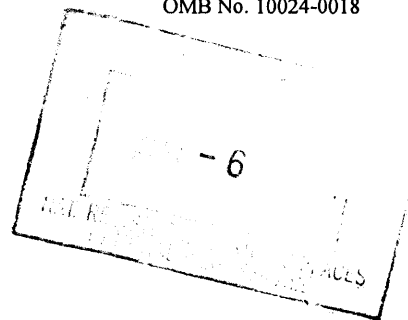


**United States Department of Interior  
National Park Service**



**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900A). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

**historic name** Fuhremann Canning Company Factory  
**other names/site number** Sun Prairie Canning Company Factory, Oconomowoc Canning Company Factory

**2. Location**

**street & number** 151 Market Street **N/A** **not for publication**  
**city or town** Sun Prairie **N/A** **vicinity**  
**state** Wisconsin **code** WI **county** Dane **code** 025 **zip code** 53590

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer-WI 8/3/04  
*James Dracup*  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  
( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title Date  
  
State or Federal agency and bureau

Fuhremann Canning Co. Factory

Dane

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

*Edson H. Ball*

9.15.04

*Jan*

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(check as many boxes as apply)

private  
 public-local  
 public-State  
 public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

building(s)  
 district  
 structure  
 site  
 object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

contributing	noncontributing
1	buildings
	sites
	structures
	objects
1	0 total

**Name of related multiple property listing:**  
(Enter "N/A" if property not part of a multiple property listing.)

None

**Number of contributing resources is previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTANCE/processing

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other CONCRETE

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Fuhremann Canning Co. Factory  
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County and State

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY

### Period of Significance

1912-1954

### Significant Dates

1944

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Stegerwald Lumber Company

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Fuhremann Canning Co. Factory  
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### 9. Major Bibliographic References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State Agency
  - Federal Agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository:  
Sun Prairie Historical Library and Museum

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property One Acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 320305 4783045  
Zone Easting Northing

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

See Continuation Sheet

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Timothy F. Heggland/Consultant for:	date	March 18, 2004
organization	Freiburger Consulting, Inc.	telephone	608-795-2650
street & number	6391 Hillswood Rd.	zip code	53560
city or town	Mazomanie	state	WI

Fuhremann Canning Co. Factory

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Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

**Maps** A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs** Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional Items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

### Property Owner

Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

<b>name/title</b>	Cannery Square L.L.C.	<b>date</b>	3/10/04
<b>organization</b>	c/o DSI Real Estate Group	<b>telephone</b>	608-226-3060
<b>street &amp; number</b>	2800 Royal Avenue	<b>zip code</b>	53713
<b>city or town</b>	Madison	<b>state</b>	WI

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 1

Fuhremann Canning Co. Factory  
Sun Prairie, Dane County, WI

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**Description**

The Fuhremann Canning Co.'s canning factory building is a largely intact, essentially utilitarian building located in the heart of the city of Sun Prairie adjacent to the now unused tracks of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad (a.k.a.: the Milwaukee road). The building consists of two main elements, an L-plan, 84-foot by 158-foot, three-story factory building, where peas were processed, and a smaller one-story, rectilinear-plan, 54-foot by 47-foot cooking wing, which is attached to the southeast corner of the factory building and which gives the combined elements a T-plan configuration. The current building was begun in 1912 and was improved and enlarged over the years. It achieved much of its current exterior appearance as a result of a remodeling and expansion program undertaken between 1943 and 1944. Throughout much of the twentieth century Wisconsin was one of the most important producers of canned goods in the nation. The Sun Prairie Canning Co., founded in Sun Prairie in 1900 in the midst of a canning industry boom period that would, within the next twenty years, create canning factories in communities all across Wisconsin, was the earliest canning company in Dane County and was the predecessor of the Fuhremann Company, which bought it in 1908. Originally set up to can corn and tomatoes, peas were added into the factory's product mix soon thereafter and by 1928, the year the factory was acquired by the Oconomowoc Canning Co., canned peas were its principal product. Although it was open only three or four months out of the year, the factory was never-the-less one of Sun Prairie's few important industries and was one of the city's principal employers throughout its history. The Oconomowoc Canning Co. and its successor continued to operate the Sun Prairie factory until 2000, but the building now stands vacant awaiting rehabilitation and renovation and the next chapter of its history.

The city of Sun Prairie is located approximately five miles northeast of the much larger city of Madison, the capitol of Wisconsin.<sup>1</sup> The Fuhremann Canning Co. factory is located one long block south of the historic commercial district of Sun Prairie, which is strung out along several blocks of the east-west running Main Street. The factory sits on an irregular-shaped parcel of flat land that is bounded on the south by the aforementioned railroad tracks, on the west by Market Street, and on the north and east by a much larger parcel of vacant land that is currently being redeveloped and will soon have fourteen new residential and retail store buildings. Located just to the south of the factory parcel on the other side of the railroad tracks is Angell Park. Surrounding the city of Sun Prairie is some of the nation's richest farmland, which was the source of the produce that was processed by the factory and shipped from it.

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<sup>1</sup> The 1990 population of Sun Prairie was 15,333. The 1990 population of Madison was 191,262.

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Fuhremann Canning Co. Factory  
Sun Prairie, Dane County, WI

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Today, the Canning Co.'s factory building sits alone on its site. Until just recently, this building was surrounded by additional buildings that were associated with it and also by buildings associated with the Pet Milk Co. and with the City of Sun Prairie's water pumping and electric works. All of these other buildings have now been demolished, leaving only the Canning Co.'s factory building, which was always the most important building in the Canning Co.'s factory complex. The factory building is positioned in such a way so as to be placed perpendicular to the adjoining, pre-existing railroad tracks, which run in a southwest-northeast direction at this point. Consequently, the principal elevations of the building face northwest, northeast, southeast and southwest, with the southeast-facing elevation being the one that parallels the railroad track. These elevations are depicted as being the north, east, south and west elevations on the accompanying plans and elevation drawings

**Exterior**

As noted above, the factory building is essentially an astylistic building of utilitarian design and its design has no period or contemporary stylistic references. The two principal elements of the factory building, the three-story L-plan main block and its attached one-story rectilinear plan cooking wing, both sit on reinforced concrete pad foundations and both have exterior walls that are completely clad in tan/orange brick. Sheltering these walls are shallow-pitched gable roofs that are protected by asphalt shingles laid over wood boards and whose overhanging open eaves have soffits made of wood boards and which are supported by projecting wooden rafters whose ends are covered by simple bargeboards. Also present on the roof of the northernmost part of the main block is a tall gable-roofed monitor that is now clad in narrow vinyl or aluminum clapboard. All of the factory's door and window openings are square or rectangular, all the window openings have concrete sills, and all of the ca.1943 windows that have survived are multi-light steel sash, many of which also have incorporated within them a smaller projecting top-hinged awning window. Besides the two main building elements, several smaller gray brick-clad additions that range from one to two stories in height are also attached to the southwest-facing elevation of the main block and they occupy a space that was formerly occupied by the original factory's boiler house.

**Northwest-facing Main Facade**

The main northwest-facing facade of the factory originally faced onto Lincoln Street, a now vacated street that ran east from Market Street, then made a left turn and continued on to Main Street. Originally this street ran through the canning company grounds, separating the main buildings from the canteen, offices and the dormitory-garage building. The principal element of the main facade is the forty-seven-foot-wide northwest end of the three-story L-plan main block. This portion is three-bays-

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wide and is essentially symmetrical in design. The first story of the first bay from the right contains a 16-light steel sash window (w/awning window), the second story contains an identical window, although it is not positioned directly above, and the third story contains a 24-light steel sash window (w/awning window). The first story of the middle bay contains a former overhead garage door opening, the second story contains a 20-light steel sash window (w/awning window), and the third story contains an identical window. The first story of the third bay from the right contains a 16-light steel sash window (w/awning window), the second story contains an identical window, and the third story contains a 24-light steel sash window (w/awning window). In addition, a flat-arched entrance door opening is placed between bays one and two and another is placed between bays two and three, the right-hand opening containing a one-light door and the left-hand one, a modern metal door having no window opening.

This facade also comprises the 37-foot-long northwest-facing side elevation of the three-story-tall ell portion of the main block, most of which is hidden by the equally long two-story gray brick addition that abuts it. What is visible of the third story, however, shows no openings of any kind.

