed into cherry juice and canned, or placed in wooden barrels for processing into maraschino cherries.

PLANT OPERATIONS—HOT PACK

The forking of tin cans usually occurs in railroad box cars which are located on sidings just outside the canning plant. Several persons, either boys or girls, work together on a closely coordinated operation in which they alternately stick the prongs of a wide wooden fork into the holes of a row of empty tin cans and either hand the filled fork to a third person or deftly place the filled fork over a narrow conveyor which carries them into the plant.



The can filling and closing operations are closely coordinated. Cherries are fed into either large or small tin cans from a hopper, after which the filled cans are automatically filled with water and carried through a sterilizing oven at about 200°.



The cans emerge at about 160° and automatically are carried to the closing machine for capping.

Several workers are required on each line. One person watches the filling hopper and another sees that the cans are completely filled. A girl is usually stationed on the line to push the cherries down into the can. An attendant controls and watches the sterilizing oven and the closing machine operator feeds top caps into the machine and operates the closer.

Warm, humid conditions prevail with considerable water on the floor. Hands are continually wet from handling cherries on most tasks. Machinery operates at high speed, therefore workers on these jobs must be very alert.

PLANT OPERATIONS—COLD PACK

The shipping unit consists of men (illustrated) who receive filled cans of cherries from a conveyor on the loading dock and carry them into large semi-trucks for shipment. Men must lift and carry the cans which weigh about 32 pounds and stack them in the trucks in orderly fashion, occasionally standing on raised planks to pile upper layers.

Cherries which are not shipped fresh are conveyed to the deep freeze storage locker where men pile the cans in orderly fashion to ceiling height. Work in the freezer must be performed at 10° below zero temperatures and requires the ability to adapt to rapidly changing temperatures.

The cold pack cherry department receives pitted cherries from a refrigerating unit by conveyor belt. Cherries are hand packed into large containers and shipped immediately by truck line as fresh cherries or are conveyed to a freezing locker nearby for storage.

Several women (illustrated) work together in cold packing cherries. One person works at the filling hopper to see that cans are properly filled, while another person adds the proper amount of sugar. A third person checks the total weight and adds or removes cherries to a weight of 32 pounds, while another person adds a covering paper and operates a squeeze machine to fasten the cover on tightly.

PLANT OPERATIONS—CHERRY JUICE

The cherry juice unit in one plant receives the undersize, undergrade and surplus runs of cherries and converts them into pure cherry juice by cutting them up in a mascerator, pressing the juice out in a hydraulic press, and running the juice through a series of heating tanks and filters before canning.

The work in this department is performed by several men. One person handles the mascerator machine and the heating and filtration units. Two men place pressing cloths in portable boxes which are automatically filled with mascerated cherries by a chute. The filled boxes are pushed to either side over a hydraulic mechanism which raises to squeeze out the juice.

Several men remove squeezed out cherries from pressing cloths and use a hose to wash out cloths for reuse. A closing machine operator handles filling and closing of cans.

Most of the jobs in this unit require heavy physical labor and the ability to work under very wet conditions. Workers wear rubber boots, gloves, and heavy rubber aprons as water and juice tend to splash considerably. The filtration man must have a good knowledge of the process and operations of a large number of valves, heat gauges and pumps.

PLANT OPERATIONS—MARASCHINO

The maraschino cherry department of one plant receives the surplus of cherries during heavy runs and some undergrade cherries which have been placed in wooden barrels. Water, pure calcium and sulphur dioxide are added in proper proportions. The barrels are then closed and cherries bleach and harden for a period of six weeks, after which the barrels are reopened. The bleached cherries are then picked over for quality, graded for size, pitted and shipped to processors who convert them into red maraschino cherries.

Several workers work together to handle this process. The filled barrels of cherries are closed by men who place wooden covers on barrels and use sledge hammers to tighten metal hoops around the barrels. Men add water and calcium powder. A girl meters out the proper amount of sulphur dioxide and keeps records on the various barrels. The bungs are then closed and men roll the 500 pound barrels to the storage area. When cherries are not coming in, men ready wooden barrels by tightening hoops on them and checking them for leaks.

Men's work in this department requires the ability to do heavy physical labor. The girl must be able to keep simple records and accurately meter sulphur dioxide. The hours of work are usually shorter than the general plant. Work surroundings are fairly dry with some work in and outside the building when moving barrels. Men must be able to manipulate 500 pound barrels around the building.

