

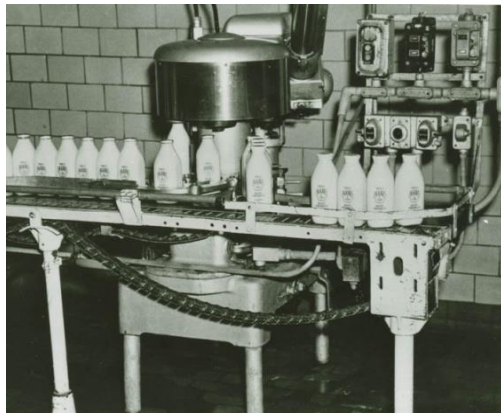
ELMHURST HISTORY HIGHLIGHT: Rabe's Dairy

Rabe's Dairy (pronounced "rabies") was one of the earliest home-based industries in Elmhurst. In 1910, German immigrant and dairy farm manager Fred Rabe opened his own family-operated dairy in basement of his home. Located at 139 East First Street, Rabe's Dairy bottled and delivered approximately eight cans of milk per day. A stable was built on the premises to house horses and delivery wagons, and the milk was acquired from dairy farmers in the Elmhurst vicinity.



Rabe's Dairy delivery wagon, 1914, M2011.12.32

By 1917, growth of the business led to the building of a separate dairy facility at 135 E. First Street and expansion became necessary within five years. The plant was upgraded to modern standards, and according to a local newspaper account in the late 1920s, the dairy was "one of the most modern in northern Illinois." By 1930, Rabe's Dairy employed 30 men, had a delivery fleet of 15 wagons and trucks, and delivered over 200 cans of milk per day throughout Du Page County.



Rabe's Dairy, 1935. M2011.12.27

Fred Rabe sold his business to Borden Co. in 1930 and retired; however, retirement did not suit him well. He and his two sons, Walter and Raymond, repurchased the business in 1935 and started Fred H. Rabe & Sons. The company boasted that the dairy farms were so close that the fresh milk arrived in Rabe's pasteurizing plant within three hours of the morning milking. The company's advertising slogan was "*Our Products Please Particular People.*" Fred Rabe passed away in 1943, and the company continued until 1959.

By Nancy Wilson, Elmhurst History Museum Staff, Updated October 2021