This facade also comprises the 54-foot-long northwest-facing side elevation of the one-story cooking wing, which has three large identical openings arrayed along its length whose original function is uncertain and which are now totally open. Very wide pilaster strips separate these bays from each other.

#### Northeast-facing Side Elevation

The principal element of this elevation is the 158-foot-long northeast-facing side elevation of the three-story, L-plan main block. This elevation is divided into two unequal length sections: a slightly recessed three-bay-wide left-hand portion and a longer seven-bay-wide right-hand portion.

A single window opening now filled with plywood occupies the left-hand bay of the second story of this elevation's left-hand portion while the remainder of the first two stories is largely covered by the narrower southwest end of the one-story, gable-roofed cooking wing. The third story of the left-hand portion contains three identical window openings. The right-hand one is now filled with plywood while the other two still retain their original 24-light steel sash windows, both of which have awning inserts.

The right-hand bay of the first story of the seven-bay-wide right-hand portion of this elevation contains a garage door opening now filled with a modern overhead door. The second, third, fifth, and sixth bays



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from the left each originally contained a paired window group, but these are all now filled with plywood, while the fourth bay from the left originally contained just a single window opening that is also now filled with plywood. The right-hand bay in the second story contains a single window opening that still contains its original 12-light steel sash window and the other six bays each originally contained a pair of 12-light windows of identical design. Today, however, only the first and second bays from the left still retain original windows, these are just the left-hand ones of each pair. All the other openings are now filled either with concrete block or with large ventilator fans that once serviced the interior. Two-third height pilaster strips capped with concrete caps are placed on the wall surface between bays one and two, two and three, three and four, five and six, and six and seven, while a wider full-height pilaster strip is placed between bays four and five.<sup>2</sup>

This elevation also comprises the 47-foot-wide northeast-facing end elevation of the one-story cooking wing, which has three openings arrayed along its length whose original function is uncertain and which are now totally open. The two end bays are identical in width and are not as wide as the larger center opening and these bays are separated from each other by very wide, nearly full-height pilaster strips. There is also a square opening centered in the gable end of this elevation.

#### Southeast-facing Rear Elevation

This elevation also consists of three parts. The right-hand portion is the 54-foot-long, southeast-facing elevation of the cooking wing, which originally is believed to have had four large openings of approximately equal width arrayed across its width, each separated from each other by very wide, full height pilaster strips. The three left-hand openings still survive and are totally open, but the right-hand opening is now filled with concrete block.

The center portion of this elevation consists of the 47-foot-wide rear elevation of the three-story, L-plan main block. This portion is three bays wide but is not symmetrical in design. The first story contains two large garage door openings placed slightly off center and to the right that are now filled with concrete block. A window opening that contains a single sixteen-light steel sash window serves an inner stairwell and occupies a mezzanine level position between the first and second stories at the far right-hand side of the elevation. The left-hand bay of the second story contains a pair of sixteen-light steel sash windows (w/awning inserts) but the larger opening in the right-hand bay is now filled

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<sup>2</sup> A large, open loading dock and receiving area is placed just outside this portion of the overall elevation and much of the elevation's first story is currently sheltered by the roof that now covers this area. This steel roof is supported by rafters made of steel I-beams that are in turn supported by posts made of steel I-beams and this entire one-story-tall structure was built some years after the building itself.

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with concrete block. The left-hand bay of the third story contains another pair of sixteen-light steel sash windows (w/awning inserts) and the right-hand bay contains an identical pair. There is also a small ventilator opening centered in the gable end.

The left-hand portion of this elevation comprises the 37-foot-long southwest-facing side elevation of the three-story-tall ell portion of the main block. This portion is also three-bays-wide and it is nearly symmetrical in design. Each bay of the first story contains a window opening, all three of which are now filled with concrete block. Identically sized window openings filled with concrete block are placed in the second story of the left and right-hand bays above, and identical window openings are also found in the third stories of these two bays. The third story's left-hand opening is also filled with concrete block, but the right-hand opening still contains its original pair of sixteen-light steel sash windows, which strongly suggests that identical paired windows of this type once filled all the other window openings on this part of the elevation as well.

#### Southwest-facing Side Elevation

The 158-foot-long southwest-facing side elevation of the building is comprised of the two principal parts of the three-story L-plan main block. This elevation is divided into unequal length sections, a projecting three-bay-wide right-hand portion and a longer seven-bay-wide left-hand portion.

The right-hand portion of the elevation consists of the three-story end elevation of the main block's ell. This elevation is nearly symmetrical in design and its first story features two large garage door openings that flank a large centered window opening that is now filled with concrete block. The right-hand garage door opening contains a modern overhead door, while the left-hand one is now filled with plywood and has an entrance door opening inserted into it. The centered middle bay of the second story contains another large opening that is filled with a modern overhead door and an identical opening is placed in the third story above, but this one still contains its original six-light, twelve-panel wooden overhead door. A small, centered, rectangular ventilator opening is placed near the peak of this elevation's gable end.<sup>3</sup>

The seven bay wide left-hand portion of this elevation is the side elevation of the main block of the building. The only visible openings on the first story of this elevation are two window openings that

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<sup>3</sup> A large, open loading dock and receiving area is placed just outside this elevation and much of its first story is currently sheltered by the roof that now covers this area. This steel roof is supported by rafters made of steel I-beams that are in turn supported by posts made of steel I-beams and this entire one-story-tall structure was built some years after the building itself.

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are located on the southwest-facing wall of a small, one-story, flat-roofed, rectilinear plan ell that occupies the second bay from the left.<sup>4</sup> The remainder of this story is now hidden by the later one and two-story gray brick-clad, shed-roofed additions that have been built across it. A window opening that contains a single sixteen-light, steel sash window lights an inner stairwell and occupies a mezzanine level position between the first and second stories at the far left-hand side of the elevation. The second story contains window openings in the second, third, fourth and fifth bays from the left and these openings are all identical and probably each originally contained a paired window group but are now all filled with concrete block. In the third story, single window openings that each contain a sixteen-light steel sash window are found in the first, sixth, and seventh bays from the left, while the second and third bays from the left both still contain paired steel sash twelve-light windows. Similar size window openings that also probably originally contained paired windows are also found in the fourth and fifth bays from the left, but these are now filled with plywood and have ventilator-related fixtures inserted into them. Two-third height pilaster strips capped with concrete caps are placed on the wall surface between bays one and two, two and three, and four and five, while a wider full-height pilaster strip is placed between bays three and four.

The factory building is currently surrounded on its southwest, northwest and northeast sides by poured concrete paving that originally supported loading and unloading, parking, and other factory uses.

**Interior**

The interior of the factory building contains elements that reflect almost the entire history of the building and it is strictly utilitarian in appearance. Major portions of the building's interior reflect its 1912 construction date; these include the floor system throughout the building and the surviving wood supports. Steel columns with concrete bases replaced the original supports in the parts of the building that held the heavier machinery. The date of the alterations is unknown, but appear to predate the 1943 remodeling. Generally, the north side and the lower parts of the building are the most reinforced. This was the portion that housed the heaviest equipment. Conversely, the south side and the upper floors are the most intact to the earlier date.

**First Story**

The first story is now divided into four principal spaces, all of which have poured concrete floors dating from different periods. The floor of the north side appears to be the newest, while the floor on

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<sup>4</sup> The original function of this ell is not known but it is clad in the same brick as the main block and also dates from 1944.

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the south side is earlier, possibly from the 1920s or 1930s.<sup>5</sup> The northwest end of the main block is a rectangular room that measures 47-feet-wide by 109-feet-long and it is this story's single largest space. An enclosed stairwell that provides access to both of the upper stories is placed in the west corner of this room and this stairwell walls are clad in white-glazed brick. All four of the walls of the room are also clad in white glazed brick, while the room's ceiling consists of wood boards that serve as the subfloor of the second story's floor; these boards are supported by 2"x12" wood joists. These joists are themselves supported by two large, steel I-beams that run from the building's northwest end to its southeast end, this being the length of both this room and of the smaller room beyond. These two massive beams are supported by two rows of posts made of steel I-beams that are placed on raised concrete footings, there being six pairs of posts in the main room.<sup>6</sup> A brick partition wall at the southeast end of the room is also clad in glazed brick on its northwest-facing surface, but the opposite side is clad in the same tan/orange brick that comprises the building's exterior walls. Identical brick covers two of the other walls of the 47-feet-wide by 49-feet-long rear room that forms the southeast end of the main section of the main block. The wooden ceiling of this room is a continuation of the one in the main room and it too is upheld by three pairs of steel I-beam posts. A second enclosed stairwell that provides access to both the upper stories is also placed in the east corner of this smaller room.

