Atlantic's Canning Season of 1902

Marcia Chinitz Goldberg

Follow this and additional works at: https://ir.uiowa.edu/palimpsest

Part of the United States History Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://ir.uiowa.edu/palimpsest/vol76/iss3/2

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the State Historical Society of Iowa at Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Palimpsest by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact lib-ir@uiowa.edu.
Atlantic's Canning Season of 1902

by Marcia Chinitz Goldberg and Phillip Chinitz

The sound of a factory whistle pierced the air on the morning of June 9, 1902, opening the new canning season in Atlantic, Iowa. That Monday morning, several dozen men wielding scythes and hay forks descended on the fields east of the factory to harvest peas. Cut down and raked into piles, the vines were then loaded onto horse-drawn wagons and delivered to the factory.

Ninety-three years later, we are witness to that harvest season, thanks to a remarkable collection of sixty-two glass plate negatives of this southwestern Iowa town. Most of the pic-
tures were taken in the summer and fall of 1902. Two-thirds of the images are of the Atlantic Canning Company and of the house of J. W. Cuykendall, the owner of the canning factory for more than two decades. The remaining third of the collection includes views of the town, landscapes, informal groups of young people, portraits of individuals, and pets. The photographer of the collection is unknown. The name “Frank Kirk” appears on one box of negatives, but that name does

Above: Wagons line up at the Atlantic factory. Below: Harvesting peas was step one in the canning process.
Atlantic’s Canning Season of 1902

by Marcia Chinitz Goldberg and Phillip Chinitz

The sound of a factory whistle pierced the air on the morning of June 9, 1902, opening the new canning season in Atlantic, Iowa. That Monday morning, several dozen men wielding scythes and hay forks descended on the fields east of the factory to harvest peas. Cut down and raked into piles, the vines were then loaded onto horse-drawn wagons and delivered to the factory.

Ninety-three years later, we are witness to that harvest season, thanks to a remarkable collection of sixty-two glass plate negatives of this southwestern Iowa town. Most of the pictures were taken in the summer and fall of 1902. Two-thirds of the images are of the Atlantic Canning Company and of the house of J. W. Cuykendall, the owner of the canning factory for more than two decades. The remaining third of the collection includes views of the town, landscapes, informal groups of young people, portraits of individuals, and pets. The photographer of the collection is unknown. The name “Frank Kirk” appears on one box of negatives, but that name does

Above: Wagons line up at the Atlantic factory. Below: Harvesting peas was step one in the canning process.

ALL PHOTOS UNLESS MARKED: COURTESY COLLECTING IOWA BUREAU
Fire insurance map from 1908 shows range of structures for various functions at the Atlantic Canning Company—from husking and silking, to pea hulling, to storage of boxes, cans, seeds, and box lumber. Fire insurance maps color code the structures: yellow for frame, blue for stone, and pink for brick. According to the top description, the company ran "about three months of year," and had a night watchman, electric lights, and its own dynamo.
not appear in the 1900 U.S. census records or in the 1902 Atlantic or Cass County directories. He may have been an itinerant photographer.

Preserving food by drying, salting, or smoking has an ancient history, but preserving food in portable containers for large populations dates only to the early nineteenth century. The process of canning had been developed early in the nineteenth century by Nicholas Appert in response to a call from Napoleon for a viable way to supply food to his large armies. Appert sealed food in glass bottles from which air had been removed, and then placed them in boiling water. His method proved successful and was adopted in other countries. Although it took only a few short years for inventors to substitute tin cylinders for bottles, production remained small and costly. By the end of the nineteenth century, American canners used new methods for avoiding spoilage and more efficient machinery to reduce manual involvement.

Canning was a natural industry for largely rural Iowa, but by the turn of the century only fifteen canning factories operated in the state. The Atlantic Canning Company had been founded in 1882, fourteen years after the town itself was established. Atlantic was an ideal location for such an endeavor because it could provide what the factory needed: fertile fields yielding suitable crops, sufficient employees, and a railway line. Atlantic was not, however, unique in this regard; in the 1903 Iowa Report on Labor Statistics, forty communities indicated a desire for a canning factory and claimed the proper essentials for success. Perhaps what the other towns lacked was entrepreneurship and necessary capital.

Atlantic had found both in J. A. McWaid, S. F. Martin, and R. D. Wilkins. Wilkins dropped out of the partnership in 1883 and McWaid became sole owner after buying out Martin in 1890. Since McWaid’s move to Atlantic in 1869, he had operated businesses in carriage- and wagon-making, and in selling blacksmithing services and agricultural implements. The year he started the canning factory, he was superintendent of a hog packing-house and owner of a 600-acre stock farm. He had also, during this period, been mayor of Atlantic and president of a local bank. His new canning factory comprised a 40 X 100 foot two-story main building, a cooling shed, wareroom, and brick boiler room. The company employed between seventy-five and one hundred men and women during an average season. In its second year, the factory more than doubled its production.

John W. Cuykendall joined the company in 1889. Born in Cayuga County, New York, in 1858, he already had extensive experience and expertise in food preservation, having operated several factories including a fruit-drying business he started at the age of sixteen. By 1900 Cuykendall, in partnership with William McWaid, the son of the founder, owned the Atlantic Canning Company. Sometime before 1913, Cuykendall became sole owner. He also started a branch factory, run by his brothers J. R. and C. E. Cuykendall, in Fremont, Nebraska, and another later in Shenandoah, Iowa.

Thanks to the detailed 1902 photos of the canning factory and other documentation,
we can now historically “tour” the factory and understand the canning process and the workers’ tasks. We can see the workers up close, observe their workday clothing, the equipment they used, the size of the rooms in which they worked. With a little imagination, we can hear the whirr of the machinery, feel the heat of the steam processes, and smell the combination of soldering metal and fresh produce. Sometimes, when there is a blur in a photo, we can sense the speed of movement, as workers’ hands flew to shuck corn or as cans filled with vegetables traveled down a conveyor belt to the next step.

The 1902 pea-canning season that opened with the blast of a factory whistle that June morning was described in detail in the June 12 Atlantic Messenger. After the workers had cut the pea vines and brought them by wagon to the factory, the article explained, the peas and vines were fed into a thresher that separated...
the two and also shelled the peas. The vine stalks were then dried for cattle feed. The peas were sent to another machine that cleaned away any remaining leaves or bits of pod and graded the peas by size. A thorough washing eliminated any leftover chaff.

In the next stage, the peas were spread out on tables where women and girls inspected them for imperfections. Then the peas were put in a filler and briner machine that could fill eighteen cans at a time with peas and brine. The excess was brushed off and the cans were placed on a conveyor belt. After the lids were put on, the cans were sent to a soldering machine. Placing the lids on the cans was done manually, mostly by women employees, and required quick hands. The photo on the opposite page shows a young woman demonstrating how this was done; behind her stands a mechanic, ready with an oil can to keep the machine running smoothly. The woman seems to have had advance notice because that day she wore both a ribbon and a flower in her hair.

Cans and lids were then soldered together, a man’s job, as suggested by the photo below. The cans were then inspected and submerged in water to determine whether they were indeed airtight.

