

**LOUISIANA'S
SHRIMP
INDUSTRY:**

**THE ASIAN-
CAJUN CONNECTION
1699-1975**



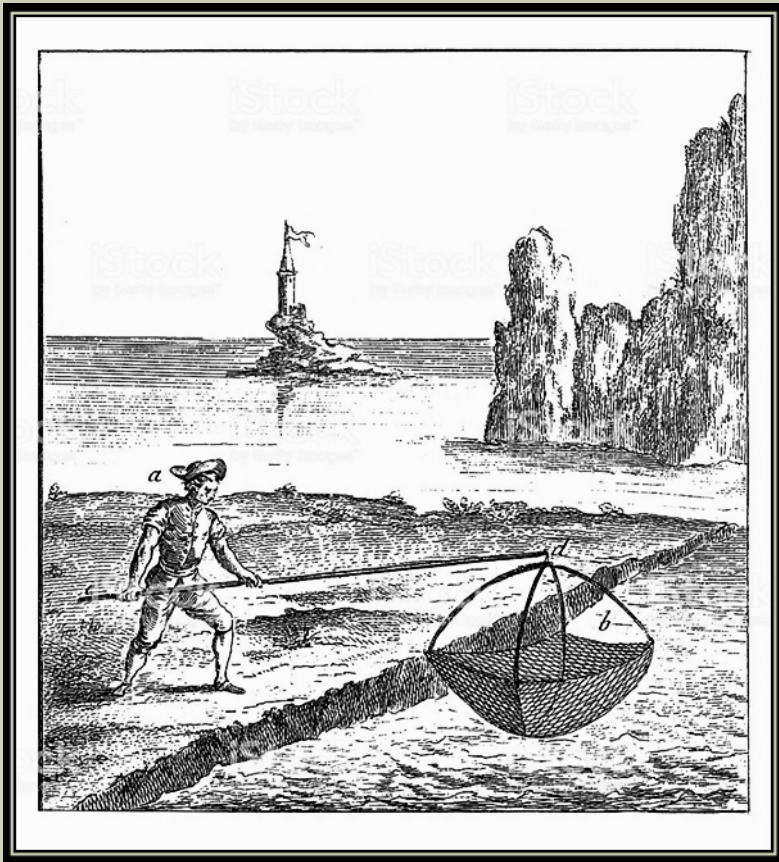
Phase I

COLONIAL AND ANTEBELLUM ERAS, 1699-1860

Drunkard's Food

“In France, around La Rochelle and in various other cities or seaports, they commonly refer to this fish [i.e., shrimp] as drunkard's meat. This is particularly true of European shrimp which are quite small.”

Dumont de Montigny,
Louisiana colonist, early 1750s



IN THE BEGINNING – FRESHWATER PRAWNS



Macrobrachium ohione

Photo by Ray Bauer, University of Louisiana

FRESHWATER PRAWNS

- Dietary staple of the poor at least from antebellum times to the 20th century.
- River shrimp were more highly prized than lake shrimp because of their “delicately flavored flesh”.
- So few persons were involved in Louisiana’s fresh shrimp industry that they didn’t merit mention in the 1850 census—the first to document occupations comprehensively. (Oystermen and other varieties of commercial fishermen were enumerated.)

FRESHWATER PRAWNS



Note the split-oak baskets fashioned into a trap (lower left).

