

THE BURT OLNEY STORY

This all got started when a few bottle diggers uncovered a ketchup bottle! Now most of these types of bottles are called by various names, like “Tomato Bitters” as you throw it over your shoulder. Most ketchup bottles are not embossed, a few companies were proud enough to put their name on the bottle, but these bottles are of local interest and are not very common. This is the story of the Burt Olney Canning Factory of Oneida, NY. Up until September 21, 2005 the only bottle I have ever seen from this company was a 8 oz size embossed in a round slug plate on the shoulder “The Burt Olney (arc/Oneida NY/ Canning Co. (arc). On the above date I found a 16 oz size in the old Utica Dump! I’m sure other diggers have seen them, but paid no attention to them at all – just another “Tomato Bitters.”

The Olney family members have long been connected with the food canning industry since George Brill Olney joined with the Floyd family (1880) to make the Olney and Floyd Company of canned goods with factories at Westernville and Delta. The story of this Olney & Floyd Co is a long and interesting one that will not be included here.

Burt Olney (1858 – 1914) was a cousin of George B. Olney (1852 – 1929) and it was he who on the 20th of January 1902 organized the Burt Olney Canning Co in Oneida, NY. The certificate of incorporation states, “the purpose for which it is to be formed are to can and preserve all kinds of fruits and vegetables, to raise and cultivate the same and to manufacture tin cans.” The Directors for the 1st year are as follows:

Burt Olney Rome, NY
William R. Olney Rome, NY
Nora C. Olney Rome, NY

In 1919, Cady and W.R. Olney helped form the N.Y State Cannery Incorporated. At this time the Burt Olney Co. had plants at Oneida, Chittenango, Fayetteville, Blossvale, Albion, and Medina. This group of companies bought out in the early 1920’s the T.A. Snider Preserve Co. in Chicago and the name of the firm The Snider Packing Co. Later it became the Birds Eye – Snider Division of the General Foods Corporation. This article continues and while on the subject of Olney’s, no one can or should ever omit the names of George and Max with their mid state vegetable canneries, and an industry renowned machine shop, noted for it’s flotation washers and other stand-bys. This machine shop is still in operation in Westernville!

H.J. Dean

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1. From data supplied to the author by John B. Olney, Westernville, NY
2. Our Country and Its People – Oneida, NY by Wagner, 1896
3. Food Production/Management – July 1978



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