From the soldering station the cans were
Left: Cans filled with produce are placed in enormous crate-like trays and then lowered into the retorts (above) for steam heating.
Age of 'hog and hominy' ends as refined American tastes shift to canned goods

"The age of 'hog and hominy' is long since gone by. The tastes and desires of humanity have so multiplied and have become so refined that the crude, meager means and methods of a generation ago, will not suffice. Farmers do not take their families to town in lumber wagons, seated on plain boards, but have top buggies and carriages instead; they have pianos in their parlors, gold watches in their pockets, pictures on their walls, books on their tables and in keeping with these environments, they must have greater variety of choicest foods....

...The climax in the art preservative is to can these fruits and vegetables in such a way as to perfectly maintain the original flavor and food qualities, and render them available....

Much depends upon getting these goods to the factory in prime condition. Tomatoes must be ripe, but not too ripe, and perfectly sound, as well as clean. Corn must be at its best, not too old, not a chaffy, flavorless, semi-barren variety, but juicy and full of dextrine qualities. This is one of the most valuable food products. The factory that can get hold of such materials as described will surely succeed, both in the process of manufacture and on the way to the market centers....

There is a great temptation in this business to use adulterations.... Factory men are besieged on every hand by men with certain preparations, which are said to restore the flavor of over-ripe tomatoes, or give the ruddy glow to green ones, or restore the youth of over-ripe corn, or vouchsafe keeping qualities to any of these products that shall be proof against certain chemical changes to which they are subject. All these things are wrong from a health point of view, and in the light of honest dealing, one with another. Our business can never be firmly established and built up until these practices are eradicated."

Excerpts from "The Canning Industry," by Walter Elliott (of Knoxville, Iowa) at the 1900 State Farmers' Institute (1901 Iowa Year Book of Agriculture).
"The age of 'hog and hominy' is long since gone by. The tastes and desires of humanity have so multiplied and have become so refined that the crude, meager means and methods of a generation ago, will not suffice. Farmers do not take their families to town in lumber wagons, seated on plain boards, but have top buggies and carriages instead; they have pianos in their parlors, gold watches in their pockets, pictures on their walls, books on their tables and in keeping with these environments, they must have greater variety of choicest foods.

The climax in the art preservative is to can these fruits and vegetables in such a way as to perfectly maintain the original flavor and food qualities, and render them available. Much depends upon getting these goods to the factory in prime condition. Tomatoes must be ripe, but not too ripe, and perfectly sound, as well as clean. Corn must be at its best, not too old, not a chaffy, flavorless, semi-barren variety, but juicy and full of dextrine qualities. This is one of the most valuable food products. The factory that can get hold of such materials as described will surely succeed, both in the process of manufacture and on the way to the market centers.

There is a great temptation in this business to use adulterations. Factory men are besieged on every hand by men with certain preparations, which are said to restore the flavor of over-ripe tomatoes, or give the ruddy glow to green ones, or restore the youth of over-ripe corn, or vouchsafe keeping qualities to any of these products that shall be proof against certain chemical changes to which they are subject. All these things are wrong from a health point of view, and in the light of honest dealing, one with another. Our business can never be firmly established and built up until these practices are eradicated."

Excerpts from "The Canning Industry," by Walter Elliott (of Knoxville, Iowa) at the 1900 State Farmers Institute (1901 Iowa Year Book of Agriculture).
Above: Apparently intent on documenting both the people working in each factory area, as well as the function of that area, the photographer included two workers in the photo above—one in the right window and one on the far right of the huge wheel.

Left: Amid a mountain of cans, workers pack more into wooden crates. Next page: Crates await shipping.

After cooling, the cans were taken to the wareroom where they were boxed to await transportation to the wholesaler. A Messenger reporter, indulging in a bit of local pride, proclaimed the 1902 crop of peas excellent: "As to the quality of the product it is not excelled by any in the United States. It was tested by the writer and he knows whereof he speaks."

One hundred and fifty workers started the season that Monday in June 1902. This was less than half the work force needed, but the number would increase as various crops matured. By June 26, the factory was so busy that people worked overtime every day, sometimes running into the midnight hours. In 1902, the Atlantic company's season was

(text continued on page 110)
Above: Apparently intent on documenting both the people working in each factory area as well as the function of that area, the photographer included two workers in the photo above—one in the right window and one on the far right of the huge wheel.

Left: Amid a mountain of cans, workers pack more into wooden crates. Next page: Crates await shipping.

After cooling, the cans were taken to the wareroom where they were boxed to await transportation to the wholesaler. A Messenger reporter, indulging in a bit of local pride, proclaimed the 1902 crop of peas excellent: "As to the quality of the product it is not excelled by any in the United States. It was tested by the writer and he knows whereof he speaks."

One hundred and fifty workers started the season that Monday in June 1902. This was less than half the work force needed, but the number would increase as various crops matured. By June 26, the factory was so busy that people worked overtime every day, sometimes running into the midnight hours. In 1902, the Atlantic company’s season was

(text continued on page 110)
longer than any other canning factory in Iowa, and a twelve-hour day was not unusual.

After the pea season ended, production stopped briefly until corn canning began. In spite of some wet fields that year, good ground nevertheless had yielded a bigger crop than usual. Farmers were paid $6 a ton for corn, about $36 an acre for the yield on the best land.

Wagons loaded with sweet corn started rolling into town the third week in August. Farmers lined their wagons up and down Second Street under the hot summer sun. Sometimes, if the wait was long enough, they unhitched their horses and let them graze by the side of the road. On the best days, the factory could handle up to 225 wagon loads, converting these into 135,000 cans of corn.

At first it had not been easy to convince farmers to raise sweet corn rather than field corn. Because sweet corn was ready for harvest much sooner than was field corn, farmers would be harvesting in hotter weather. They also disliked the long wait sometimes required before they unloaded their wagons. At a 1900 State Farmers' Institute in Des Moines, agricultural officials assured their audience that sweet corn did not deplete the

---

**Iowa Canned Corn for Iowa People**

Buy it and encourage Iowa Manufacturers. None better, the majority not as good. If you are not satisfied after a trial purchase return what you have left and your grocer will take it back and refund your money. Buy a case of 24 cans, by doing so you can get it cheaper.

**HAWKEYE BRAND IS ONE OF THE LEADERS.**

**ATLANTIC CANNING CO., ATLANTIC, IOWA**
Factory smoke fills the sky and corn husks litter the road, as farmers wait with wagons full of sweet corn.
longer than any other canning factory in Iowa, and a twelve-hour day was not unusual.

After the pea season ended, production stopped briefly until corn canning began. In spite of some wet fields that year, good ground nevertheless had yielded a bigger crop than usual. Farmers were paid $6 a ton for corn, about $36 an acre for the yield on the best land. Wagons loaded with sweet corn started rolling into town the third week in August. Farmers lined their wagons up and down Second Street under the hot summer sun. Sometimes, if the wait was long enough, they unhitched their horses and let them graze by the side of the road. On the best days, the factory could handle up to 225 wagon loads, converting these into 135,000 cans of corn.