A later plywood partition wall now separates the rear room just described from the space that occupies the first story of the main block's ell. This space's original brick walls are now completely covered by sheets of painted plywood and the original wooden ceiling is also now covered by a later drop ceiling.<sup>7</sup> This ceiling is supported by two pairs of steel box columns that now are covered in painted plywood. Two large garage doors placed in the southwest end reflect its use as a shipping room.

The first story of the factory building also includes the cooking wing as well. This 46-foot-wide by 54-foot-long wing has a poured concrete floor, walls clad in the same tan/orange brick as the exterior, and a ceiling that is open to the wing's roof, whose wood board decking is visible. This roof is supported by simple wooden truss work that is itself supported by two full length steel I-beams that are supported by a pair of round steel posts.

### Second Story

The second story consists of a single large room that encompasses the entire main block and its ell (the

<sup>5</sup> Conversations with preservation architect, Donna Weiss Priebe. June 2004.

<sup>6</sup> It is almost certain that all the wooden elements in the factory date to the original construction of the factory building.

<sup>7</sup> Insulation is placed between the plywood inner surface and the brick-clad outer wall.

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cooking wing does not have a second story). Despite the lack of partition walls, not every part of this story is uniform. What is uniform is the floor, which is plywood covered with a non-slip material, and the ceiling, which consists of wood boards that serve as the subfloor of the third story's floor and these boards are supported by 2x10" wood joists. These joists are supported by two large steel I-beams that run from the building's northwest end to its southeast end, and by an additional intersecting pair that run from southwest to northeast and support the ceiling of the ell. These sets of beams are supported by two rows of posts made of steel I-beams that are placed on raised concrete footings, there being eight pairs of posts in the main room and three pairs in the ell. The walls of the northwest room, like the room below it, are clad in white glazed brick, while the walls of the rest of this story are bare brick of the same color as the exterior walls of the building. In addition, much of this story's northwest room is filled with machinery associated with the canning process.

### Third Story

The main northwest room of the third story and the first story's shipping room are the most altered building's interior spaces. This northwest room occupies the northwest two-thirds of the main block, its raised plywood floor is clad in non-slip material, and, with the exception of its still bare brick northwest wall, all its other walls are now clad in white-painted sheet material, as are the room's ceilings. This room is open all the way up to the building's main roof and to the still taller gable roof ceiling of the monitor that crowns the roof above this space. Almost filling this room is a large one-and-a-half-story-tall steel superstructure supported on steel I-beams that was associated with the factory's manufacturing process.

The third story's remaining L-plan space has wood board floors, bare brick walls, and is open all the way up to the bare boards that underlie the main roof of the building. This portion of the roof is supported by two pairs of 2" by 12" wood joists, which are, in turn, supported by five pairs of wood posts.

### Summary

In the years following the factory building's major reconstruction in 1943-44, several small additions and other elements have been added to the southwest and northeast-facing elevations of the building. Many of the original window and door openings have either been filled with concrete block or plywood. It is the intent of the current owners, however, to demolish these later additions and return the building to its 1944 appearance.

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**Significance**

The Fuhremann Canning Co. Factory Building is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under National Register (NR) Criterion A. More specifically, this building is nominated because of its associations with the NR significance area of Industry, a theme identified in the State of Wisconsin's *Cultural Resource Management Plan* (CRMP). Research centered on evaluating this building using the Fruit and Vegetable Products section of the CRMP's Industry Theme section.<sup>8</sup> The results of this research is detailed below and confirms that the Fuhremann Canning Company Factory is locally significant under Criterion A as a fine, largely intact example of the type of factory that was typically associated with the processing and shipping of canned vegetables and especially canned peas, a highly important Wisconsin specialty crop. This building is representative of the evolution of such factories in Wisconsin from their beginnings at the turn of the twentieth century up to the end of World War II and it is now the only surviving historic resource associated with this industry in Dane County. It is also the only surviving historic resource associated with the industrial history of the city of Sun Prairie. The Fuhremann Canning Company Factory played an important part in the economic and social life of Sun Prairie and its relatively high degree of integrity allows it to successfully portray the important role that the canning industry played in this city throughout the twentieth century. The period of significance begins with the original construction of the current building in 1912 and ends with the end of the historic period in 1954. During these years, the building was continuously updated and altered, reflecting its continued use by the canning industry.

The original factory on this site was built in 1900 for the Sun Prairie Canning Co. This was replaced by the earliest incarnation of the present building, which was constructed in 1912 for the locally owned Fuhremann Canning Co. This was essentially a three-story and two-story, wood frame, wood-clad building. In subsequent years the factory passed through other owners and it was steadily expanded, the expansion consisting principally of the construction of additional buildings on the factory site (no longer extant). In 1929, the factory was purchased from the Sittville Canning Company by the Oconomowoc Canning Co., based in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, which was already operating factories in that city and in the northern Wisconsin communities of Marshfield and Medford. During the next ten years this company either bought or constructed additional plants in the nearby Dane County communities of DeForest (non-extant) and Waunakee (non-extant), and in the northern Wisconsin community of Stratford (non-extant). By the end of World War II it was one of the largest independent canning companies in Wisconsin. In 1943, the Company began the reconstruction of the factory building in its Sun Prairie complex. This work was completed in 1944. The Oconomowoc Canning

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<sup>8</sup> Wyatt, Barbara (Ed.). *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin*. Madison: State Historic Preservation Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986, vol. 2 (Industry), pp. 11-1 – 11-13).

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Co. purchased Stokely-Van Camp in 1983 and in 1985 changed its name to Stokely USA. Chiquita Brands International purchased Stokely in 1997. Through all the changes, canning continued in Sun Prairie until the plant finally closed in December of 2000, 100 years after the first canning factory on the site had been completed.

### **History**

A general overview of Wisconsin's important historic role in the nation's canned food industry is contained in the CRMP. A far more extensive history of both the industry and of the individual companies that comprised it is contained in *The Story of Wisconsin's Great Canning Industry* by Fred A. Stare, an outstanding general history of the canning industry in Wisconsin.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the historic context that follows deals primarily with the history of the canning industry in Dane County and other nearby communities and especially with the history of the Sun Prairie Canning Company.

### **Fruit and Vegetable Products**

The early history of the canning industry in Wisconsin is set forth in the CRMP:

The processing of fruit and vegetables in Wisconsin, particularly canning, provided the state with an extensive, small-scale industry linked directly to its rich agricultural development. Fruit and vegetable processing began in the last quarter of the nineteenth century; by the early decades of the twentieth century, Wisconsin had become one of the country's leading states in fruit and vegetable processing. The canning of vegetables was the most prominent processing industry.

With the settlement of Wisconsin farmlands in the nineteenth century, small garden plots of vegetables appeared uniformly across the state, increasing proportionately with the spread of settlement. By 1880, Door, Kewaunee, Sheboygan, Manitowoc, and other lakeside counties had developed and early and relatively substantial cash crop of peas and beans for fresh-market sale. By the late nineteenth century, industrialists began to consider the possibility of canning the products for resale in local and distant markets. Nationally significant concentrations of large-scale production did not appear until the turn of the century, however, when commercial production surged in the central counties of Columbia, Dodge, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, and Waushara, where the light soil and cool climate proved conducive to raising canning crops.

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<sup>9</sup> Stare, Fred A. *The Story of Wisconsin's Great Canning Industry*. Madison: The Wisconsin Cannery Association, 1949.

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The earliest Wisconsin cannery was established in 1887, when Philadelphia seedman Andrew Landreth, impressed with the quality of commercial peas grown in the lakeshore counties, purchased land in Manitowoc and built a factory to process the peas that he grew. Although not early by Midwestern standards (other states had canneries 10 to 15 years earlier), the Landreth plant and a branch operation at Sheboygan that started in 1890 set an important precedent in the state. The second pioneer canning concern in Wisconsin was that of William Larsen of Green Bay. Originally engaged in the wholesale produce business, Larsen organized his canning operation in the Fort Howard area in 1890.

In the early development period of the canning industry in Wisconsin and for a number of years to follow, pea canners had to plant and harvest their own crops from land either owned by the firms or leased from area farmers because of the lack of interest among farmers in raising peas. As the industry grew and farmers became convinced of the economics of raising vegetable crops for sale to canneries, many of the vast company-owned farms were replaced by private suppliers. Early in the industry's development, the University of Wisconsin's College of Agriculture assumed an active part in the development and encouragement of the canning industry in the state, offering scientific and economic expertise on a broad range of agricultural topics.

