

## Lincoln, New York Cheese Factory By Bob Mogray

The earliest record of the now defunct Lincoln Cheese Factory is from 1866 by George W. Clyde in the publication Landmarks of Wayne County. All that is left of this local industry is a deserted building. The property is a little over 8 acres and stands on the northwest corner of the intersection of Lincoln Road and Plank Road in Lincoln, New York. This is directly across from the Lincoln Fire Hall building.

The Lincoln Cheese Factory was completed in 1866 into the side of a hill at this location and is about 40 feet by 120 feet in size. The property was originally owned by Willis B. Hicks and was sold to Joseph D. Dewey. Mr. Dewey owned it for a very short time and then sold it to a group of trustees. In 1870 the property was seized for non-payment of taxes. A few years went by and in 1875 Sanford Miller bought the cheese factory at a public auction. In 1892 Goram Engert became the main cheese-maker and also bought the property. After his death in 1936, the property was tied up in Mr. Engert's estate but in 1945 his oldest daughter Miss Flora Engert bought it. She lived here for many years.



The structure has a basement where the cheese-making was done, a first floor that was used for cheese storage and later as living quarters, and a second floor, also used for cheese storage. This building had an elevator consisting of a platform with ropes and pulleys. The main product was cheddar cheese of several varieties. This locally made cheese was sold under the brand name "Holley Brand Cheese." It is interesting to note that in this era, there was actually a season for cheese making. It was manufactured during the spring and summer months because milk was scarce in winter and the steam boiler was much more difficult to operate in winter because of the colder temperatures.

**Left: Cheese Factory in Lincoln, New York**

During the early 1900's, the milk for cheddar cheese production was bought from local farmers and transported to the factory by horse-drawn wagons. This milk was carried in 40-quart metal cans and when all of the milk arrived at the factory it was collected in a large metal tank. When the tank was full it was drawn off to a large vat that was steam heated to 82 degrees. Next a starter mix was added to increase the acid content of the milk. Rennet, a substance that curdles milk, was then added. After about 20 minutes the mixture was mostly solid and was cut with sharp metal blades and slowly stirred. The whey, the liquid part, was drawn off. The cheese that remained after this process was ground, soaked in water, salted, and pressed. The cheddar cheese was then aged from one to four weeks in the dark to properly ripen it.

Buyers for this cheese were Joe Casper, a West Walworth store owner, J.A. Seal Company, and Sibley, Lindsay, and Curr Company in Rochester. The cost of this cheese ranged from about ten cents to eighteen cents per pound. It should be noted that at the time when this cheese factory was in operation, there were no labor unions, no child labor laws, no pure food controls, and no electrically operated machines. The cows were milked by hand, the curd was stirred by arm power, the cheese presses were operated by means of a simple wooden handle, and the water was supplied through a basic pipe and hand pump system. The factory was fairly quiet, plain, and practical. There were no elaborate lounges for visitors or any building cafeteria. However this small local industry made its contribution to the history of the Lincoln area and served as a gathering place for farmers and neighbors for many years.



**An early photo of the Lincoln Cheese Factory**



**The Lincoln Cheese Factory in the 1960s**

In 1905 another building was erected to the east of what is now the Lincoln Fire Department building. The cheese making operation was transferred to this building which also was used for the Lincoln Grange meetings. Cheese was made in this building from 1906 until 1914. The cheese making operations were stopped at this time because the Ontario Creamery bought the building and cheese making was never resumed. This building burned in 1926 under suspicious circumstances and was never rebuilt.

*Editor's Note: Thanks to John R. Baker of Macedon, New York for his 1964 publication: Cheese Manufacturing in Lincoln, New York and Peter Evans, the Wayne County Historian, for help finding information.*