At first it had not been easy to convince farmers to raise sweet corn rather than field corn. Because sweet corn was ready for harvest much sooner than was field corn, farmers would be harvesting in hotter weather. They also disliked the long wait sometimes required before they unloaded their wagons. At a 1900 State Farmers' Institute in Des Moines, agricultural officials assured their audience that sweet corn did not deplete the

---

Iowa Canned Corn for Iowa People

Buy it and encourage Iowa Manufacturers. None better, the majority not as good. If you are not satisfied after a trial purchase return what you have left and your grocer will take it back and refund your money. Buy a case of 24 cans, by doing so you can get it cheaper.

HAWKEYE BRAND IS ONE OF THE LEADERS.

ATLANTIC CANNING CO., ATLANTIC, IOWA

Factory smoke fills the sky and corn husks litter the road, as farmers wait with wagons full of sweet corn.
soil faster than field corn and advised farmers to sow peas after the corn to increase soil fertility. At the same meeting, farmers were advised to stagger planting so that the entire corn crop would not ripen at the same time. The fact that production at the Atlantic Canning Company increased every year indicated that area farmers had been convinced that raising sweet corn was indeed profitable.

Canning corn required more space than did canning peas, although much of the process was the same once the corn was removed from the cob. One of the largest areas of the complex was the husking shed, a long, open-sided building. Under the simple trussed roof, workers sat on rough boxes on both sides of a conveyor running the length of the building and shucked corn. A worker was paid two cents for each bushel shucked. If the worker stayed the entire season, the rate was raised to three cents.

The conveyor transferred the filled baskets to machines that removed the corn from the

---

Farmers find that marketing sweet corn to canning factories involves hot harvests and long waits

"It is hard work to get farmers to raise corn for canning factories. The work must be done in hot weather, and the farmers do not like to wait to unload. Sometimes there will be twenty-five or thirty teams waiting to unload and it takes considerable time. Some of the goods put up at Atlantic spoiled and there were considerable losses, but under the management of the present owner the factory has been a success. Pumpkins, peas and other things are canned, and large loads, like loads of hay are hauled in. In busy times the factory runs night and day, and they have two sets of hands, and the factory brings in more money than any other three institutions in Atlantic. The manager said in June that all products were sold."

George Franklin, at the 1900 State Farmers' Institute (Iowa Year Book of Agriculture, 1901)
Flanked by drifts of husks and stacks and rows of bushel baskets, seasonal workers shuck sweet corn.
soil faster than field corn and advised farmers to sow peas after the corn to increase soil fertility. At the same meeting, farmers were advised to stagger planting so that the entire corn crop would not ripen at the same time. The fact that production at the Atlantic Canning Company increased every year indicated that area farmers had been convinced that raising sweet corn was indeed profitable.

Canning corn required more space than did canning peas, although much of the process was the same once the corn was removed from the cob. One of the largest areas of the complex was the husking shed, a long, open-sided building. Under the simple trussed roof, workers sat on rough boxes on both sides of a conveyor running the length of the building and shucked corn. A worker was paid two cents for each bushel shucked. If the worker stayed the entire season, the rate was raised to three cents.

The conveyor transferred the filled baskets to machines that removed the corn from the

**Farmers find that marketing sweet corn to canning factories involves hot harvests and long waits**

"It is hard work to get farmers to raise corn for canning factories. The work must be done in hot weather, and the farmers do not like to wait to unload. Sometimes there will be twenty-five or thirty teams waiting to unload and it takes considerable time. Some of the goods put up at Atlantic spoiled and there were considerable losses, but under the management of the present owner the factory has been a success. Pumpkins, peas and other things are canned, and large loads, like loads of hay are hauled in. In busy times the factory runs night and day, and they have two sets of hands, and the factory brings in more money than any other three institutions in Atlantic. The manager said in June that all products were sold."

George Franklin, at the 1900 State Farmers' Institute (Iowa Year Book of Agriculture, 1901)
cob. Almost all these machines were new that year and were equipped with safety devices—strategically placed guards to prevent injury to the operator's hands. Two women were assigned to each machine. The women wore caps to keep their long hair from getting tangled in the machinery. The exposed pulley belts look quite dangerous; apparently this problem had not yet been solved.

With safety as a consideration, periodic inspections were made by state officials. Inspectors checked the height of the building and
in good condition and safe to operate. Inspectors also kept track of the number of accidents that had occurred over the previous year and how often the boilers were inspected. In 1903, the Atlantic factory passed muster, but the owners were asked to provide guard railings for the elevator and to improve safety devices on the machinery.

The factory, as several photographs reveal, employed a significant number of men and women; some appear to be in their teens. For local women, factory employment was a boon because there were very few job opportunities for them in Atlantic.

The canning factory had a significant impact on the town and its economy. In 1900, according to an authority at the State Farmers’ Institute, “The factory brings in more
Almost all these machines were new that year and were equipped with safety devices—strategically placed guards to prevent injury to the operator’s hands. Two women were assigned to each machine. The women wore caps to keep their long hair from getting tangled in the machinery. The exposed pulley belts look quite dangerous; apparently this problem had not yet been solved.

With safety as a consideration, periodic inspections were made by state officials. Inspectors checked the height of the building and the number of stairways, fire escapes, and elevators. They also checked that ventilation in workrooms was adequate; that dust blowers were provided; that there were “water closets, earth or flush,” and separate accommodations for women; and that the machinery was in good condition and safe to operate. Inspec tors also took note of the number of accidents that had occurred over the previous year, and how often the boilers were inspected. In 1905, the Atlantic factory passed muster, but the owners were asked to provide guard railings for the elevator and to improve safety devices on the machinery.

The factory, as several photographs reveal, employed a significant number of men and women, some appear to be in their teens. For local women, factory employment was a boon because there were very few job opportunities for them in Atlantic.

The canning factory had a significant impact on the town and its economy. In 1900, according to an authority at the State Farmers’ Institute, “The factory brings in more money than a single farm.”

Left: Long belts from overhead power processing machines. Below: Straddling the smokestack gives a painter a bird’s eye view of the factory pines of corn (front left) and a horse-drawn wagon (front right).
money than any other three institutions in Atlantic.” In September of 1904, two years after these photographs were taken, the factory employed 454 people and had a weekly payroll of between $2,500 and $3,000.

Cuykendall also commissioned the same photographer to take pictures of his house, certainly a source of great pride for the local entrepreneur. The town of Atlantic is set among rolling hills. The canning factory was located at the foot of one hill, in the northwest end of town. The house, purchased in February of 1901 shortly after Cuykendall became half owner of the factory, was located atop another hill at 14th and Chestnut Streets in the southwest end. The house had been built by Edward Shaw in 1890; either he or the new owner had named the house “Lyndhurst.”

Lyndhurst was an impressive structure on a three-quarter-acre lot. It was built in the then-fashionable Queen Anne style. Asymmetrical bays, gables, porches, balconies, and dormers projected out from the main rectangle of the house. Many houses of this style and period had several trim colors, but if we judge from the black-and-white photographs, this house appears to have been painted in one basic color with a lighter trim. On the roof, lighter bands of scalloped shingles contrasted with darker shingles, and each roof ridge was adorned with half-circle cresting. The fish-scale shingle pattern was repeated under the eaves. Decorative detailing also graced rails, screening, porches, and the porte cochere (or carriage porch). A circular drive connected the porte cochere, the front entrance, and Chestnut Street. Cuykendall’s granddaughter, Jeanette Emmert Lee, remembers that the drive was lined with concrete planters of flowers.