The availability of laborers was an important consideration of early plant operation. Out of necessity, canning plants had to locate in areas where a dependable, annual supply of seasonal laborers existed. Early operations, such as Larsen's and Landreth's, regularly hired more than 1000 men, women, and children during the picking season to harvest the crop and prepare it for canning in the factory (e.g. shelling peas, husking corn). All operations were done by hand. In later years, mechanical devices, such as the pea viner, dramatically decreased the industry's dependence on seasonal labor.

The early concerns of Landreth and Larsen struggled through their first years of production with crude machinery, a dependence on hand labor, and an overall lack of experience, but they ultimately became successful and professional promoters of the canning industry. Private investors soon began to press for the establishment of vegetable canneries across the state. By 1900, approximately 15 canning plants had been established in the state. About one-half of these were located in the fertile area bounded by Lake Winnebago, Lake Michigan, and Green Bay. From that early core, the industry spread outward first to the south and southwest where factories were scattered along a corridor stretching from the southern tip of Lake Winnebago to



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the point where the Wisconsin River turns westward. In later years, the industry spread into the northwestern areas of the state, avoiding the sandy central area and dense woodlands of the extreme north.<sup>10</sup>

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Wisconsin was in the midst of its first "boom" period of cannery development. In Dane County the enthusiasm generated by industry promoters first bore fruit in Sun Prairie.

Sun Prairie is one of the oldest settled places in Dane County, having been settled as early as 1839. The story of the naming of this place is part of the folklore of the county and involves some of the county's earliest residents. The decision of the first Wisconsin territorial assembly to locate the permanent seat of the future state government at Madison resulted in Augustus A. Bird being elected acting commissioner for the erection of suitable buildings for the assembly and for the officers of the territorial government. On May 26, 1837, Bird began the overland trek from Milwaukee to Madison, seventy miles to the west, with a crew of 45 men, including his brother, Charles H. Bird. Constant rain and an almost total lack of sunshine made the nine-day journey miserable.

At length, as they emerged on the borders of the beautiful prairie, about two miles east of where the village of Sun Prairie now [1877] stands, the sun shown forth in all its brightness, and illuminated the scene before them as with a halo of glory. The contrast which this beautiful vision presented to the gloom with which they had been surrounded was so great, that they greeted it with a shout, and almost involuntarily bivouacked upon its borders, christening the locality "Sun Prairie," which name they carved into an oak tree which stood near by; for many years this tree bore upon its breast, in rude letters, the inscription "Sun Prairie."<sup>11</sup>

Two years later, Charles Bird returned to this spot and built a residence there, becoming the first settler of the future township and village of Sun Prairie. Bird organized the township of Sun Prairie in 1839, which initially included all that land that now constitutes Sun Prairie, York, Medina and Bristol townships. Bird spent his first year alone, but in 1840 he was joined by Thomas Marks and 1841 saw the arrival of seven more families. The next few years saw still more families arrive. "In the year 1844, William H. Angell purchased five acres of land from Mr. Bird, being the first lot of ground sold in the present village of Sun Prairie. The idea was then conceived of founding here a village. The first

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<sup>10</sup> Wyatt, Barbara (Ed.). Op. Cit., pp. 11-1 – 11-2.

<sup>11</sup> Crosse, Dr. C. G. "Sun Prairie." Included in: *Madison, Dane County and Surroundings*. Madison: Wm. J. Parks & Co., 1877, pp. 313-327.

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step taken was to secure a post office."<sup>12</sup> The original name chosen was Rome, but this was replaced within a month with that of Sun Prairie. William H. Angell was the new postmaster and his first term in that office lasted until 1850.

Coinciding with the development of Sun Prairie was the settlement of the surrounding territory by the area's first farmers. Within a few years Sun Prairie was ringed with farms and small crossroads settlements located at Deansville, North and East Bristol, and Pierceville sprang up to serve them. Gradually, an agricultural district came into being with Sun Prairie at its core. This circumstance gave the young village a continuing reason for existence and it was the foundation upon which its future growth was built.

The first regular attempt at merchandising was in the fall of 1845, Edwin Brayton opening a small stock of goods in the building erected by Mr. Angell for his carpenter shop. Mr. Brayton continued to do business for about one year. In June, 1848, Silas Smith came to the place and rented the place formerly occupied by Mr. Brayton, and opened a stock of general merchandise. Fredrick Starr was successor to Mr. Smith, and after a brief business career, the former was followed by Thomas White. In 1859, White was succeeded by William & Maloney, who soon established a successful trade, of which George Maloney is the present [1880] representative. Patrick Doyle was the first "village smith," and opened his shop here in the fall of 1846.<sup>13</sup>

Others started the various small retail and service enterprises that were features of the village life of that day; a school was built as early as 1842, Methodist and Congregational churches were built, and both the American House hotel and the Sun Prairie House hotel were established in 1850. Gradually, Sun Prairie took on the appearance of a typical small rural distribution center of that day and it might have continued like this indefinitely but for the ambition of its settlers and the coming of the railroad.

In the year 1859, a line of railroad having been projected from Milwaukee to the Baraboo Valley was completed as far as Watertown. The line was located and graded about three miles south of the village of Sun Prairie. But the route was afterward changed, and on the 24th day of September, 1859, the railroad was completed to the last mentioned place. Then followed a period of active business prosperity and apparently a golden opportunity for building up, on a permanent basis, a village of considerable importance and magnitude. For ten years, Sun Prairie was the western terminus of the

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<sup>12</sup> Butterfield, Consul W. *History of Dane County, Wisconsin*. Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1880. p. 833.

<sup>13</sup> Butterfield, Consul W. *Op. Cit.* p. 834. Historic records housed in the City of Sun Prairie Historical Library and Museum indicate that Brayton opened his store in 1840.

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Milwaukee and Baraboo Valley Railroad and was one of the largest and most flourishing inland grain markets in the State.<sup>14</sup>

One result of this period of prosperity and of the population growth that accompanied it was that Sun Prairie was incorporated as a village in 1868. Within a year, however, the economic picture changed:

In 1868, construction commenced on the railroad line to Madison, with the line reaching Madison in 1869, precipitating a severe economic decline in the village. Farmers and grain merchants no longer had to cart their grain to Sun Prairie to obtain low shipment rates. Sun Prairie merchants accustomed to the trade the farmers brought to their businesses had to retrench. If the railroad bypassed the village as proposed in the original plans, the village site could have been abandoned and moved south of the marsh. Col. Angell and community businessmen successfully lobbied the railroad not to abandon Sun Prairie. The new railroad line remained north of the marsh. Col. Wm. Angell constructed the first grain elevator in the new rail corridor. Not until the construction of tobacco warehouses in the 1890s, did Sun Prairie regain prominence as an agricultural shipping center. Merchants constructed six tobacco warehouses [non-extant] on railroad land. Several cigar makers also set up small factories in Sun Prairie.

The economic problems in Sun Prairie during the 1870s were reflected in the censuses of 1870, 1880, and 1890. The 1870 census listed 1610 residents in the township of Sun Prairie and 626 in the newly incorporated village of Sun Prairie. In 1880 the population of the township of Sun Prairie was 923. The population of the village in 1880 declined to 597. The next decade, the 1890s, witnessed another slight decline in population with the census counting only 912 residents in the township. The 1890 census of the village showed a gain in population in the village, with the population rising to 704 residents.<sup>15</sup>

Part of this population increase can be attributed to the growing success of village businesses. These businesses catered primarily to the increasingly mechanized farmers in the surrounding township, many of whom were by 1890 reaping the benefits of farming on some of the richest farmland in the nation. By the late 1890s, nearly all of the principal commercial enterprises in the village were associated with agriculture in some way and agriculture would continue to dominate the economic life of Sun Prairie for much of the first half of the twentieth century as well.

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<sup>14</sup> Butterfield, Consul W. Op. Cit. p. 834.

<sup>15</sup> Klein, Peter Michael. *Sun Prairie's People, Part 1: Shadows and Dreams*. Sun Prairie; Sun Prairie Historical Library and Museum, 1993, pp. 63-64.

