

Missouri Valley Creamery

One of the first industries in Townsend (other than agriculture) was the Missouri Valley Creamery – later named The Broadwater County Creamery Company.

The first discussions of creating a creamery for the Townsend community started in January of 1904. An article in the Townsend Star in January, 1904 stated

“An interesting group was addressed at a meeting held in the courthouse at which time Senator Whipple made a proposition feasible by reciting his experience with a Creamery in Stevensville. Professor Elliot of the Bozeman Agricultural College gave statistics and explained the advantages to farmers who have milk to sell.”

In February of 1904 a number of shareholders met at the Courthouse and selected J.R. Marks (partner of W.E. Tierney and longtime manager of the Townsend House), Julius Berg (the Berg brothers’ built Jeannie Steeles building and the Lakeside distillery building), J.P. Kearns (long time president of the State Bank of Townsend), Frank X. Dolenty, Guy Dean, J.W. Johnson, D.J. McCarthy, Peter J. Meloy and W.C. Everson as the Board of Directors. There were fifty-five shareholders (1 share apiece at \$100 a share) making a total of \$5500 to start the Creamery.

The same spirit that created the town and built schools and churches, built and equipped the creamery in less than three months. On June 27, 1904 the Missouri Valley Creamery had its Grand Opening. The Montana Secretary of State listing shows that the Creamery was incorporated on July 14, 1904.

Many people were present to witness the first wheels as they separated the first 1580 pounds of milk from the cream on the initial run of the Creamery. A few days later after the cream had aged, the first churning produced 75lbs of butter.

The name of the Creamery was changed from the Missouri Valley Creamery to the Broadwater County Creamery Company and the “Primrose” brand name was chosen for the Creamery brand. For many years the Primrose brand of butter took state honors. The Primrose ice cream, buttermilk and cheese were held in high esteem throughout the state.

By 1912, the Creamery was producing 200,000 pounds of butter. In 1913, the production was at 700 pounds a day.

In 1923, the Primrose butter took first place in the U.S. Department of Agriculture earning a rating of 90 while competitive brands came in at 80 (and some as low as 50). The State Butter Makers chose Townsend for their convention city in 1915 and in 1916.

The Creamery celebrated its thirty years of success in 1934 at the Greyson Creek ranch of Peter J. Meloy. It was estimated there were 500 cars and 1500 people in attendance. That year the Creamery won first place in the State Show in Bozeman for the Primrose ice cream and third place for the Primrose butter.

The Creamery ran smoothly with considerable improvements over the years until a fire destroyed the building in 1945. A new Creamery building was built and is now the office building, "The Creamery Building" on Front Street.

In 1951, the Creamery received a "Token of Merit" for being the best creamery in ten counties at the 26th Association meeting in Great Falls.

The information in this article was mainly from the Broadwater Bygones. The Bygones is available at the Broadwater County Museum. Visit the Museum for more information about the Broadwater County Creamery Company.