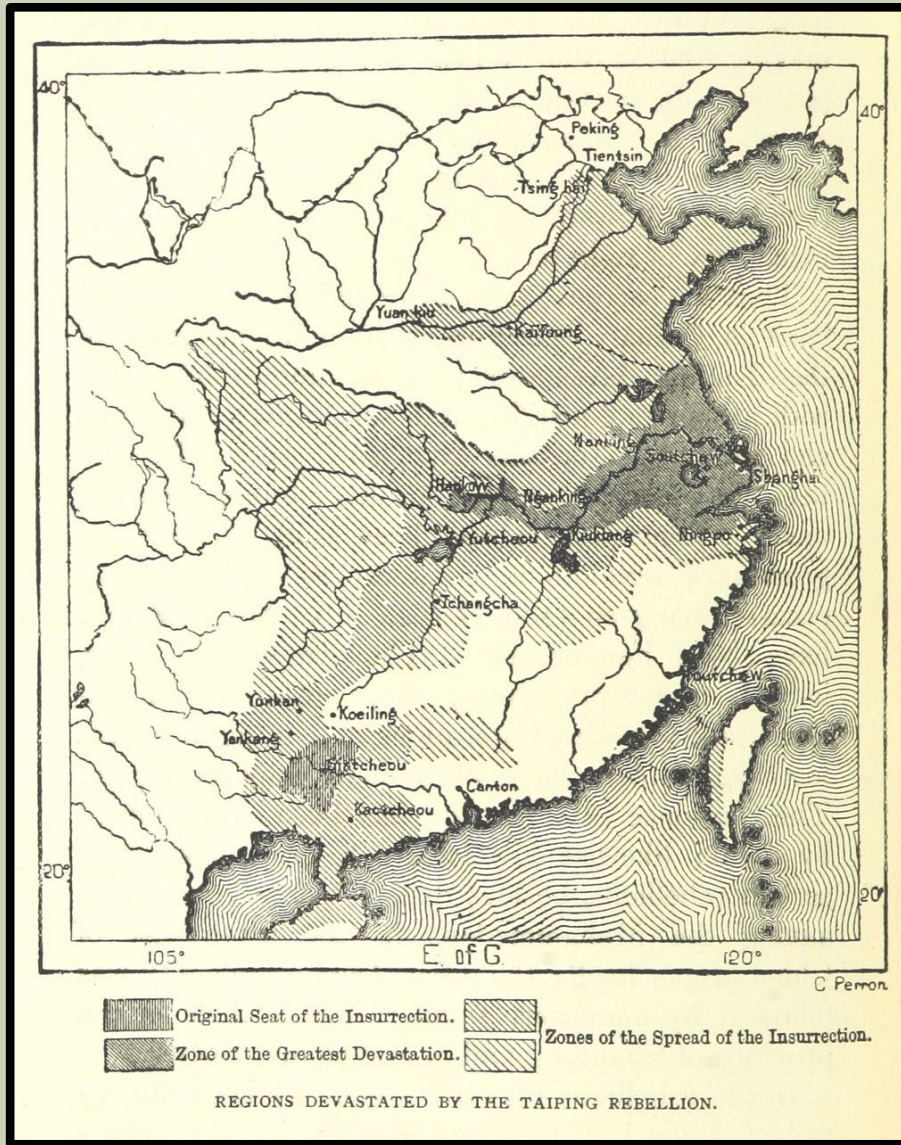
PHASE 2 - DRIED SHRIMP



PHASE 2 - DRIED SHRIMP

- River shrimp consumption remained dominant so long in the antebellum New Orleans-area largely because of logistical issues.
- Shrimp are highly perishable in seasonable Gulf Coast heat and humidity and, as a result, the New Orleans area shrimp harvest was effectively limited to a 20-mile radius from the city's open-air markets before the age of refrigeration.
- It was not until the introduction of ancient Asian drying technology that the shrimp industry moved beyond the Crescent City's geographical shadow.

TAIPING REBELLION, 1850-1864



- Millions of casualties
- Millions more displaced
- Resulting Outmigration

PHASE 2 – DRIED SHRIMP

- By the 1880s, the coastal marshes of Louisiana's southeastern parishes were dotted with thriving communities centered around elevated shrimp drying platforms.
- At its peak (1900-1915), the industry boasted at least 95 drying platform communities.
- These platforms were sometimes enormous — with surface areas of up to three acres.

PHASE 2 – DRIED SHRIMP

THE VITAL SAN FRANCISCO CONNECTION

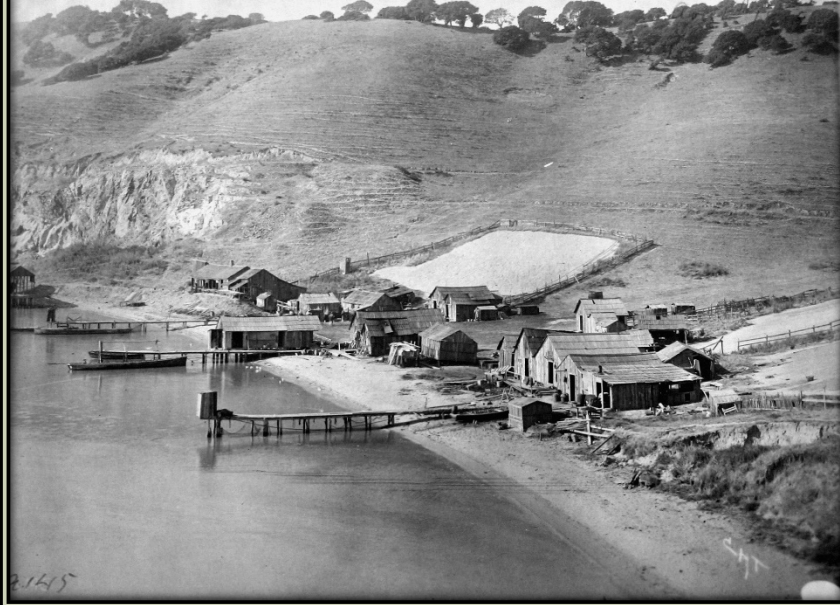


CAPITALIZATION
DOMESTIC
CONSUMERS



ASIAN EXPORTS
LABOR BEFORE 1882

Camp, drying ground etc,
Pt. San Pedro San Francisco Bay



2.145



Drying Skins
San Francisco Bay
88-89.

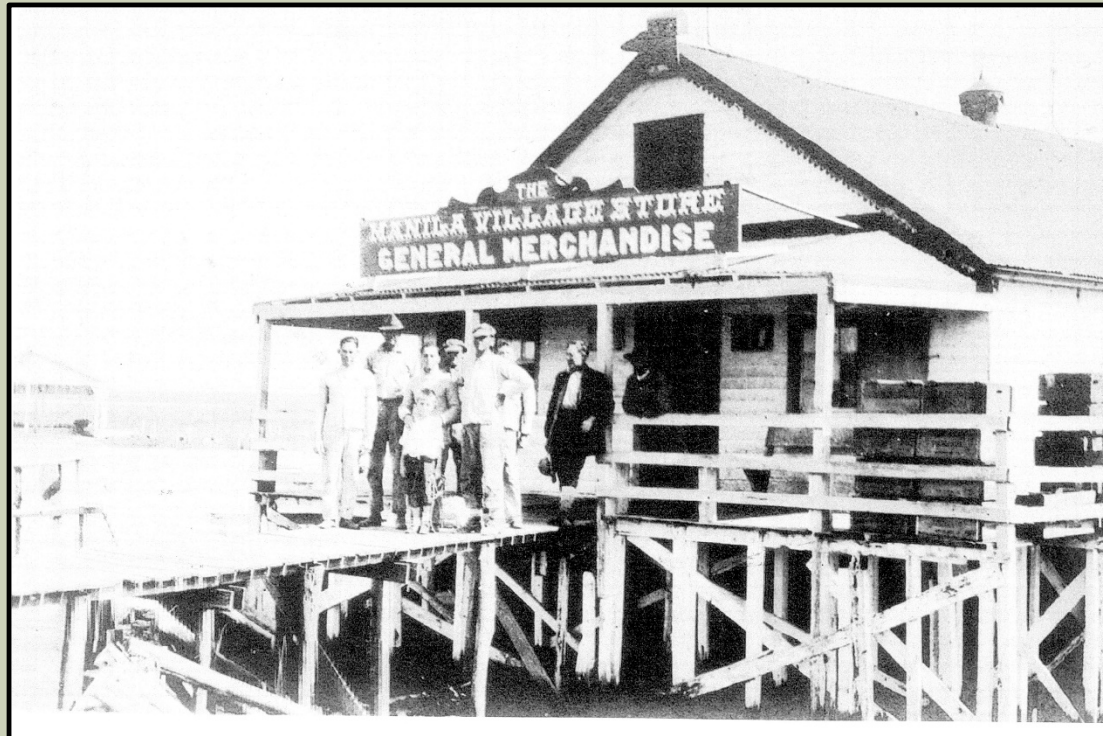


Treading out dried skins



PHASE 2 – DRIED SHRIMP

- These isolated communities were largely self-contained, and, in addition to processing facilities, most boasted dormitories and/or modest homes, general stores, and even post offices.