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Nearly all of these nineteenth century commercial enterprises, which consisted mostly of grain elevators and tobacco warehouses, were located on land that bordered the railroad tracks, which by the 1890s belonged to the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific system (a.k.a. the Milwaukee Road).<sup>16</sup> In 1899, another structure of importance was constructed adjacent to the tracks as a direct result of the village's decision to build a municipal waterworks system. This system, which was completed in the same year, resulted in the construction of a stone water tower (extant, NRHP 4/16/2000), located at the junction of Center and Church streets, and a brick-clad pumphouse building (non-extant), located on the corner formed by Market Street, Lincoln Street and the railroad tracks immediately adjacent to the site of the still to be constructed canning factory.

The completion of the waterworks project may also have acted as a spur to those in the Sun Prairie area that were interested in the formation of a canning factory in the village, since a plentiful, reliable supply of water is an essential part of the canning process. What is certain is that in 1900 the Sun Prairie Canning Company was formed by a group of local farmers and businessmen.

A major addition to the farming economy involved the creation of a canning company in Sun Prairie. The canning company organized a cooperative venture between local farmers and businessmen. The businessmen knew that increased prosperity for the farmers would percolate throughout the business community. The farmers needed additional markets for their produce. To gain entry into these markets, food had to be preserved or processed for shipment.

The canning company stockholders elected the following officers and board members: L. V. Lewis, president; Nathan S. Davison, vice-president; Thomas C. Hayden, treasurer; Gil M. Smith, Secretary; additional board members included William W. Birkinbine, John F. Dott, and Walter Dunphy. The company opened an eleven thousand dollar factory in 1900, with financing through Farmers and Merchants Bank of Sun Prairie. The capital stock was set at fifteen thousand dollars. A contract was signed with the Hasting [Industrial] Company of Chicago for the necessary machinery.<sup>17</sup>

An article in the local newspaper gave still more details about the projected scope of the company's operations.

<sup>16</sup> None of the buildings associated with these enterprises have survived except for a now unused grain elevator located on the south side of Linnerud Street at the foot of Bristol Street that is believed to have been built in the early twentieth century as a replacement for an earlier grain elevator on the same site.

<sup>17</sup> Klein, Peter Michael. Op. Cit., p. 86.

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The plant will have a capacity of twenty-thousand cans per day and the season lasts about three months, furnishing employment for forty men and sixty women and girls. It is estimated that two hundred acres of corn and one hundred acres of tomatoes can be handled easily, and contracts will be made with the farmers for that amount within a short time if possible. The stockholders will be given the first opportunity to furnish this produce. The plant will be run on a co-operative system and payment will be made four times a year.<sup>18</sup>

The factory building itself was ready for processing by July of that year and its design was very much in line with other typical early examples as described in the CRMP.

The majority of these [early] firms were housed in plants consisting of one or two buildings. Of simple, frame construction, the narrow one to two story factories commonly featured gabled roofs with ventilators and front or side receiving/loading areas. Building dimensions ranged from the 36' x 60' Fond du Lac plant to the large 200' x 50' factory at the Algoma Packing Co. in Kewaunee County.<sup>19</sup>

Early photos in the possession of the Sun Prairie Historical Library and Museum and a Sanborn-Perris map printed in 1904-05 show that the original Sun Prairie factory building was located in almost the exact same spot as the present building and that it was positioned so as to be placed perpendicular to the adjacent, angled railroad tracks.<sup>20</sup> This factory had a one-and-one-half story, 35-foot-wide x 90-foot-long main block with clapboard siding, a gable roof and stone foundation walls that enclosed a full, partially exposed basement story. There were also several one-story additions added to its southeast, northeast, and northwest-facing elevations that gave the overall building a length of 140-feet and a width of 50-feet. There was also a brick one-story boiler room wing attached to its southwest-facing elevation.

Expectations for the new plant were high, as is usual in an industry's boom period, and the local newspaper published numerous articles about the plant and its progress during its first year.<sup>21</sup> The end of the first year of operation showed that the plant had been a success in many ways and the economic

<sup>18</sup> *Sun Prairie Countryman*. February 15, 1900, p. 1. This article is also reproduced in its entirety in Fred A. Stare's book cited above, on pp. 574-575.

<sup>19</sup> Wyatt, Barbara (Ed.). *Op. Cit.*, pp. 11-2 – 11-3.

<sup>20</sup> Fire Insurance Map of Sun Prairie, Wisconsin. New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Co., 1904-05.

<sup>21</sup> *Sun Prairie Countryman*. July 5, 1900, p. 1; July 12, 1900, p. 1; August 23, 1900, p. 1, and September 13, 1900. These articles are also reproduced in their entirety in Fred A. Stare's book cited above, on pp. 574-576.

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impact on the village, which had a population of about 1100 at the time, was significant. The following year, however, crop failures and other problems pushed the company into receivership and it did not go into operation again until 1905, by which time the Sun Prairie bank, which was owned by Peter Batz & Sons, had taken over ownership. The Batz family operated the plant until the end of 1908, when it was sold to Jacob Fuhremann, Sr. Fuhremann had previously begun a canning factory in Oostburg, Wisconsin in 1901 and had operated it until selling his interest in 1908. Fuhremann's subsequent ownership of the Sun Prairie plant was a success from the start.

At that time [1908] there were two lines of peas and one of corn. Their first pack in 1909 was about 35,000 cases of peas and 10,000 cases of corn. In the fall of 1912, an entirely new plant at Sun Prairie was built and there was added one additional line of peas, then operating two lines of No. 2 peas, one line of No. 1 tin peas and one line of No. 2 tin corn. The pack from there on was increased to about 65,000 cases of peas, and about 20,000 cases of corn.<sup>22</sup>

Historic photos of the new 1912 plant in the possession of the Sun Prairie Historical Library and Museum and a Sanborn-Perris map printed in December of 1912 show the 1912 plant in its current location and that it was positioned so as to be placed perpendicular to the adjacent, angled railroad tracks.<sup>23</sup> This factory began life with a two-part main block. The northwest end of this block was three-stories-tall, 50-feet-wide x 50-feet-long, and its first story was devoted to packing, its second story to picking, and its third story to grading. The southeast end of this block was two-stories-tall, was also 50-feet-wide x 50-feet-long, and its first story was devoted to packing and its second story to storage. A two-story wing measuring 80-feet-long x 30-feet-wide was attached to the southeast end of the main block, giving the overall building an L-plan, and this wing was used for storage and shipping. The entire building was clad in clapboards, its three main elements all had simple gable roofs, and it also had a brick one-story boiler room wing attached to its southwest-facing elevation.

In the meantime, the Fuhremann family had relocated from Oostburg to Sun Prairie and in 1916 two of the sons started a second canning company in the nearby Dane County community of DeForest. The Fuhremanns continued to run their Sun Prairie factory successfully until 1920, when they sold it to the Stittville Canning Co. of Utica, New York.<sup>24</sup> The Stittville Company then sent their own manager out from Utica to run the plant, which again appears to have been operated successfully under its new management. During the Stittville Company's ownership, additional changes were made to the factory, which included increasing the height of the two-story southeastern portion of the main block to a full

<sup>22</sup> Stare, Fred A. Op. Cit., p. 419.

<sup>23</sup> Fire Insurance Map of Sun Prairie, Wisconsin. New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Co, 1912.

<sup>24</sup> Stare, Fred A. Op. Cit., pp. 419-420.

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three stories and adding a 55-foot-long x 45-foot-wide, one-story, frame wing to the northeast end of the main block that gave the factory a T-plan configuration. They also constructed a new frame husking shed (non-extant) located just to the east of the factory, a large 100-foot x 100-foot two-part brick-clad packing house (non-extant) that lay adjacent to the railroad tracks just to the northeast of the factory, a small one-story frame office building (non-extant) located just to the north of the factory, and an additional 135-foot-long x 60-foot-wide frame one-story warehouse building (non-extant) located just to the north of the larger brick warehouse.<sup>25</sup> In 1925, the Stittville Company leased the Sun Prairie plant back to the Fuhremanns and finally, in the fall of 1928, the plant was sold to the Oconomowoc Canning Company, which was to manage it thereafter.<sup>26</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the Oconomowoc Canning Co. already owned canning plants in Oconomowoc, Marshfield and Medford at the time of their Sun Prairie acquisition and this continued expansion on the part of the Company was very much in tune with the industry-wide trend towards consolidation of ownership. This trend reflected the fact that by 1929 the canning industry in Wisconsin had built almost too many factories. By way of example, in 1900 there had been just 15 canning factories in the state. By 1910, however, there were 49, by 1920, 126, and by 1930, 169.<sup>27</sup> Also contributing to this trend was the fact that roads were now much better and the trucks that were now using them were proving to be a reliable and economically viable method of transporting crops from the farm to the factory. Consequently, the original need to have a factory located as close as possible to the place where its crops were grown had gradually diminished and it would continue to diminish throughout the twentieth century.

