

ATKINS PICKLE PLANT

BY MORGAN WARREN

I the Atkins Pickle Plant have seen many things. First I would like to describe myself. I was built in the nineteen forty-six. I am sixty-two years old. Although I am now the Atkins Prepared Foods, I will always be the Pickle Plant at heart. I was made possible by Lee Cheek, T.J. Ehmann, and many others.

My first test run was Wednesday, July 17, 1946, with about 100 employees and a full operation schedule for the following Monday. The employment for the summer packing season increased and in August, 1946, reached a total of 150 employees with a weekly payroll of about \$4,000. Over the years I remained to have about 150 permanent employees, but over the summer I employed a large number of high school and college students.

In the early years of my life my tank yard consisted of 57 vats. Each of my vats had a storage capacity of 1,000 bushels. At the end of my pickle processing life I had 400 wooden vats, ranging in capacity from 500 to 1,000 bushels. I was bought and sold many times during my life span as the Atkins Pickle Plant and with each owner, the operations that took place here grew and so did I.

In 1983 I was purchased by a major food company, Dean Foods. They brought into me lots of new equipment, so that wide variety of pickles could be mass produced. The sales of pickles soon reached more than \$40,000,000. This helped to put Atkins on the map as the Pickle Capital of the world.

The citizens of the community loved me, the Atkins Pickle Plant, so much they throw a festival for me every year. This festival is called the Picklefest. During the wondrous few days of the Picklefest they have a pickle eating contest, a pickle juice drinking contest, a dunking booth, a pickle ride, great entertainment, face painting, many foods, and a great number more of activities. Even though I have not been the Pickle Plant for several years now, the Atkins community still celebrates a festival for me each year.

In 2002 Dean Foods decided to shut me down. There were many people laid off, including some people who had been working here with me for over 30 years. It was a very sad time for me along with many other people. I felt like I was losing my family. After I was shut down I was very lonely, but the people of Atkins did not give up on me. They tried very hard to find someone to buy me, and in 2004 their hard work paid off. I was turned over to Atkins Prepared Foods, a chicken processing plant. Although things are very different now from when I first opened, I am still very happy to be used and

needed once again. In my sixty-two years I have seen many people come and go and have been used for many different things. The people of Atkins in their heart will always think of me as the Atkins Pickle Plant.

Bibliography

www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net

www.atkinschronicle.com