**“Platform” seine crews
and brine boilers in
marshes west of the
Mississippi River.**





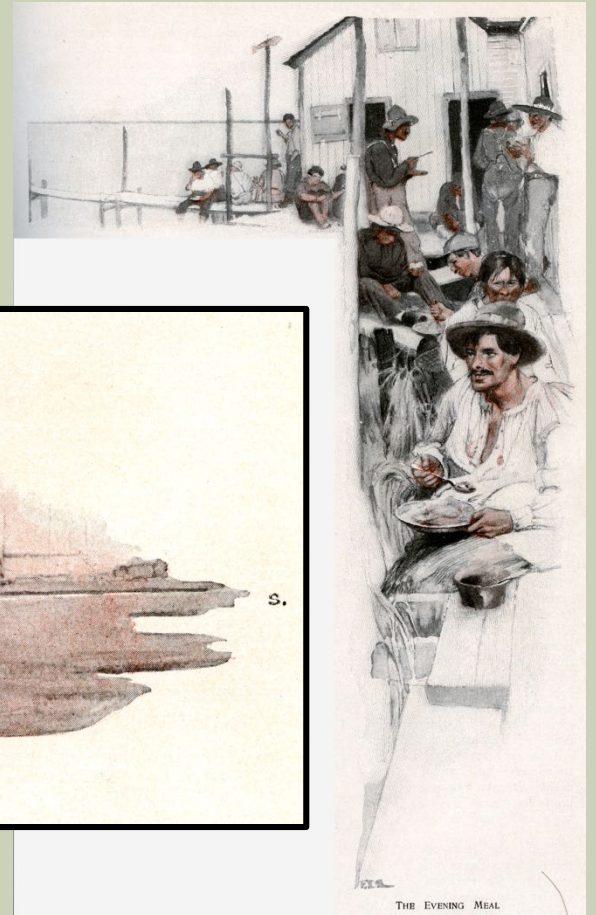
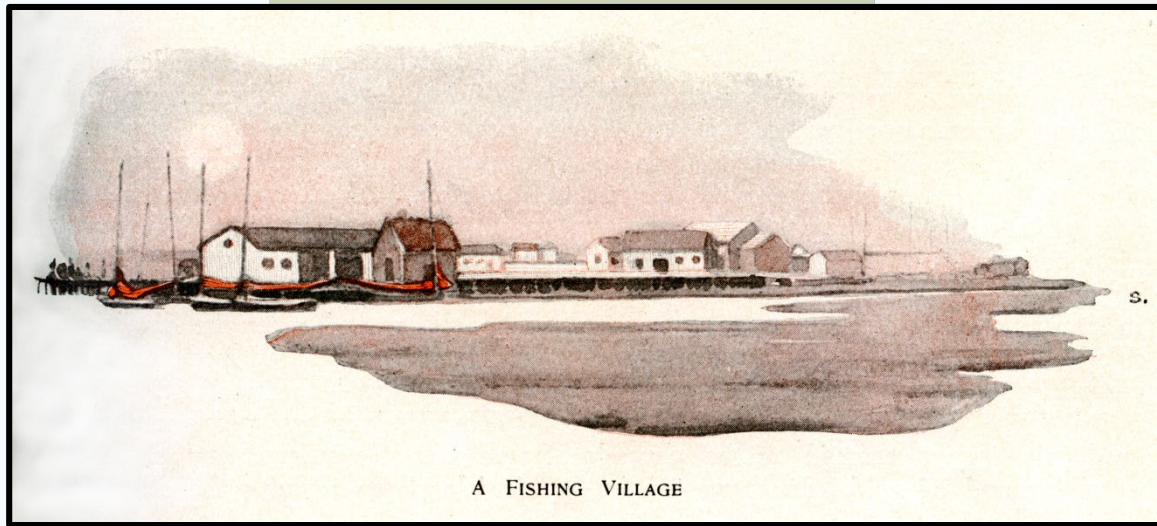
**Between 1915 and 1930,
hurricanes destroyed many
platforms. Most were never
rebuilt.**



PHASE 2 – DRIED SHRIMP

- These communities often had surprisingly large, diverse, multi-generational populations.
- One contemporary observer maintained that Manila Village alone had a population of over 300 at the turn of the 20th century.