In 1929, the year following their Sun Prairie purchase, the Oconomowoc Company also purchased the DeForest canning factory from the Fuhremanns, which the company continued to operate until January of 1938, when the plant was destroyed by fire. This plant was not rebuilt, however, "as the production facilities at Sun Prairie were increased to take care of the acreage formerly handled by DeForest."<sup>28</sup> In 1930, the Company purchased yet another canning company, this being the one located at Stratford. The Stratford plant was located close to the company's Marshfield and Medford factories, and, like the DeForest plant, it had also been founded in 1923.<sup>29</sup> In 1940, the Company entered into a five-year

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<sup>25</sup> Fire Insurance Map of Sun Prairie, Wisconsin. New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Co., 1928. The southwest half of this packing house building was two-stories-tall and the northeast half was one-story-tall.

<sup>26</sup> Stare, Fred A. Op. Cit., p. 509.

<sup>27</sup> Wyatt, Barbara (Ed.). Op. Cit., p. 11-3.

<sup>28</sup> Stare, Fred A. Op. Cit., p. 509.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, pp. 573-574. See also: Stratford Centennial Book Committee. *Stratford Centennial: 1891-1991*. Stratford, WI: 1991, pp. 212-213 (illustrated). The Stratford plant was demolished in 1980.

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lease to operate the Poynette Canning Company plant located in Columbia County just to the north of Dane County, a plant that it subsequently purchased in 1947.<sup>30</sup> The Company acquired just one more factory before the start of World War II, this being the plant located in the village of Waunakee in Dane County that it purchased in January of 1941 which was subsequently demolished in 2003.<sup>31</sup>

World War II

The entry of the United States into World War II at the end of 1941 placed enormous stress on Wisconsin's canning industry, just as it did on every other facet of civilian life. Practically overnight the civilian population of the country had to adjust to the overwhelming new needs of the military, which required increased production of every kind. At the same time, these new demands were accompanied by a corresponding reduction in the manpower necessary to meet them since millions of the nation's men either volunteered or were drafted into the armed services. These stresses and strains were felt in every community in the country and Sun Prairie was no exception.

The war effort had an instant effect upon the business and manufacturing establishments in the village. Rationing became a major focus of daily life. A three gallon gas ration was tried on a trial basis in the eastern states; this ration was extended nationally on December 1, 1942. By April 1943, coffee, sugar, canned goods, meats, fats, and cheese were rationed. The rubber ration reduced civilian consumption of rubber, primarily for tires, by eighty percent. The shoe ration allowed three pairs of shoes for each civilian. Car dealers could not sell new cars and trucks for civilian use.<sup>32</sup>

The manpower shortage created by the war effort made life especially difficult for industries that had large but short term needs for laborers, such as the canning industry. It needs to be remembered that canning factories operated for at most just three or four months out of the year, from the end of the harvest in July or August up until the time the canning and shipping process was completed in September or October. The industry's labor needs had traditionally been met by hiring men and women for the summer months; teenagers were also frequently employed in the factories. The coming of the war, however, drastically reduced the pool of men available for the work, leaving the industry

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<sup>30</sup> Stare, Fred A. Op. Cit., pp. 524-525.

<sup>31</sup> Stare, Fred A. Op. Cit., pp. 596-597. About the Waunakee plant Stare stated as follows: "Waunakee is the sixth plant which has been acquired by the Oconomowoc Canning Company group and is the last of their purchases. This operation, in conjunction with Oconomowoc Canning plants at Sun Prairie and Poynette, in nearby territory, gives this company one of the largest agricultural growing areas for peas and corn in the state, and in one of the finest sections for quality production."

<sup>32</sup> Klein, Peter Michael. Op. Cit., p. 128.



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short-handed at a time when demand was growing ever greater. The sense of urgency this situation created can be seen in an article printed in the Sun Prairie newspaper just before the harvest of 1943.

We are facing a grave food crisis here in America. But we are going to lick it in the Democratic American Way. We have a canning plant in Sun Prairie. It is charged by our government with the responsibility of producing food for our Army, our Navy, and our allies. The war requirements of canned food are enormous. Because such foods keep well and can be delivered with all their nourishment preserved direct to front-line fighters on land or on sea, canned goods are fighting foods.

There are not the normal number of people to harvest the canning crop or to can them in the cannery. So we are faced with a responsibility in Sun Prairie of seeing that these crops from our fertile fields are harvested and that they are canned and shipped.

There, in crushed, overrun Europe and even in Germany and Italy, the people, as human as we, are forced at the bayonet's point. Here, we are only asked to help. There, our pay would be a blow with a lash and a pitiful crust of bread. Here, we will be paid at regular rates for our work. For we live in free, Democratic America.

But we must be prepared, if we merit our freedom, to sacrifice our convenience, our usual pleasure, to suffer backache and blistered hands. That, at least, we can do and will do. The time is coming and will come soon when able-bodied men, women, boys and girls in Sun Prairie will be asked to do their share in harvesting and canning our local crops. We cannot and will not fail.<sup>33</sup>

Not surprisingly, such appeals to village patriotism produced spectacular results and the canning of the pea crop of 1943, the largest on record up to that time, can truly be said to have been a community effort.

The Oconomowoc Canning company is a busy place this week where 400 and 500 workers are being employed daily in field and factory taking care of the ripening pea crop. The company has found a whole-hearted cooperation from the people in the village and almost every unemployed person able to work is there to work, and many who have regular jobs are working during their leisure hours. Outside help too, has been made available. Between 30 and 50

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<sup>33</sup> *Sun Prairie Countryman*. April 9, 1943, p. 1.

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soldiers from Truax Field [in Madison] have come daily to help, and employees of the Oscar Mayer plant [also in Madison] have come out and have worked part of the night, on different nights.<sup>34</sup>

With the 1943 pea canning completed the Company then embarked on a plan to remodel the Sun Prairie factory that had first been approved by the State Industrial Commission late in 1942. These plans were developed by the Stegerwald Lumber Co. of Sun Prairie and consisted primarily of placing the existing clapboard-clad frame construction factory building within a new brick-walled shell that rested on a new poured concrete foundation.<sup>35</sup> Such a sizable remodeling project was a rarity during the war, given the very strict limits that were placed on the allocation of building materials, and it was probably allowed only because of the great strategic importance that was attached to food production. A brief description of the project appeared in the local newspaper at the beginning of the work.

The Oconomowoc Canning Co. are rebuilding or rather building an entirely new main factory building. The interior of the building is not for the present being disturbed while new brick walls that will enclose the entire factory are made of Chicago common brick and lined with white glazed brick. The work is in charge of the Stegerwald Lumber Company, and is being planned so that it will not interfere with the coming corn pack.

The cement for the foundation has been laid and work on the walls begun. Work will be continued on the interior of the main building and on the other building until an entirely new factory will replace the old one.<sup>36</sup>

The Sanborn-Perris map of Sun Prairie that is dated 1943 depicts the new plant as being shown 'from plans,' meaning that construction had not yet begun but was expected soon. The footprint of the plant shown on the map is identical with that of the 1912 plant and also with the plant as it exists today, the principal difference between the new and the old plants being that the new one is to be clad in brick rather than wood. Also shown on this map are the other buildings of the complex, including the brick warehouses located along the railroad tracks to the northeast, which had been extended by an additional 140-feet since the 1928 map was published.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Sun Prairie Countryman*. July 1, 1943, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Wisconsin Division of Safety & Buildings. Building plans correspondence (e-files), 1914-1998. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives: Series No. 2284, Box No. 216, File No. 23804.

<sup>36</sup> *Sun Prairie Countryman*. August 12, 1943, p. 8.

<sup>37</sup> Fire Insurance Map of Sun Prairie, Wisconsin. New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Co., 1928 (1943). The population of Sun Prairie at this time was 1625.

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By April of 1944, preparations for the coming canning crop were underway and Dane County was already feeling the pressure that accompanied hopes for a successful wartime season.

