

ISCHUA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE STORY OF THE STAR-DELL PLANT

SENTINEL PRESS, OCT. 25, 1955 from the [Marjorie Graves](#) scrapbook

Nine years ago was the starting point for this business here founded by Joseph H. Meyer Jr., John McClory, and John Cash. Meyer is the sole owner today and the plant keeps between 40 and 50 men and women busy daily, handling vegetables by the carloads.

The man wrestling with this operation is a former wrestler and professional football player. A native of White Plains, New York, he had attended Hobart College at Geneva, where he met John Cash of Franklinville. He settled here for a more central location for his pro wrestling tours, which ranged between Pittsburgh and Canada.

During a lay-off from the mat, he and Cash tangled with a surplus of Danish cabbage on the John McClory farm, intending to make sauerkraut for sale. A visit to a sauerkraut plant discouraged the attempt on the small investment Meyers had on hand. So he and Cash switched to cole slaw as an outlet for the McClory cabbage. That start, with their wives pitching in cutting cabbage and rutabaga by hand and mixing it by hand has grown into the business today, an operation of over half a million dollars in sales.

Meyer, who was a second lieutenant in the infantry and a major after four years of service, is still built like the pro who can pin a 225 pounder with ease.

Chief brands produced at Star-Dell are "Oswayo Valley," "Star-Dell," "Four Star," "Howdy Doody" and "Western." Under these names and packed and sealed in colorful transparent containers, vegetable go to independent and chain groceries, Loblaws, Atlantic and Pacific, Market Basket Red and White, Grand Union and other chains buy and sell Franklinville packaged vegetables. The operation here covers production and storage space of over 21,000 square feet.

Fresh-grown vegetables come to Franklinville from as far as California and Texas, but Star-Dell handles local produce too.

In 1954, the "Howdy Doody" Craze reached Star-Dell, when Mr. Meyers bought rights for the use of the name from Kagan Corp. Store displays for that brand name were set up with all the fanfare of a movie premier. Entertainers flew in from New York. "Clarabelle" toured the City of Buffalo recently in a motorcade led by state and city police and children flocked to three supermarkets there and in Niagara Falls, for the beginning of "Howdy Doody" brand sale of vegetables.

Recently, Joe Meyer, a leader in conservation, volunteered his assistance to the Soil Conservation Service in helping solve a problem of waste disposal, in the interest of clean water in Ischua Creek. He initiated the action without public complaint, to preserve the natural setting along the shores here and encourage fishing. Star-Dell paid the cost for care of waste from its plant with no urging from the outside, by using soil conservation principles of drainage and concern, with both the growing farm produce and the processing of farm produce.

Submitted by: William Watkins, Machias Deputy Town Historian