PHASE 2 – DRIED SHRIMP

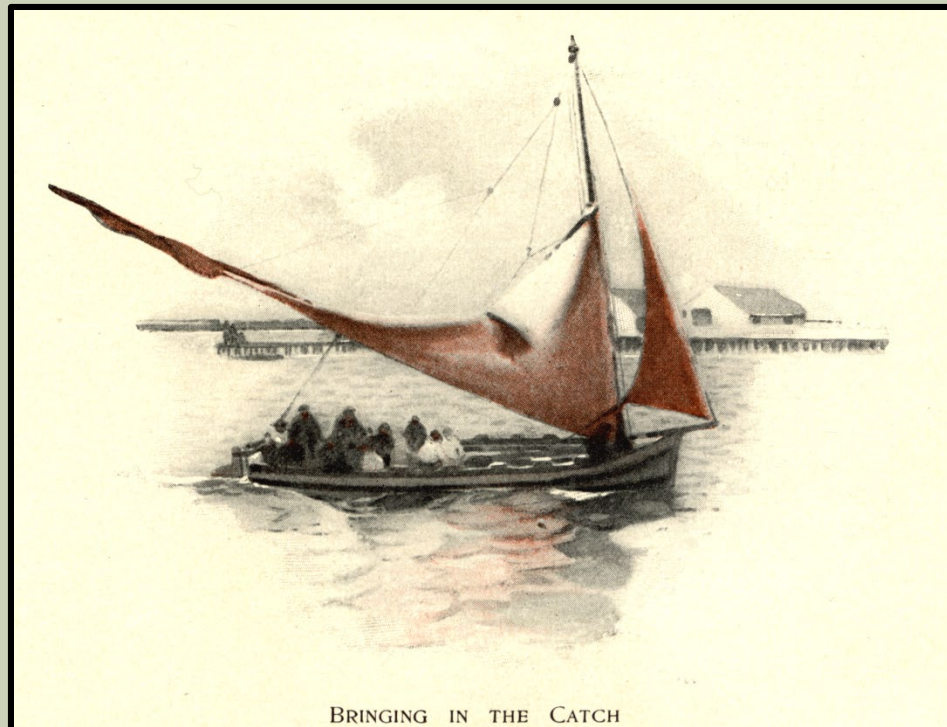


PHASE 2 – DRIED SHRIMP

- Anecdotal information suggests that isolated platform communities were run by individuals who wielded authority with an iron fist.’
- This included dried-shrimp industry pioneer Mme Quong Wo [Wu?], a widow who worked harder than anyone on her platform:
- “Many of the fishermen hired in the shrimp fisheries entered it with the impression that they could manage it better than a mere woman, but it never took Mrs. Quong more than seventeen minutes by the sun — she didn’t have a clock — to lay before such ambitious fishermen the alternative of abandoning either that impression — or the fisheries.”
 - Washington, DC, *Morning Times*, Feb 2, 1896.

PHASE 2 – DRIED SHRIMP

- Production Routine:
- Fresh shrimp were taken from inland waters by seines drawn by work crews. Catch was transported to platforms aboard luggers.

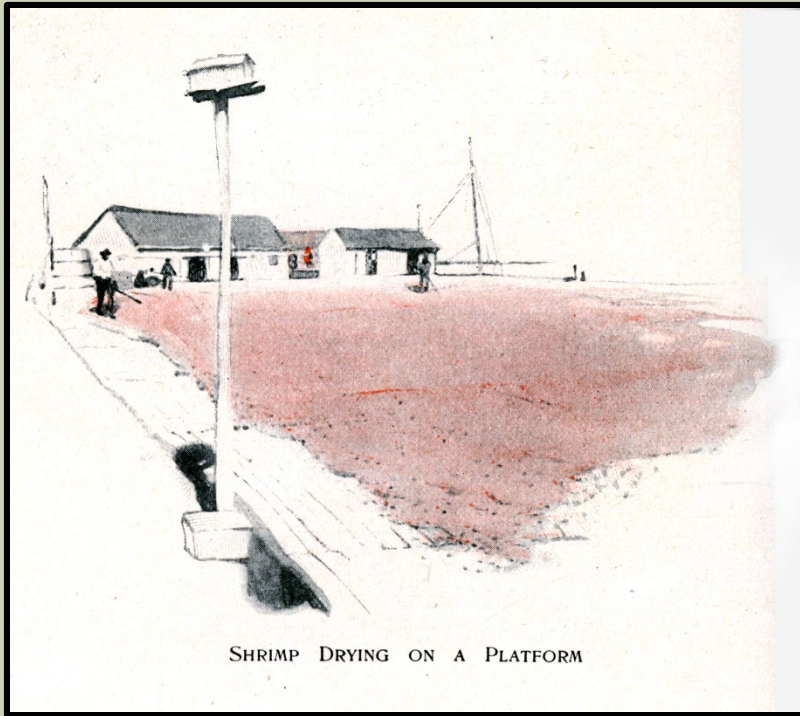


BRINGING IN THE CATCH

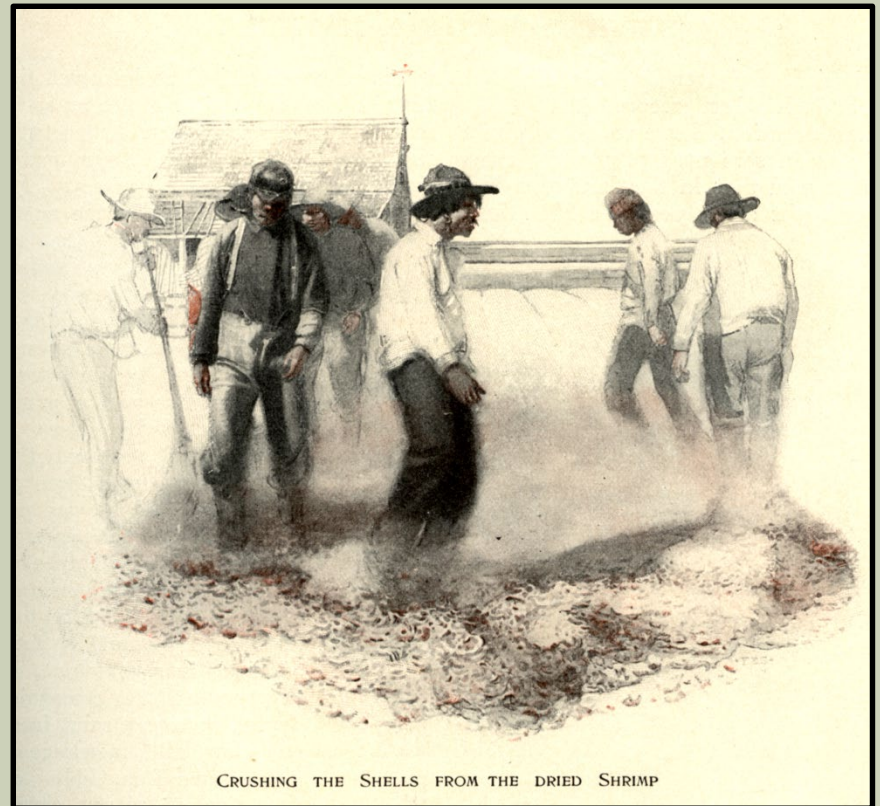
PHASE 2 – DRIED SHRIMP

- “The shrimp are boiled in salt water for twenty minutes. They are then scooped out of the vat into wheelbarrows and carried out onto the drying space. Here they are spread out in a single layer to be dried in the sun. At night and during inclement weather the shrimp are raked to the top of the crests of the waves in the platform and covered with tarpaulins. The tarpaulins [*sic*] do not touch the shrimp, but are laid over a wooden framework which has the shape of an inverted V. About eighteen hours of sunshine are required to dry the shrimp properly. After drying, the heads and hulls [are removed by workers “dancing the shrimp”]. The dried shrimp eats are then packed in paper-lined barrels.”
 - *Early 20th century description of Louisiana shrimp drying*