Joseph C. Adler, Chairman of the AAA committee points out that the responsibility for meeting the national goal for canning peas and sweet corn rests heavily upon Wisconsin and Dane County farmers. "Wisconsin," he says, "is the leading state in the production of canned peas and both peas and corn have always been important cash crops in Dane county." For 1944, Government requirements will take the first 5 million cases that roll off our nation's processing lines. This 5 million case figure represents ½ million cases more than Wisconsin's entire 1939 pea pack, according to Adler.<sup>38</sup>

Fortunately, by spring of 1944 the remodeling of the Sun Prairie factory had been completed and the essentially completely new factory was ready for its first season.

Activities at the local plant of the Oconomowoc Canning Co. for the 1944 season are underway. The season's pea pack began Monday and is now in full swing in one of the most complete and modern factories in the state.

One year ago the factory was undergoing reconstruction toward the goal it has now reached, and was only partially completed at the opening of the 1943 packing season. Now the buildings are completed, and with the streamline installations of modern machinery and up-to-the-minute equipment, all arranged for maximum efficiency and ideal working conditions for the employees, the plant presents a most attractive appearance. The landscaping around the office building and the general cleanliness of the grounds also enhance the whole plant.<sup>39</sup>

That the enlarged capacity of the factory was needed became especially apparent as the 1945 pea and corn crop neared maturity.

Canners in the Madison district have contracted for the largest acreage of peas and corn in their history. This means that under normal growing conditions, they will have more peas and corn to can than ever before, according to J. E. Roberts, district manager of the United States Employment Service [U.S.E.S.].

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<sup>38</sup> *Sun Prairie Countryman*. April 13, 1944, p. 8.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, June 22, 1944, p. 4.

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Although the canners have carefully planned their planting of peas so that the crops should mature at different intervals, and only as fast as canners can process them, the weather this year has upset this planning. The early plantings have been retarded by unusually cool weather so that the entire crop is likely to mature at the same time. This would be a repetition of the conditions that prevailed in 1943 when canners were faced with the problem of processing an enormous amount of peas in an unusually short period of time.

Mr. Roberts said that he anticipated a great demand for workers in canneries, and he hopes that people who are able to do so will plan to take work in the canneries this season. The employment office manager pointed out that even greater quantities of food are needed now that the European war is over since liberated countries will not be able to produce enough food for their own needs. Mr. Roberts said that requests have already been made by the U.S.E.S. for prisoners of war to assist with food processing this summer. However, he explained that since V-E day the flow of prisoners from Europe has ceased and there is now no assurance that the canners will get the number of prisoners requested.<sup>40</sup>

The last paragraph of this article is one of only three mentions made in the Sun Prairie newspaper during World War II of what was then a little known and little talked about aspect of wartime life in Wisconsin; the fact that there were many thousands of mostly German prisoners of war (PW's) interred in the this state from 1942 until 1946. Wisconsin's share of these prisoners was only a small portion of the nation's total number, which is estimated to have included over 5000 Japanese, 371,000 Germans, and 51,000 Italians, as well as members of assorted other nationalities. These prisoners were principally housed at what were called "base camps," most of which were part of military bases located throughout the country. One of the first of these camps was located in a portion of Camp McCoy in Monroe County, Wisconsin, at an abandoned Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp, which began receiving prisoners in September of 1942. Another base camp that had a major impact on southern Wisconsin was located at Fort Sheridan in Illinois. From these camps, prisoners were farmed out to smaller "branch camps" that were located throughout the state. These camps were typically occupied on a seasonal basis and many were in effect tent city type camps, although some occupied more permanent quarters.

An excellent recent book detailing the Wisconsin part of this history is *Stalag Wisconsin*. In it, author Betty Cowley estimates that "at the peak, Wisconsin housed nearly 3500 Japanese, 5000 Germans, and nearly 500 Koreans at Camp McCoy. In addition to those staggering numbers, Fort Sheridan also

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<sup>40</sup> *Sun Prairie Countryman*. May 31, 1945, p. 1.

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placed nearly 13,000 more PW's seasonally or year round in 38 "branch" camps scattered across Wisconsin during the war."<sup>41</sup> Ironically, these prisoners were to prove to be of enormous value to the nation's war effort and to Wisconsin and Sun Prairie in particular.

With Camp McCoy a base camp, and Fort Sheridan, Camp Ellis, and Camp Custer nearby, Wisconsin gained a unique opportunity to utilize these prisoners to fill severe labor shortages. PW's became especially useful in the seasonal employment of our agricultural industry. Patriotism brought on by the war as well as a much less skeptical attitude of the media of the day encouraged cooperation with the U.S. government in keeping a very low profile of this enemy among us. Therefore, little was reported or printed about the PW work camps appearing across the state. Furthermore, the military located most of these "branch camps" in rural settings which helped to keep knowledge of and direct contact with the PW's to a minimum. In fact most Americans were unaware of their presence.

The work of PW's at these seasonal branch camps filled the labor shortage brought on by our men being called into the military and others who moved to take the better paying industrial jobs in the cities. As the war dragged on, the deferment system tightened and the labor shortages grew worse. Since the Geneva Convention rules on the treatment of PW's allowed prisoners to be put to work, our military quickly responded with the "branch" camps system and set them up primarily in agricultural areas where seasonal workers were impossible to hire. In many areas of the state PW's literally saved the crops. Because of the agricultural employment needs of Wisconsin, the state housed over three times as many PW's as neighboring Minnesota.

The results of this effort became tremendously successful. The PW's filled vital labor shortages, working primarily in agriculture, lumber, and some industry. In Wisconsin they were contracted to the canning companies to help harvest and process crops that would have gone to waste, to bale hemp, and to work in nurseries, tanneries, dairies, and some industrial factories. Even as the war in Europe ended, local farmers and factories pleaded with the government to keep the prisoners for the entire 1945 harvest season. The work of the PW's also relieved many American military personnel for other war jobs as the prisoners filled clerical, maintenance, kitchen, laundry, construction and road building jobs at the base and branch camps and other military installations.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Cowley, Betty. *Stalag Wisconsin: Inside WWII prisoner-of-war camps*. Oregon, WI.: Badger Books, 2002, p. 12.

<sup>42</sup> Cowley, Betty. Op. Cit., pp. 12-13.

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The enormous labor requirements of the 1944 pea crop harvest coupled with the shortage of available workers had created a situation that was tailor-made for the introduction of PW's into Wisconsin's labor supply.

This [1944] was also the year that many Wisconsin canners, excepting for local boys and girls of high school age and housewives and elderly men, were almost solely dependent on prisoners of war for field and factory. Approximately 10,000 former soldiers of Rommel's African Corps were assigned to help in the harvesting and processing of canning crops in the Mid-West, 3259 being in Wisconsin. Under supervision of the Sixth Service Command Military Police based on Camp Grant, Illinois, housed and fed from a number of temporary prison camps in whatever buildings were available in suitable locations, the PW's under close guard were distributed to surrounding canneries and farms.<sup>43</sup>

The labor situation for the state's canners in 1945 was, if anything, even worse than the year before and once again PW's were utilized as a labor force. By July of that year nearly every cannery in the state was making use of PW's and the Oconomowoc Canning Company was no exception. PW's from the branch camp at Lodi in Columbus County worked at its plants in DeForest and Waunakee and PW's from the branch camp at Waterloo served Sun Prairie. Because of wartime censorship and for other reasons, the arrival and presence of the PW's in Sun Prairie was never mentioned in the Sun Prairie newspapers, the only notice that appeared being a generic article entitled "Don't Get 'Chummy' With P.O.W. Workers, Army Orders."<sup>44</sup> Never-the-less, the village was quite aware of the prisoners in their midst.

Later, [1945] the government transported German prisoners of war to Sun Prairie...and the entire plant was surrounded by a high fence. According to Tony Delwiche, manager of the plant during the war, the community didn't worry about a prisoner breakout, "After all, where would they go?"<sup>45</sup>

The end of the war in 1945 coincided with the end of the 1945 pea pack and the following year saw a gradual return to normalcy in Sun Prairie and elsewhere. Even by this late date, however, there were still only two real industries in the village. The canning company was one of them and although it was only a seasonal one it was still one of the economic mainstays of the village. The village's other significant industry was the Wisconsin Porcelain Company, which had been organized in the village in

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<sup>43</sup> Stare, Fred A. Op. Cit., pp. 157-158.

<sup>44</sup> *Sun Prairie Countryman*. August 2, 1945, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> Klein, Peter Michael. Op. Cit., p. 128.