WAREHOUSE OPERATIONS

Warehouse operations begin at the point where hot pack canned cherries or cherry juice enter the warehouse on automatic conveyors coming from the cooling tanks. Filled cans are either stored in large piles, boxed for future labeling, or go directly to the labeling machines, and carton boxers and are stored or shipped. Warehouse jobs are usually manned entirely by men and boys.

Several boys may pick up 10 unlabeled cans at a time off the conveyor with a flat board and carry them to a nearby storage pile. In another method, cans may run to a boxing machine. The boxing machine operator receives the empty carton from one man, holds it up to the boxing machine which automatically pushes

24 labeled or unlabeled cans into the carton. Another man takes the filled cartons away and piles them up. One worker may operate a labeling machine, followed by the boxer and carton paster. Other jobs in the warehouse include carton stapler, carton stenciller, carton loader and unloader for shipping, and electric-truck driver.

Work in the warehouse is performed in cool, dry surroundings. Operations usually begin an hour or so after canning begins and run an hour or so after canning is completed. Much of the work involves lifting and handling of filled cartons weighing 25 to 30 pounds and pushing hand trucks of various kinds.

RECREATION

Most of the larger camps have a full-time staff of athletic directors, counselors and program planners who arrange outdoor athletic activities after work such as baseball, boxing, basketball, volleyball, horseshoes and swimming. In addition some camps have indoor facilities for movies, checkers, reading, etc. Several camps have a weekly amateur night on which all of the various age and nationality groups gather round a bonfire. Persons with singing, acting, acrobatic and instrumental ability volunteer to perform. On weekends many camps arrange scenic trips to noted beauty

A variety of planned recreation is found in the various Door County cherry camps running from highly organized daily recreation in younger boys' and girls' camps to once-a-week amateur nights and Sunday programs in other camps. It should be emphasized, however, that persons seeking a vacation in the cherry orchards are not wanted. Picking cherries and working in the plants is a tough, hard grind and only persons principally interested in picking cherries and doing other labor to *earn money* are wanted. Recreation is a sideline, provided to make the off-work hours more interesting.

RECREATION

spots in Door County with a picnic lunch provided for the group. Some recreational activity is present in most of the many camps in operation. In some camps a camp store is operated for the workers. Usually groceries, meats, milk, candies, soft drinks, ice cream and tobacco can be purchased.

Many job opportunities in recreational work during the cherry season are filled by high school and college teachers, especially those teaching physical education, home economics, and social subjects.

The Door County Council of Church Women, a non-denominational council composed of church women of all faiths, has organized church services for many of the camps. The services are designed to fit the various religions of migrant workers. In some instances religious services are held at the camp and in others trucks haul the groups to nearby churches. The over-all aim is to make life more pleasant for the thousands of workers who pour into the area for the brief cherry season.

MEALS

tents and live in various camping areas where they prepare their own meals on their own equipment.

In the larger camps many girls and women are hired to do cooking, miscellaneous kitchen work, such as preparing vegetables and washing dishes, and serving food to workers. In addition, normal cleanup work after meals must be done. Workers in the commissaries are usually paid on an hourly or weekly basis with meals included. Hours of work range from about 6:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M., with some in-between hours off. During the season commissary workers work seven days a week.

Meals are provided to workers in the cherry industry in a variety of ways depending on the size and type of camp. The larger orchards hire full-time cooks who prepare breakfast, noon lunch and supper for large numbers of workers, who are served cafeteria style and eat in large dining rooms. Usually the noon lunch is delivered to the workers in the orchards. A nominal charge is made for meals with plenty of food available. In smaller camps, cherry pickers may eat with the farm family. In the case of migrant nationality groups who carry their own cooking utensils, and buy and cook their own food, only a stove is provided by the growers. Other migrant workers have their own trailers or

HOUSING

Washing Facilities

Boys' Camp

Migrant Family Barracks

Multiple Girls' Cabins

Girls' and Women's Cabins

MEMO

DATE DUE
STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF WISCONSIN
816 State Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53706
SEP 1 7 1981
DEMCO 38-297

MEMO

ATTENTION

OUT OF STATE WORKERS

FOR JOB INFORMATION
STOP AT
THE STURGEON BAY OFFICE
OF THE

ATENCI´ON

TRABAJADORES DE FUERA DEL ESTADO

POR INFORMES DE SU TRABAJO
HAY QUE VISITAR
LA OFICINA EN STURGEON BAY
DEL

WISCONSIN STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

WATCH

For This

ROADSIDE SIGN