PHASE 2 – DRIED SHRIMP



SHRIMP DRYING ON A PLATFORM



CRUSHING THE SHELLS FROM THE DRIED SHRIMP

PHASE 2 – DRIED SHRIMP

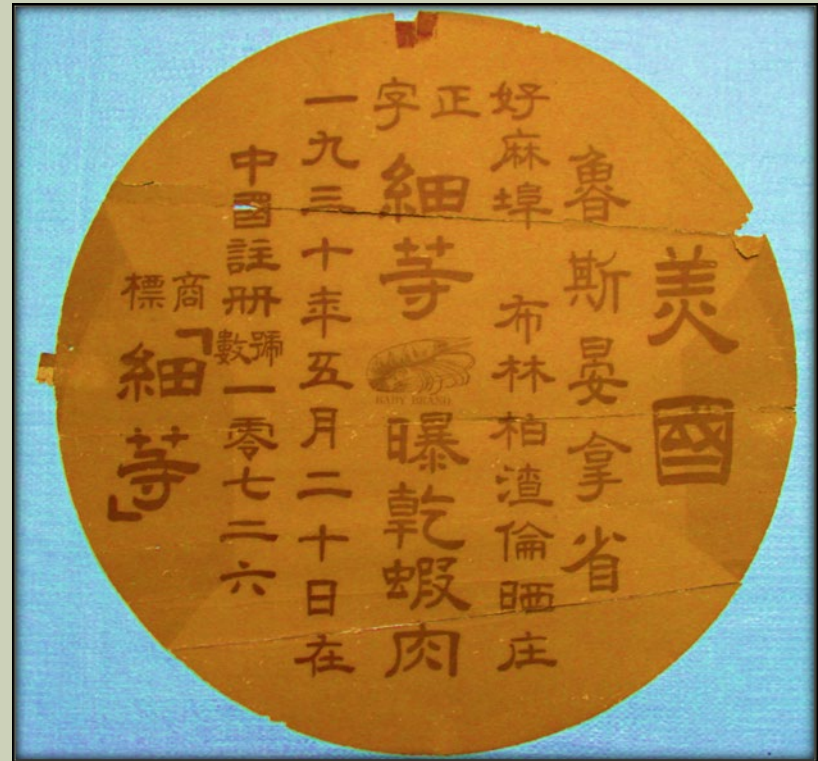
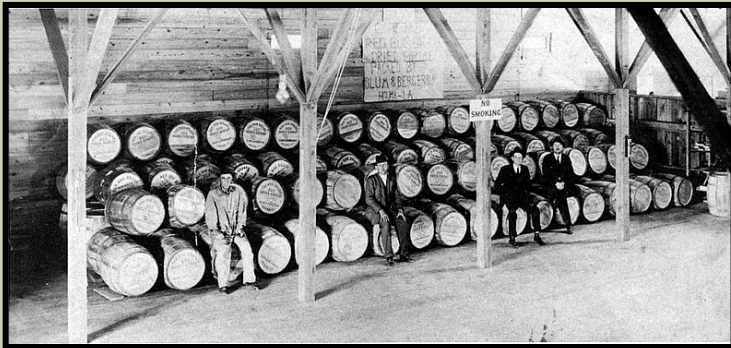


Baratarian Luggers at the Fruit Landing.

PHASE 2 – DRIED SHRIMP

- Dried shrimp were placed in barrels and transported by lugger to New Orleans for shipment to domestic and foreign markets.
- DOMESTIC MARKETS:
 - A) Primarily American cities with large Chinatowns, such as New York
 - B) Much smaller market in Catholic South Louisiana
- FOREIGN MARKETS: But the bulk of the dried shrimp were exported
 - A) to Cuba and Central America
 - B) to China via San Francisco