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1920 with five employees as the American Spark Plug and Porcelain Specialty Company. By its 25th anniversary in 1945, the company employed 214 people, although 300 was a more normal number, and its factory (non-extant) was located across Lincoln Street and just to the north of the cannery.<sup>46</sup>

Both of these companies prospered after the war. The Canning Company was especially fortunate because it was then housed in what was essentially a state-of-the-art building for that period. One measure of the Company's continuing influence in the community occurred in 1953, when it became the principal sponsor of what is now Sun Prairie's best known annual event, the Sun Prairie Corn Festival.

The economic power of corn cultivation and canning led to the creation of the Sun Prairie Corn Festival in 1953. The opening of the Sun Prairie Canning Company in the early 1900s and the success of hybrid corn growers like the Renk and Batz families in the 1940s, made corn cultivation and processing a major part of the local economy. The first celebration took place on two blocks of Angell Street, near the canning company. Its first "queen" was selected by purchasing ten votes for a dollar. Dianne Schluckebier earned 580,000 votes and was the first "Queen Teenie Weenie," a title named for a brand of sweet corn. In return for the promotion, Oconomowoc Canning Company provided 1300 ears of corn, two hundred pounds of butter and salt, rations that greatly increased with each successive year. In 1955, the festival moved to Angell Park, and the Chamber of Commerce assigned eight committees to handle the dance, corn cooking, corn buttering, queen contest, concessions, rides, and advertising. The four-day festival features corn-eating contests, music and talent shows, a "Corn Boiler Run," a festival parade and fireworks. ... When the canning company decided to stop cooking the corn for the festival in 1997, festival planners raised sufficient funds to build a "community owned" corn-cooking building. The new facility served up 70 tons of sweet corn to 100,000 Corn Festival visitors in 2000.<sup>47</sup>

An Oconomowoc Canning Company newsletter article that appeared in 1983 gives a good account of the continued importance of the Sun Prairie factory to the Company and to the Sun Prairie community at that time.

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<sup>46</sup> *Sun Prairie Star and Countryman*. August 23, 1945, pp. 1, 2, 3 and 8 (illustrated).

<sup>47</sup> Ruff, Allan and Tracy Will. *Forward! A History of Dane: the Capital County*. Cambridge, WI: Woodhenge Press, 2000, p. 362. The "Teenie Weenie" brand was associated with the Oconomowoc Canning Company's corn products and was named after popular cartoon characters of the 1930s.

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In the early years, cream style corn, tomatoes, dried peas and string beans were canned. Since Oconomowoc Canning Company has owned the plant, peas, tomatoes, whole kernel corn, lima beans and miscellaneous 8 oz. Products have been canned. Today [1983] approximately 1.6 million cases of product are canned annually.

In 1975 the original corn shed was demolished and a portion of the warehouse was remodeled to house the corn processing equipment. When this project was completed, in time for the 1976 pack, the corn floor was considered to be the most progressive corn processing operation in the state. The plant is personally managed by Ray Kenefick. There are 19 fulltime employees. During the peak canning months, approximately 125 additional people are hired.

Oconomowoc Canning Company is one of the largest industries in the Sun Prairie area. As a member of the Chamber of Commerce, they are the major contributor to the success of the annual "Sweet Corn Festival." This year the Chamber awarded Oconomowoc Canning Company a testimonial of appreciation for their work in this capacity.<sup>48</sup>

Later in 1983, the Oconomowoc Canning Company, which by then was operating six Wisconsin plants in Sun Prairie, Waunakee, Poynette, Cobb, Lincoln, and Merrill, purchased six more plants belonging to the Stokely Canning Co. as well as the Stokely label. In 1985 the name of the firm was changed to Stokely USA. Chiquita Brands International then purchased Stokely USA in 1997 and in 2000 the Sun Prairie canning factory of the company was finally closed down. The Chiquita company now operates a large very modern canning plant in DeForest.

Since 2000, all the buildings on the entire large block bounded by Market Street, Main Street, and the railroad tracks in what is now the city of Sun Prairie have been leveled, including all the buildings in the canning factory complex save the canning factory building itself. This parcel is now being redeveloped for retail and housing use.

Throughout its long history the Sun Prairie canning factory played a major role in the local economy of Sun Prairie and in its social life.

Generations of local residents worked in the canning factory, or on the farms supporting the canning factory. Working in the factory developed into a traditional summer occupation for women and teenagers seeking temporary employment. The whistle of the canning factory

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<sup>48</sup> Oconomowoc Canning Company. "The Can Opener." Vol. 11, Number 5, May, 1983, p. 1.



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became a sound of summer, with the whistle blowing one hour prior to the factory opening for the day, so that all the workers could assemble at the plant for the pack to begin, and, at noon, so the workers knew when to take their lunch. At the end of the canning season, the whistle sounded until all the steam was out of the boilers.<sup>49</sup>

Summary

It is therefore believed that the Fuhremann Canning Company factory building is eligible for listing in the NRHP for its local significance to the industrial history of Sun Prairie and to the canning industry of Dane County. The Canning Company played a highly important role in the twentieth century economic history of Sun Prairie and its factory building is now the only surviving historically significant building in the city that is associated either with the canning company or with industry in general. Likewise, the canning factory building is now the only surviving historically significant intact resource in the county that retains associations with this industry. The Sun Prairie factory was the first canning factory in the county and was later joined by factories in Mazomanie, Waunakee, DeForest, and Stoughton. Nothing remains of the first three of these factories and while the fate of the Stoughton factory has not been ascertained it was not even begun until 1941 and, if extant, cannot have played the same role in the county that the Sun Prairie factory has. Consequently, the Sun Prairie factory is now the sole remaining historically significant resource that is associated with the canning industry in Dane County, an industry that has and continues to play a significant part in Dane County's agricultural history and development. In addition, the factory is now the only identified building in the County that was directly associated with the use of prisoner of war labor to support local industry during World War II.

While the building has been altered from its construction in 1912, the majority of the changes occurred within the period of significance. These alterations reflect the continued use of the building as an active industry during the period. While the exterior appearance of the building dates primarily to the 1943-44 remodeling, portions of the 1912 plant are visible on the interior. Taken together, these alterations tell the history of the building and portray the significance of the canning industry to the community of Sun Prairie.

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<sup>49</sup> Klein, Peter Michael. Op. Cit., p. 88.

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**Boundary Description**

The Sun Prairie Canning Co. factory building is situated on a parcel of land situate at Sun Prairie, in the county of Dane and state of Wisconsin described as follows, to wit: Lots Twenty-four (24) and Twenty-five (25), both in the subdivision of Lot Eleven (11) in Block Seventeen (17), of the Village of Sun Prairie according to the recorded plat thereof.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries of the parcel described above enclose the westerly portion of the larger parcel of land that was originally associated with the Canning Co. operations. This smaller portion is now and has always been bounded by Market Street to the west and the tracks of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad to the south and is that portion of the larger original parcel of land that has historically been associated specifically with the factory building. All the other Canning Co. buildings that originally stood on the larger original parcel have now been demolished and this land currently stands vacant awaiting new construction.

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Items a-d are the same for each photo,.

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- a) Sun Prairie Canning Company Factory
- b) Sun Prairie, Dane County, WI
- c) Timothy F. Hegglund, March 6, 2004
- d) Wisconsin Historical Society
- e) View looking east
- f) Photo 1 of 14

Photo 2

- e) View looking southeast
- f) Photo 2 of 14

Photo 3

- e) View looking south
- f) Photo 3 of 14

Photo 4

- e) View looking southwest
- f) Photo 4 of 14

Photo 5

- e) View looking northwest
- f) Photo 5 of 14

Photo 6

- e) West Building, detail view of southwest-facing side elevation looking northeast
- f) Photo 6 of 14

Photo 7

- e) View of Cooking Wing, looking northwest
- f) Photo 7 of 14

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Photo 8

- e) View of southeast-facing elevation looking northwest
- f) Photo 8 of 14

Photo 9

- e) View of southwest-facing side elevation looking northeast
- f) Photo 9 of 14

Photo 10

- e) View of the first story interior of the main block looking south
- f) Photo 10 of 14

Photo 11

- e) View of the second story interior from the southeast end of the main block looking northwest
- f) Photo 11 of 14

Photo 12

- e) View of the third story's northwest corner stairwell, looking northwest
- f) Photo 12 of 14

Photo 13

- e) View of the third story interior of the main block, looking northwest
- f) Photo 13 of 14

Photo 14

- e) View of the third story interior of the main block's ell, looking west-southwest
- f) Photo 14 of 14