J. W. and his wife, Sarah, were also obviously proud of their fine carriage and horses, which appear in three of the photographs in the entire collection. In one photo (see next page), an unidentified driver sits with reins in hand, while, presumably, Sarah Cuykendall and her daughter, Virginia, ride inside. The

(text continues on page 121)
The Cuykendall grounds included a carriage house, the top story visible above the brow of the hill on the left.
money than any other three institutions in Atlantic." In September of 1904, two years after these photographs were taken, the factory employed 454 people and had a weekly payroll of between $2,500 and $3,000.

Cuykendall also commissioned the same photographer to take pictures of his house, certainly a source of great pride for the local entrepreneur. The town of Atlantic is set among rolling hills. The canning factory was located at the foot of one hill, in the northwest end of town. The house, purchased in February of 1901 shortly after Cuykendall became half owner of the factory, was located atop another hill at 14th and Chestnut Streets in the southwest end. The house had been built by Edward Shaw in 1890; either he or the new owner had named the house "Lyndhurst."

Lyndhurst was an impressive structure on a three-quarter-acre lot. It was built in the then-fashionable Queen Anne style. Asymmetrical bays, gables, porches, balconies, and dormers projected out from the main rectangle of the house. Many houses of this style and period had several trim colors, but if we judge from the black-and-white photographs, this house appears to have been painted in one basic color with a lighter trim. On the roof, lighter bands of scalloped shingles contrasted with darker shingles, and each roof ridge was adorned with half-circle cresting. The fish-scale shingle pattern was repeated under the eaves. Decorative detailing also graced rails, screening, porches, and the porte cochere (or carriage porch). A circular drive connected the porte cochere, the front entrance, and Chestnut Street. Cuykendall’s granddaughter, Jeanette Emmert Lee, remembers that the drive was lined with concrete planters of flowers.

J. W. and his wife, Sarah, were also obviously proud of their fine carriage and horses, which appear in three of the photographs in the entire collection. In one photo (see next page), an unidentified driver sits with reins in hand, while, presumably, Sarah Cuykendall and her daughter, Virginia, ride inside. The (text continues on page 121)
Two passengers, presumably Sarah Cuykendall and daughter Virginia, sit in the shadowy interior of their carriage.
The collection includes three photos of the horses and carriage, no doubt a source of pride for the Cuykendalls.
The collection includes three photos of the horses and carriage, no doubt a source of pride for the Cuykendalls.

Two passengers, presumably Sarah Cuykendall and daughter Virginia, sit in the shadowy interior of their carriage.
Light spills through colored panes down the open stairwell and into the fashionably furnished hall, where a variety of Victorian patterns—in rugs, wallpaper, wood, and tile—meets the visitor to Cuykendalls' elegant home.
carriage house, a small building visible behind the house to the southwest, served first as storage for the carriage, horses, and perhaps a cow—and later for automobiles. There was an apartment for the caretaker and his family on the second floor of the carriage house, with a vegetable garden next to the building.

The exterior and interior photographs offer evidence of the home’s Victorian elegance and many modern features. A utility pole with glass transformers suggests electricity. The year 1902 was still early for complete transformation to electricity; indeed, the chandeliers in all rooms but the parlor were transitional and had both gasolier globes and down-facing bowls for incandescent lights.

The house also had central heating; radiator pipes appear in several rooms. Although the fireplace in the hall was apparently still operational, stove insets in the fireplaces in the dining room and one parlor indicate that auxiliary heating was used.

Guests who entered the Cuykendalls’ home would have encountered a hall fashionably furnished. To mark the summer season, the plants most common to Victorian homes, the fern and the palm, were placed in front of the fireplace. On the mantel, a French plaster bust of a young woman and a porcelain ewer flanked an elaborate clock adorned with a graceful classical figure, perhaps representing the Greek goddess Ceres with sheaves of grain and a basket of fruit.

A little nook—or “Turkish corner”—was created out of fancy pillows on the first landing of the stairway. Behind it, light poured through two large windows of stained glass, most likely matching colors and patterns repeated in the front door and in other first-floor windows.

The open stairwell was made to appear separate from the entrance by a pair of tall newel posts affixed with transitional lighting fixtures and a spindle screen hung from the ceiling. As on the house exterior, the millwork is extensive, especially in the handsome entrance hall and its staircase of airy
Light spills through colored panes down the open stairwell and into the fashionably furnished hall, where a variety of Victorian patterns—in rugs, wallpaper, wood, and tile—meets the visitor to Cuykendalls' elegant home.

Carriage house, a small building visible behind the house to the southwest, served first as storage for the carriage, horses, and perhaps a cow—and later for automobiles. There was an apartment for the caretaker and his family on the second floor of the carriage house, with a vegetable garden next to the building.

The exterior and interior photographs offer evidence of the home's Victorian elegance and many modern features. A utility pole with glass transformers suggests electricity. The year 1902 was still early for complete transformation to electricity; indeed, the chandeliers in all rooms but the parlor were transitional and had both gasolier globes and down-facing bowls for incandescent lights.

The house also had central heating; radiator pipes appear in several rooms. Although the fireplace in the hall was apparently still operational, stove insets in the fireplaces in the dining room and one parlor indicate that auxiliary heating was used.

Guests who entered the Cuykendalls' home would have encountered a hall fashionably furnished. To mark the summer season, the plants most common to Victorian homes, the fern and the palm, were placed in front of the fireplace. On the mantel, a French plaster bust of a young woman and a porcelain ewer flanked an elaborate clock adorned with a graceful classical figure, perhaps representing the Greek goddess Ceres with sheaves of grain and a basket of fruit.

A little nook—or "Turkish corner"—was created out of fancy pillows on the first landing of the stairway. Behind it, light poured through two large windows of stained glass, most likely matching colors and patterns repeated in the front door and in other first-floor windows.

The open stairwell was made to appear separate from the entrance by a pair of tall newel posts affixed with transitional lighting fixtures and a spindle screen hung from the ceiling. As on the house exterior, the millwork is extensive, especially in the handsome entrance hall and its staircase of airy
In the parlor, ornate rockers are silhouetted against lace curtains, framed pictures line the walls above the piano and radiator, and porcelain is displayed on several surfaces. Behind the portieres on the left is a second parlor.
spindles alternating with solid wood rectangles. At the time the house was built, customizing woodwork was simplified by the availability of a variety of ready-made units from nearby mills and factories or through catalogues.

The Cuykendall house had two parlors, one with a piano (see left). Except for the small rugs, the center of this room seems bare for what we would expect of a Victorian room. Did it appear that way to the photographer, and was the little hexagonal plant stand borrowed from the hall to fill up the foreground? Then again, the room may have been arranged this way for a formal reception for many guests, or perhaps it reflects the advice of turn-of-the-century taste-makers who urged sparseness.