PHASE 2 – DRIED SHRIMP

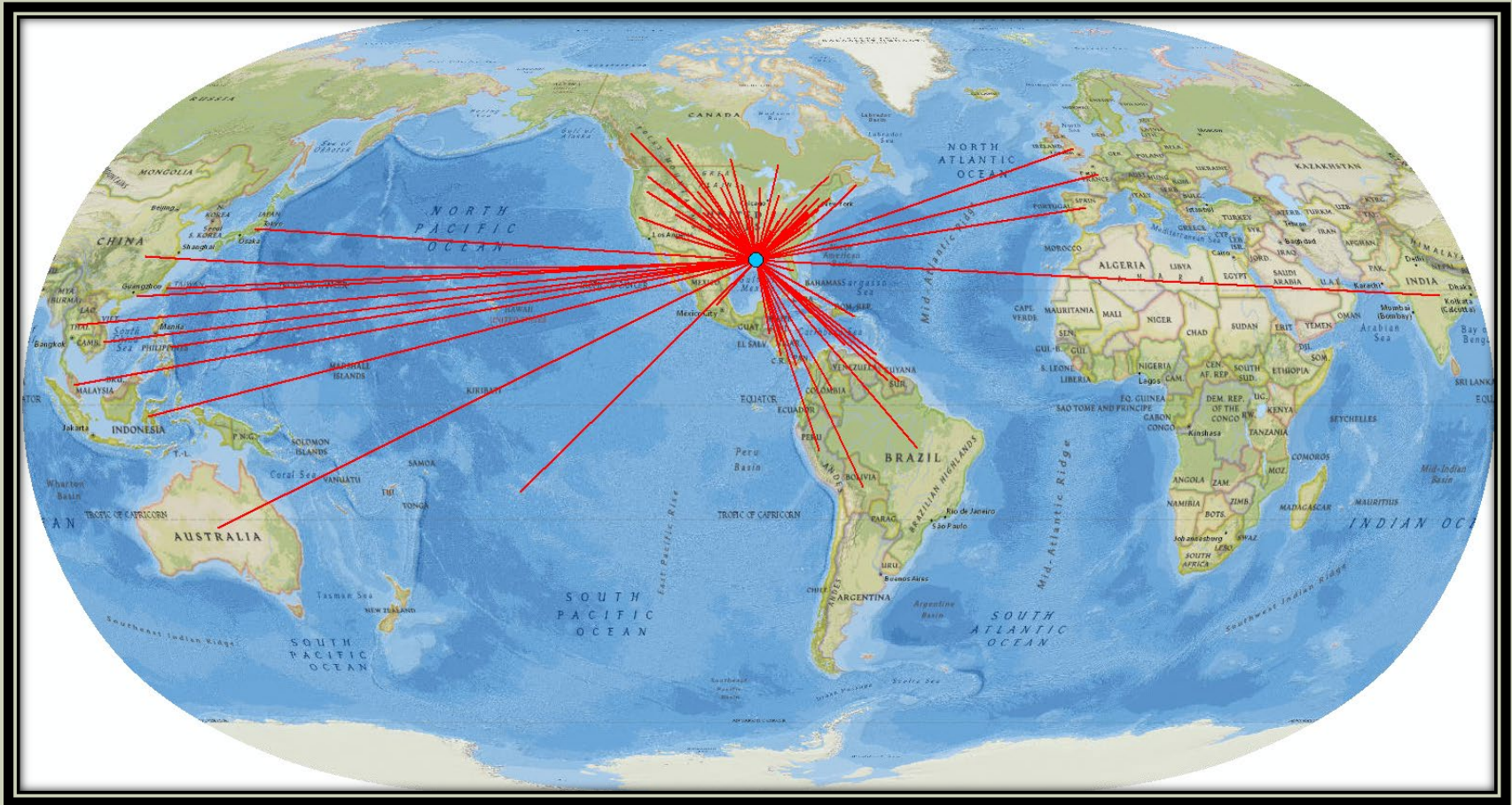


BLUM AND BERGERON, EST. 1913

PHASE 2 – DRIED SHRIMP



Phase 2 – Dried Shrimp



Map by Dewitt Braud, Louisiana Sea Grant

PHASE 2 - DRIED SHRIMP

STATE OF LOUISIANA, }
PARISH OF ORLEANS }

Whereas, Lee Yen whose photograph is hereto attached, is about to depart for China intending to return to the United States.

Now, therefore, for the better identification of the said Lee Yen

and in order to facilitate his landing on his said return, we, the undersigned persons, being persons other than Chinese, do severally state under oath that we have known the said Lee Yen as a resident of the City of New Orleans, Louisiana, for the number of years set opposite our respective names below, that he is by occupation a merchant in good standing, engaged in buying and selling merchandise, to-wit: as a member of the San Francisco Quong Sun and Company dealer in Fish and Shrimp, & Chinese Groceries doing business at 315 Chartres Street New Orleans, State of Louisiana, and that he now resides at said location and during the entire year antecedent to the date Nov 27 1910 he engaged in no manual labor except such as was necessary in the conduct of said business, as such merchant. That he has been engaged in such business for more than one year last past, and that he is an actual owner of a partnership interest in the business of Quong Sun & Co affiant further says that his personal employment in said business is that of Ass't Manager. Affiants further say that they recognize the attached photograph as that of said Lee Yen


New Orleans, Jan 4th 1910; and affiants say on information and belief that his interest in said business is of the extent of \$1000.00

NAMES	ADDRESSES	YEARS
<u>Baptiste Coste</u>	<u>1025 St Louis St, N.O., La</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>M. Frank</u>	<u>121 Cornwell St, N.O., La</u>	<u>7</u>

Sworn to and subscribed before me at New Orleans, La., this 25 day of January, 1910

I CERTIFY that I know Baptiste Coste and M. Frank whose names are signed above both of whom are persons other than Chinese, and both of whom are credible persons whose statements are entitled to weight and belief.

Henry Chinbelle
United States Commissioner,
E. Dist of La., New Orleans, La.



Department of Commerce and Labor
IMMIGRATION SERVICE

Office of COMMISSIONER
NEW ORLEANS, LA.
Port of NOV 8 - 1910, 1910

To COMMISSIONER OF IMMIGRATION,
Chinese and Immigrant Inspector
NEW ORLEANS, LA.

Sir: It being my intention to leave the United States on a temporary visit abroad, and to depart and return through the Chinese port of entry of SAN FRANCISCO, CAL., I hereby apply, under the provisions of Rule 15 of the Regulations of the Department of Commerce and Labor, for reinvestigation of my claimed status as a lawfully domiciled MERCHANT.

I submit herewith the names of two (or more) "credible witnesses other than Chinese" who can testify of their own knowledge that for at least one year immediately preceding the date of this application I have been engaged in the occupation of a MERCHANT, and have not performed any manual labor except such as was necessary in the conduct of my said occupation. I am prepared to appear personally and to produce before you at such time and place as you may designate the said witnesses and (if a merchant) the partnership or other books of the firm in which I claim membership.

The following are the names of my witnesses are:
Herbert Raymond, #111 Carondelet St., New Orleans, La.
Dr. C. C. Souchon, 309 Royal St., New Orleans, La.

WONG SUN
TO BE FILLED OUT IF MERCHANT

The firm in which I claim membership is known as Quong Sun & Co.
Address No. 315 Chartres St. S. City NEW ORLEANS, LA. State La.

My partners in said business are as set forth in the partnership list of our firm filed

My interest therein amounts to \$ 1000 and was acquired in Feb. 18, 1892, 19 . It is not my intention to dispose of such interest while absent from the United States. During the entire year last past I have performed no manual labor other than that necessary to the conduct of the said mercantile business.

TO BE FILLED OUT IF TEACHER OR STUDENT

I have been engaged during the entire year last past in the occupation of teaching or studying (name branches taught or studied)

at the following place or places _____ and during the said time have not engaged in the performance of manual labor.

Signature in Chinese 作連

Signature in English Chack Lin

Address # 315 Chartres St., New Orleans, La.