While this dictum seemed easy to follow with regard to the amount of furniture placed in the room, Sarah Cuykendall did not heed this advice for empty horizontal surfaces. The top of the piano, artfully draped with a ball-fringed fabric, was also adorned with a clock, porcelain plates, and photographs. Even the radiator (left foreground) had been turned into a shelf for displaying art objects, and another collection of porcelain was placed on the three-tiered table in the back.

All the rooms in the photographs were carpeted. In most of the rooms, a picture molding ran along the walls a foot or so beneath the ceiling. Large pictures were hung from this strip of wood by cords, thus giving a characteristic forward tilt to the frames. As in most of the rooms, the pattern of the wallpaper frieze here differed from the patterns on the ceiling and walls. Drifts of white lacy curtains at the large window softened the light. If Sarah Cuykendall’s purpose was to make the room light and airy for Iowa’s hot summer days, she was successful.

The large doorway to the left was hung with heavy portieres, or curtains, as a substitute for sliding doors. These not only provided privacy, they also may have kept heat from dissipating into unused spaces in the winter.

Behind these heavy draperies was a second parlor. One of the parlors may have been the
In the parlor, ornate rockers are silhouetted against lace curtains, framed pictures line the walls above the piano and radiator, and porcelain is displayed on several surfaces. Behind the portieres on the left is a second parlor.

Spindles alternating with solid wood rectangles. At the time the house was built, customizing woodwork was simplified by the availability of a variety of ready-made units from nearby mills and factories or through catalogues.

The Cuykendall house had two parlors, one with a piano (see left). Except for the small rugs, the center of this room seems bare for what we would expect of a Victorian room. Did it appear that way to the photographer, and was the little hexagonal plant stand borrowed from the hall to fill up the foreground? Then again, the room may have been arranged this way for a formal reception for many guests, or perhaps it reflects the advice of turn-of-the-century taste-makers who urged sparseness.

While this dictum seemed easy to follow with regard to the amount of furniture placed in the room, Sarah Cuykendall did not heed this advice for empty horizontal surfaces. The top of the piano, artfully draped with a ball-fringed fabric, was also adorned with a clock, porcelain plates, and photographs. Even the radiator (left foreground) had been turned into a shelf for displaying art objects, and another collection of porcelain was placed on the three-tiered table in the back.

All the rooms in the photographs were carpeted. In most of the rooms, a picture molding ran along the walls a foot or so beneath the ceiling. Large pictures were hung from this strip of wood by cords, thus giving a characteristic forward tilt to the frames. As in most of the rooms, the pattern of the wallpaper frieze here differed from the patterns on the ceiling and walls. Drifts of white lacy curtains at the large window softened the light.

If Sarah Cuykendall's purpose was to make the room light and airy for Iowa's hot summer days, she was successful.

The large doorway to the left was hung with heavy portieres, or curtains, as a substitute for sliding doors. These not only provided privacy, they also may have kept heat from dissipating into unused spaces in the winter.

Behind these heavy draperies was a second parlor. One of the parlors may have been the
family’s private sitting room, reserved for more intimate gatherings of family and very close friends. Like the first parlor, this room (left) was sparsely furnished but well decorated with objects. The one chair shown was either borrowed from the entrance hall or was its duplicate. Perhaps the Cuykendalls, who had just moved in the previous year, had not had time to finish furnishing the house but wanted to make it appear so for the photographs.

The fireplace dominated this room. Its elaborate mantelpiece extended all the way to the picture molding; a large mirror framed by carved griffins occupied the upper half. Each griffin balanced on its head a small shelf bearing a porcelain figurine. Framed photographs and more porcelain lined the mantel. The fireplace itself had a handsome inset iron stove, with fiery torches flanking the sun’s rays in relief. Propped up against the stove (undoubtedly because it was summer and the stove would not have been in use) were ruffled pillows. On the floor in front of these was a rug of animal fur. An 1878 issue of the magazine *House Beautiful* had advocated using fur rugs in this manner, and the style remained popular past the turn of the century.

The radiator pipes in the corner were partially hidden by a large easel, a fashionable way of displaying a picture. The picture here is an image of a child, perhaps daughter Virginia at an earlier age. At the foot of the easel is a print of Sir Joshua Reynolds’s *Heads of Angels, Miss Frances Isabella Gordon* (1787). It was possible at this time to purchase prints of famous paintings by catalogue. The Reynolds and other art prints displayed in the house were likely obtained in this way.

As in the other parlor, the curtains were sheer and appropriate for summer. They were cut long enough to “puddle” on the floor, a mid-nineteenth-century style evidently still admired by Sarah Cuykendall (although out of fashion according to professional home decorators at the turn of the century). The curtain rods in both parlors

An animal fur rug and ruffled pillows, as well as porcelain and artwork, decorate this parlor.
family's private sitting room, reserved for more intimate gatherings of family and very close friends. Like the first parlor, this room (left) was sparsely furnished but well decorated with objects. The one chair shown was either borrowed from the entrance hall or was its duplicate. Perhaps the Cuykendalls, who had just moved in the previous year, had not had time to finish furnishing the house but wanted to make it appear so for the photographs.

The fireplace dominated this room. Its elaborate mantelpiece extended all the way to the picture molding; a large mirror framed by carved griffins occupied the upper half. Each griffin balanced on its head a small shelf bearing a porcelain figurine. Framed photographs and more porcelain lined the mantel. The fireplace itself had a handsome inset iron stove, with fiery torches flanking the sun's rays in relief. Propped up against the stove (undoubtedly because it was summer and the stove would not have been in use) were ruffled pillows. On the floor in front of these was a rug of animal fur. An 1878 issue of the magazine *House Beautiful* had advocated using fur rugs in this manner, and the style remained popular past the turn of the century.

The radiator pipes in the corner were partially hidden by a large easel, a fashionable way of displaying a picture. The picture here is an image of a child, perhaps daughter Virginia at an earlier age. As the foot of the easel is a print of Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Heads of Angels, Miss Frances Isabella Gordon* (1787). It was possible at this time to purchase prints of famous paintings by catalogue. The Reynolds and other art prints displayed in the house were likely obtained in this way.

As in the other parlor, the curtains were sheer and appropriate for summer. They were cut long enough to "puddle" on the floor, a mid-nineteenth-century style evidently still admired by Sarah Cuykendall (although out of fashion according to professional home decorators at the turn of the century). The curtain rods in both parlors...
were dropped below the transom to show off the handsome panels of colored glass at the top.

The library, in contrast to the two parlors, had heavier, more masculine furniture: a tufted leather chair, an ornate armchair, and a leather chaise longue backed into one corner. Ruffled pillows on the chaise longue invited relaxation. (Incongruously perhaps, the scene on one of the ruffled pillows depicted Red Riding Hood meeting the Wolf in the forest.)

This was the master's room. On the center table sat a humidor and a tray with three graduated cups, the largest holding cigars; a cuspidor was tucked beneath. (One employee recalls J. W. Cuykendall smoking his big cigars as he made his periodic checks of factory operations.)

As in the other rooms, there are suggestions of a temporary arrangement for the benefit of the photograph: the Reynolds print from the second parlor leaned against the leg of the library table; and the potted palm in the fluted vase, presumably on loan from the entrance hall, sat on the secretary near the window. On this side of the room there are a number of framed prints, possibly ordered from a catalogue, and a small, oval object with a pouch decorated with flowers. This is a wall pocket, which held letters and notes, sort of a Victorian file basket.

Perhaps in this room, Cuykendall met with other Atlantic leaders to discuss business interests—of which he apparently had many. According to a 1906 county history, he was vice-president of the Iowa Trust & Savings Bank and the Cedar Rapids Life Insurance Company, and president of the Democrat Publishing Company.

Heavier, more masculine furniture characterizes the library in the Cuykendall house. An ornately framed portrait of J. W. Cuykendall sits on the top of the secretary, which holds several sets of bound books including the multi-volume *History of the World*. More books are stacked casually on the highly polished table.
were dropped below the transom to show off the handsome panels of colored glass at the top.

The library, in contrast to the two parlors, had heavier, more masculine furniture: a tufted leather chair, an ornate armchair, and a leather chaise longue backed into one corner. Ruffled pillows on the chaise longue invited relaxation. (Incongruously perhaps, the scene on one of the ruffled pillows depicted Red Riding Hood meeting the Wolf in the forest.)

This was the master's room. On the center table sat a humidor and a tray with three graduated cups, the largest holding cigars; a cuspidor was tucked beneath. (One employee recalls J. W. Cuykendall smoking his big cigars as he made his periodic checks of factory operations.)

As in the other rooms, there are suggestions of a temporary arrangement for the benefit of the photograph: the Reynolds print from the second parlor leaned against the leg of the library table; and the potted palm in the fluted vase, presumably on loan from the entrance hall, sat on the secretary near the window. On this side of the room there are a number of framed prints, possibly ordered from a catalogue, and a small, oval object with a pouch decorated with flowers. This is a wall pocket, which held letters and notes, sort of a Victorian file basket.

Perhaps in this room, Cuykendall met with other Atlantic leaders to discuss business interests—of which he apparently had many. According to a 1906 county history, he was vice-president of the Iowa Trust & Savings Bank and the Cedar Rapids Life Insurance Company, and president of the Democrat Publishing Company.

Heavier, more masculine furniture characterizes the library in the Cuykendall house. An ornately framed portrait of J. W. Cuykendall sits on the top of the secretary, which holds several sets of bound books including the multi-volume History of the World. More books are stacked casually on the highly polished table.
It was customary to display china in the dining room (above), and manufacturers created furniture just for this purpose. Two glass cabinets, a large sideboard, and additional shelves filled the spacious room. Even the top of the radiator pipes was transformed into a shelf with a lace-edged “scarf” under a bowl, a covered dish, and a vase of flowers. In keeping with the dining function of the room, the artwork on the wall depicted cascades of fruit and an idyllic scene of cows.

The two chairs, which match the armchair of the library, have been pushed back for the photograph so that the table arrangement
Dining room furnishings offered Sarah Cuykendall more opportunities for displaying her china.

the social lights of the city,” according to a typically congratulatory county history, and were “held in high regard.”

The fireplace, with extraordinarily tall Ionic columns, has a facing of decorative tile, as does the parlor fireplace. Both have an iron stove inset, rather than an open hearth. It was fashionable to cover the front of the fire-retardant brick surrounding the stove with tile. And tile had its practical side, since it was easier to clean than brick. By this time, it was no longer necessary to import fancy tile designs as American manufacturers were creating their own.

Images reveal photographer’s eye for people, composition, light

Although the profusion of objects in the interior shots of the Cuykendall home is ample evidence of family life, human figures are conspicuously absent, except for one photograph of little Virginia in her bedroom. Maintaining the owners’ privacy may well have been a consideration of the photographer.

These pictures of the Cuykendall home are a striking contrast with those of the factory. There, the photographer’s good sense of composition, and the naturally strong elements of design in the machinery are paired in every case with the presence of workers. Notice the dramatic line-up of retorts separating two more casual lines of men (page 104), the stacks of cans in the wareroom upon which workmen are artfully posed (pages 108-9), or the large doors in the furnace room that frame the stokers (pages 134-35).

Although light was sometimes a problem, as evidenced by intrusive bursts of the sun’s glare off of glass surfaces, the photographer sometimes exploited its poetic effects. On the front cover, note how light falls both on the furnace’s metal relief of a bird poised for flight and on the stoker who, posed diagonally like the bird, prepares to shovel coal into the white-hot fire.

—Marcia Goldberg
It was customary to display china in the dining room (above), and manufacturers created furniture just for this purpose. Two glass cabinets, a large sideboard, and additional shelves filled the spacious room. Even the top of the radiator pipes was transformed into a shelf with a lace-edged “scarf” under a bowl, a covered dish, and a vase of flowers. In keeping with the dining function of the room, the artwork on the wall depicted cascades of fruit and an idyllic scene of cows.

The two chairs, which match the armchair of the library, have been pushed back for the photograph so that the table arrangement would not be obstructed. On the freshly ironed cloth is a variety of pitchers, creamers, cups, and saucers. The Cuykendalls’ granddaughter remembers a buzzer on the floor beneath the table that could be used discreetly by the hostess to summon a servant.

The fireplace, with extraordinarily tall Ionic columns, has a facing of decorative tile, as does the parlor fireplace. Both have an iron stove inset, rather than an open hearth. It was fashionable to cover the front of the fire-retardant brick surrounding the stove with tile. And tile had its practical side, since it was easier to clean than brick. By this time, it was no longer necessary to import fancy tile designs as American manufacturers were creating their own.

Dining room furnishings offered Sarah Cuykendall more opportunities for displaying her china.

The social lights of the city,” according to a typically congratulatory county history, and were “held in high regard.”

The photographer’s eye for people, composition, light

Although the profusion of objects in the interior shots of the Cuykendall home is ample evidence of family life, human figures are conspicuously absent, except for one photograph of little Virginia in her bedroom. Maintaining the owners’ privacy may well have been a consideration of the photographer.

These pictures of the Cuykendall home are a striking contrast with those of the factory. There, the photographer’s good sense of composition, and the naturally strong elements of design in the machinery are paired in every case with the presence of workers. Notice the dramatic line-up of retorts separating two more casual lines of men (page 104), the stacks of cans in the wareroom upon which workers are artfully posed (pages 108-9), or the large doors in the furnace room that frame the stokers (pages 134-35).

Although light was sometimes a problem, as evidenced by intrusive bursts of the sun’s glare off of glass surfaces, the photographer sometimes exploited its poetic effects. On the front cover, note how light falls both on the furnace’s metal relief of a bird poised for flight and on the stoker who, posed diagonally like the bird, prepares to shovel coal into the white-hot fire.

—Marcia Goldberg
The bedrooms—there were five—were on the second floor. The heavy wooden bedstead (left) suggests that this room was where J. W. Cuykendall slept.

On the wall to the right of the wooden bed was an unusual object, perhaps an early telephone. It appears similar to the “Pony Magneto Call Telephone,” sold by Sears Roebuck in their 1908 catalogue and designed to be used with short lines of fifty feet to five miles. Equipped with a transmitter, receiver, three-magnet generator, two telephones, and four batteries, the Pony Magneto Call Telephone sold for $9.50. The phone would have been adequate for requesting the horse and carriage from the caretaker or for receiving an emergency call from the canning factory.