Height 5 feet 11 inches 11 inches

Physical marks or peculiarities Deformed thumb

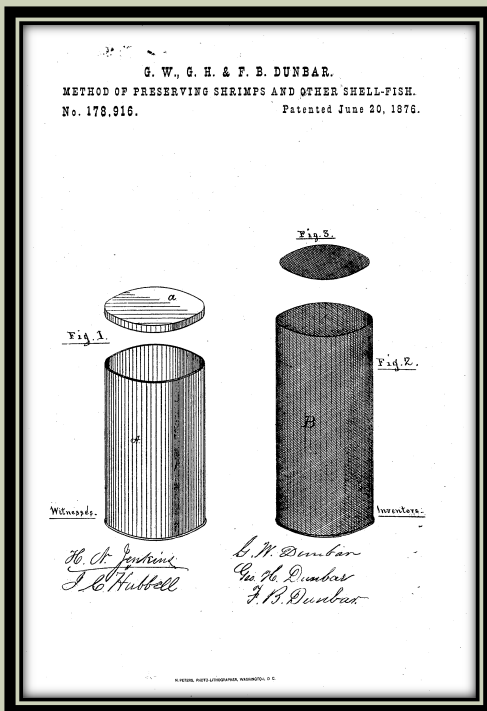
Subscribed and sworn to before me, this 8th day of November, 1910.

W. B. Brough
Chinese and Immigrant Inspector.

Quong Sun and Company, Fish, Shrimp and Chinese Groceries

PHASE 3 – CANNING

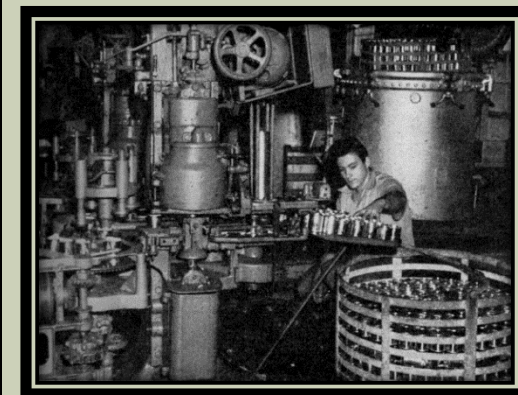
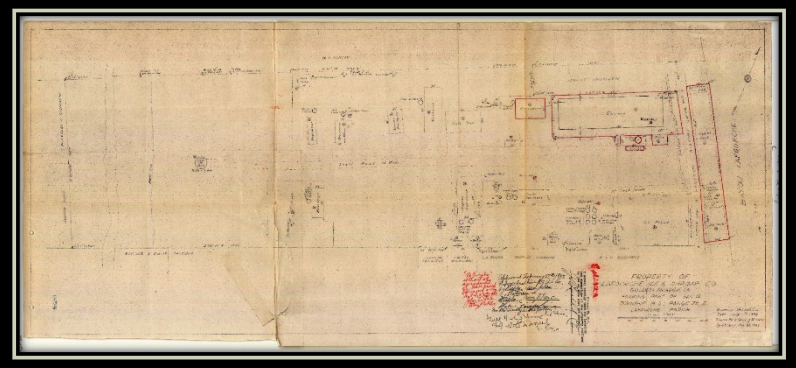
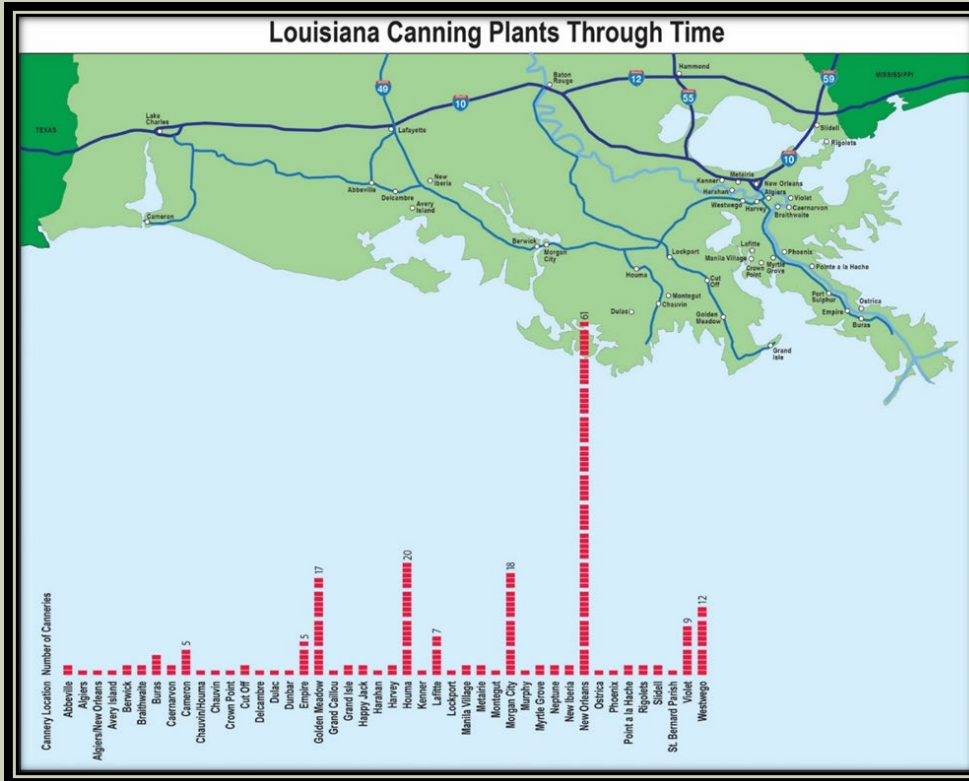
In 1875, the Dunbar family established, to our knowledge, the nation's first shrimp cannery at New Orleans. Shrimp canning, presented unique technological challenges because of the chemical properties of the crustacean itself, as the tin precipitated a dark discoloration in the shrimp.



A textile lining was patented and protected the shrimp from the can's tin.