The heavy wooden bed contrasted with the graceful brass bed covered with a light embroidered spread in another bedroom (see below). The ubiquitous hexagonal plant stand and a fern appeared in both bedrooms.

Bedrooms appear relatively infrequently in historical photographs, making richly detailed images such as these two all the more important sources of information about the domestic lives of people in the past. In the photograph on the left, what appears to be an early telephone hangs on the wall between the bed and the washstand.
The bedrooms—there were five—were on the second floor. The heavy wooden bedstead (left) suggests that this room was where J. W. Cuykendall slept.

On the wall to the right of the wooden bed was an unusual object, perhaps an early telephone. It appears similar to the "Pony Magneto Call Telephone," sold by Sears Roebuck in their 1908 catalogue and designed to be used with short lines of fifty feet to five miles. Equipped with a transmitter, receiver, three-magnet generator, two telephones, and four batteries, the Pony Magneto Call Telephone sold for $9.50. The phone would have been adequate for requesting the horse and carriage from the caretaker or for receiving an emergency call from the canning factory.

The heavy wooden bed contrasted with the graceful brass bed covered with a light embroidered spread in another bedroom (see below). The ubiquitous hexagonal plant stand and a fern appeared in both bedrooms.

Bedrooms appear relatively infrequently in historical photographs, making richly detailed images such as these two all the more important sources of information about the domestic lives of people in the past. In the photograph on the left, what appears to be an early telephone hangs on the wall between the bed and the washstand.
Little Turkish slippers with pompons appear first (above) on the young girl’s feet and then (right) at the foot of the bed, in another view of the bedroom. The girl is probably Virginia Cuykendall, twelve years old in 1902.
Virginia Cuykendall was twelve in 1902, the year the photographs were taken. In this photograph (left), we see a serious young girl, book in hand, in a small rocking chair. She wore Turkish slippers with pompons and turned-up toes. In the photo below, which shows another angle of the same bedroom, the photographer suggested the girl's presence by placing her slippers at the foot of the ornate bed. (In this smaller photo, the same dresser—with the same pictures tucked in the mirror—had been moved to an opposite corner of the room.)

The room contains a beautiful brass bed, and a dressing table and dresser. Above the corner washstand, towels were hung from a round hanger suspended from a ribbon. On a draped wall shelf, mementos include a framed oval photograph of her father (compare with his portrait on page 101.) The objects dangling from the chandelier appear to be decorated eggs, perhaps a holiday custom.

At the back of the second floor were the maid's or cook's room, the sewing and ironing room, and the back stairs to the kitchen. We can only speculate about what these spaces of the house, as well as the kitchen, pantry, bathrooms, attic, cellar, and carriage house, may have looked like. These areas were apparently not considered appropriate
Virginia Cuykendall was twelve in 1902, the year the photographs were taken. In this photograph (left), we see a serious young girl, book in hand, in a small rocking chair. She wore Turkish slippers with pompons and turned-up toes. In the photo below, which shows another angle of the same bedroom, the photographer suggested the girl's presence by placing her slippers at the foot of the ornate bed. (In this smaller photo, the same dresser—with the same pictures tucked in the mirror—had been moved to an opposite corner of the room.)

The room contains a beautiful brass bed, and a dressing table and dresser. Above the corner washstand, towels were hung from a round hanger suspended from a ribbon. On a draped wall shelf, mementos include a framed oval photograph of her father (compare with his portrait on page 101.) The objects dangling from the chandelier appear to be decorated eggs, perhaps a holiday custom. At the back of the second floor were the maid's or cook's room, the sewing and ironing room, and the back stairs to the kitchen. We can only speculate about what these spaces of the house, as well as the kitchen, pantry, bathrooms, attic, cellar, and carriage house, may have looked like. These areas were apparently not considered appropriate

Little Turkish slippers with pompons appear first (above) on the young girl's feet and then (right) at the foot of the bed, in another view of the bedroom. The girl is probably Virginia Cuykendall, twelve years old in 1902.
or necessary for photographing. No doubt, the family would not have understood our interest today in domestic work spaces of the past.

Today the carriage house, converted into a modern home, is the only part of Cuykendall’s Lyndhurst still standing. The main house was demolished in 1938. Two other houses were built on the lot. Fortunately, thanks to a photographer in 1902, the house in all its turn-of-the-century glory was documented thoroughly through these images.

More importantly, the photographer also documented Cuykendall’s factory in detail. Interior photographs of this period of Iowa factories are rare, and it is only recently that industrial history has been recognized for its importance. And although the Atlantic Canning Company continued for decades after the photos were taken in 1902, the physical structures depicted here would change.

Soon after Cuykendall became sole owner of the Atlantic Canning Company, he replaced most of the 1902 factory buildings. The factory was rebuilt in brick except for the wooden husking sheds (see pages 112-13) and the warehouse. Ironically, when a disastrous fire struck in November 1913, only these two buildings and the brick boiler room (perhaps the building shown here) and smokestacks were spared.

The factory was rebuilt by August 15, 1915, just in time for the corn crop. The new machinery was both more compact and more efficient. It was, as Cuykendall described it in the November 1915 Iowa Factories, “the last word in canning factory construction and equipment.”

Cuykendall continued, “The machinery on the main floor, where the corn is put in the cans, is compact and occupies a space not any larger than a lady’s parlor, where more cans of corn can be turned out than could be turned out with the old machinery which spread itself all over the first floor. The modern canning machinery does away with many of the old steps in the old process.” Cans were closed and sealed not by a crew of men and women, but by a single machine. A steam crane, rather than men, hoisted the cans into the retorts. And the huskers (busy on pages 112-13) were replaced by husking machines.
"The new factory makes necessary only about a fourth of the help formerly employed by Mr. Cuykendall," *Iowa Factories* exalted, "as with the modern equipment one man, boy or girl in many instances can do the work formerly done by several."

Images such as this one are important to historians because they document workday clothing.

The interior of the factory was white enam-
or necessary for photographing. No doubt, the family would not have understood our interest today in domestic work spaces of the past.

Today the carriage house, converted into a modern home, is the only part of Cuykendall's Lyndhurst still standing. The main house was demolished in 1938. Two other houses were built on the lot. Fortunately, thanks to a photographer in 1902, the house in all its turn-of-the-century glory was documented thoroughly through these images.

More importantly, the photographer also documented Cuykendall's factory in detail. Interior photographs of this period of Iowa factories are rare, and it is only recently that industrial history has been recognized for its importance. And although the Atlantic Canning Company continued for decades after the photos were taken in 1902, the physical structures depicted here would change. Soon after Cuykendall became sole owner of the Atlantic Canning Company, he replaced most of the 1902 factory buildings. The factory was rebuilt in brick except for the wooden husking sheds (see pages 112-13) and the warehouse. Ironically, when a disastrous fire struck in November 1913, only these two buildings and the brick boiler room (perhaps the building shown here) and smokestacks were spared.

The factory was rebuilt by August 15, 1915, just in time for the corn crop. The new machinery was both more compact and more efficient. It was, as Cuykendall described it in the November 1915 *Iowa Factories*, "the last word in canning factory construction and equipment."

Cuykendall continued, "The machinery on the main floor, where the corn is put in the cans, is compact and occupies a space not any larger than a lady's parlor, where more cans of corn can be turned out than could be turned out with the old machinery which spread itself all over the first floor. The modern canning machinery does away with many of the old steps in the old process." Cans were closed and sealed not by a crew of men and women, but by a single machine. A steam crane, rather than men, hoisted the cans into the retorts. And the huskers (busy on pages 112-13) were replaced by husking machines.

"The new factory makes necessary only about a fourth of the help formerly employed by Mr. Cuykendall." *Iowa Factories* exalted, "as with the modern equipment one man, boy or girl in many instances can do the work formerly done by several."

The interior of the factory was white enam-
el, and those employees who had direct contact with food wore white uniforms. "This not only insures perfect sanitation," Iowa Factories commented, "but is a very pleasing and satisfactory sight for visitors."

Cuvkendall thought the corn pack would be smaller in 1915, allowing for time to break in the new facilities. But "he intimated that next year would be a big one," Iowa Factories noted, "and that some of those seven million can records which were made in the past, might be equaled or even surpassed them."

The factory's productivity continued. F. D. Simpson, who worked in the factory about 1920, recalled that on Saturdays, "the entire supply [of produce to be canned] had to be cleaned up to keep it from spoiling, so working past midnight was not uncommon. One Saturday afternoon we counted 54 wagons waiting to unload . . . the shucking sheds were already so full." Not much had changed for the farmers—the wait seems to have been just as long in 1920 as it was in 1902.

In 1913, the premier issue of the National Canners Association's Bulletin had featured an article on factory safety, indicating that worker injury continued to be a problem even with the new machinery. At the Atlantic canning factory, for instance, eighteen-year-old Albert Huss lost one finger and part of another in a shucking machine in 1928. The operators wore gloves, but there were no guards on the rolls that fed the machine. The rolls caught Huss's glove and pulled in his hand. A week later another man lost a finger in a similar accident.

Huss remembers in great detail his work at the canning factory. He was making thirty-five cents an hour, working long days especially during the corn-canning season of 1928. He lost his fingers his first year. Compensation insurance paid his doctor and hospital bills and allotted him $6 a week for fifty-five weeks. He was also assigned to lighter and less dangerous work while recovering from his injury. Huss commented recently, "I have been asked many times if my fingers went into the canned corn. Definitely not. They went with the shucks."

After Cuvkendall died in 1935, the factory changed hands several times. By the late 1930s and early 1940s, as operations became even more automated, more women than men were hired. For the Paulsen family, the seasonal canning job meant being able to afford school clothes for their nine children and coal for their stove. In the late 1930s, Florence Paulsen operated a husking machine, and Harry Paulsen worked with the retort crew (the rest of the year he worked in quarries near Lewis). Their daughter, Norma Madsen, remembers the women canners, grown quite giddy, sticking corn silk "moustaches" under their noses. She also recalls neighborhood children pilfering fresh corn.

In 1949 the factory was purchased by a group of local men anxious to keep it operating. Green beans, yellow beans, and corn were canned, the beans harvested by Mexican labor. This, however, was to be its last season. The canning industry was struggling with competition from the new technology of frozen foods.

In 1951, the buildings were leased and later purchased by Walnut Grove Products, a manufacturer of livestock and poultry minerals. The new owners sold the old factory machinery to Esidor Chinitz, the co-authors' father, with the proviso that it all should be removed without damage to the buildings. Newlyweds Ben and Goldie Chinitz, Esidor's son and daughter-in-law, got most of the unlabeled canned food from the sale (suppers were something of a surprise for the couple that year). Some of the equipment was sold to other Midwest canning companies. Up until a few years ago, a local farmer, Vallie Pellett, was still using some of the conveyor system in his cattle feeding operation. A smoke stack, similar to the one pictured on page 115, was bought by a farmer from Exira who used the sections as culverts. But most of the equipment was dismantled, cut up with blow torches, and sold for scrap. Over the course of the next decade, the buildings themselves were demolished; the last wall was knocked down in 1969.

The Atlantic Canning Company, which had once claimed to be the largest cannery in the country, had canned beans, peas, to-
tomatoes, pumpkin, and corn. The products were widely distributed. During World War II, the brother of Dorothy Hughes of nearby Lewis was stationed in Germany. One day on KP duty he found corn canned by the Atlantic Canning Company on the menu. Nicholas Appert’s method of food preservation, devised for Napoleon’s troops nearly 150 years earlier, was feeding yet another army.

Little remains today to remind us of the Atlantic Canning Company and of the Cuykendall house. Some citizens of Cass County remember working at the cannery; a few remember the Cuykendalls. Now and then a can of Atlantic vegetables surfaces. A clock from the home was purchased by our parents at a house sale after J. W. Cuykendall died. Its chime signaled every half hour. Eventually, it became a cherished showpiece in co-author Phillip Chinitz’s home.

The 1902 photographs, twenty-nine of them published for the first time here, remain the most compelling evidence of the Atlantic Canning Company’s productivity and its role in the local economy. The photographs also give us glimpses of the Victorian surroundings in which the Cuykendall family lived.

In the early 1980s, Lowell Clausen, a retired high school science teacher, gave some boxes of glass plate negatives, labeled “1902,” to co-author Phillip Chinitz. The negatives sat on a shelf for some time before he examined them and realized they were of Cuykendall’s factory and house. Could that beautiful clock our parents had purchased be in one of the images of the house? Indeed, eventually it was spied on the mantel in the photograph of the hall (see page 120).

Because of the historical importance of the images to Iowa history, Phillip Chinitz donated the collection to the State Historical Society of Iowa in 1993; it is housed in the Society’s archives in Des Moines. The photographs are an eloquent step back in time, illustrating not only how one family in Atlantic lived, but also how many other Atlantic and Cass County citizens earned their living.

NOTE ON SOURCES

Sources used for information on the canning factory include histories of Atlantic and Cass County, Iowa; articles in the Atlantic News Telegraph and the Messenger; annual reports of the Iowa Bureau of Labor Statistics and Department of Agriculture; research bulletins of the National Canners’ Association; “Atlantic Canning Company,” Iowa Factories (Nov. 1915). On the development of the industry nationally and internationally, see A. W. Bitting, Appertizing: or the Art of Canning; its History and Development (San Francisco: Trade Pressroom, 1937); Earl Chapin Mays, The Canning Clan (New York: MacMillan, 1938); and S. A. Goldblith, “A Concise History of the Science and History of Thermal Processing,” Food Technology (Dec. 1971, Jan. 1972). Among sources on American Victorian interiors, these were especially helpful: William Seale, The Tasteful Interlude: American Interiors through the Camera’s Eye, 1860-1917 (New York: Praeger, 1975); and Harold Peterson, Americans at Home (New York: Scribner, 1971). The authors are grateful to Alice M. Goold, Dorothy E. Hughes, Al Huss, and Norma Madsen for writing to the authors about their memories of the Atlantic Canning Company, and to Jeanette Emmert Lee for information about her grandparents’ home.