PHASE 3 – CANNING



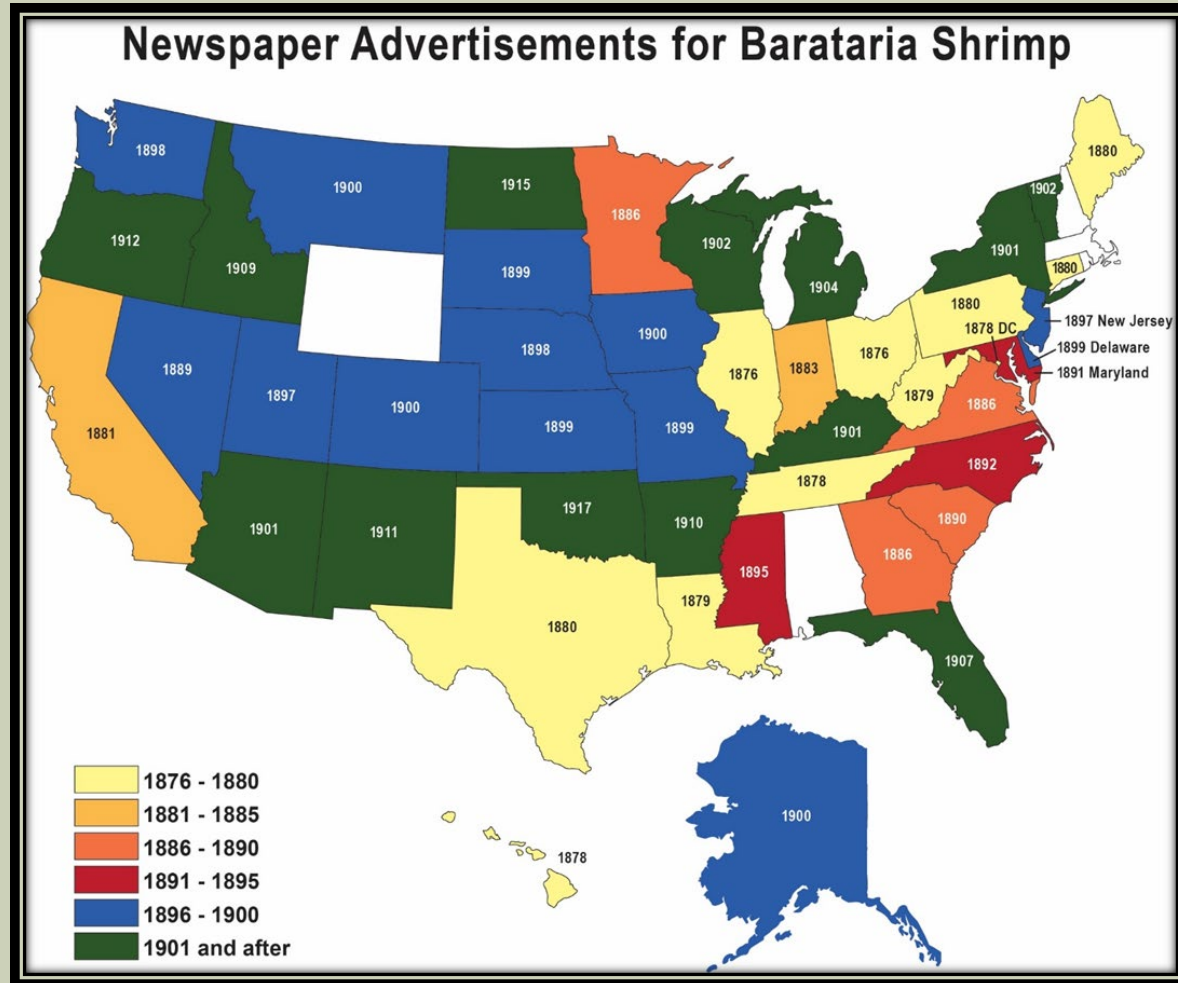
Two hundred and ten canneries have been documented—the state’s last cannery closed after Hurricane *Katrina* (2005), but never more than 38 in a single year.

PHASE 3 – CANNING

The Department of Agriculture in 1918 issued a circular warning canners of shrimp not to label their goods “Barataria” shrimp unless caught in Barataria Bay. This circular stated: It has come to the attention of this Bureau that some packers of shrimp are labeling their product “Barataria Shrimp,” regardless of whether or not the shrimp so labeled are caught in Barataria Bay.



PHASE 3 – CANNING



PHASE 3 – CANNING



The tin can was patented in 1810 and in 1901 the American Can Company was founded. In New Orleans the Company built this building between 1907 and 1927.

PHASE 3 – CANNING

Average Number of Shrimp Cans Manufactured Per Day, 1921-1930

328,767

Canned Shrimp Cases Shipped

1921 – 655,364

1922 – 579,797

1923 – 700,429

1924 – 718,517

1925 – 735,714

1926 – 732,365

1927 – 852,764


1928 – 851,831

1929 – 909,949

1930 – 818,491



Total cases with 48 cans/case: 7,555,221

PHASE 3 - CANNING




Shrimp Trawlers Company Identification Flags


Researched by Leroy J. Dantin
Summer 2002


Even in the 21st century, local fishermen in the home state of Louisiana still use a variety of small boats and equipment to harvest shrimp. Many companies still use the same equipment that was used in the early 20th century. One of the most important pieces of equipment is the identification flag. A flag is a small, rectangular piece of fabric that is attached to the mast of the boat. It is used to identify the boat to other fishermen and to the authorities. The flag is also used to identify the boat to the cannery. The flag is a small, rectangular piece of fabric that is attached to the mast of the boat. It is used to identify the boat to other fishermen and to the authorities. The flag is also used to identify the boat to the cannery.




ALABAMA
GREEN/WHITE




FLORIDA
GREEN/WHITE




LOUISIANA
GREEN/WHITE




MAINE
BLUE/WHITE




MASSACHUSETTS
BLUE/WHITE




NEW JERSEY
BLUE/WHITE




LOUISIANA
RED/WHITE




LOUISIANA
RED/WHITE



LOUISIANA
RED/WHITE




LOUISIANA
RED/WHITE




LOUISIANA
RED/WHITE




LOUISIANA
RED/WHITE




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RED/WHITE




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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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LOUISIANA
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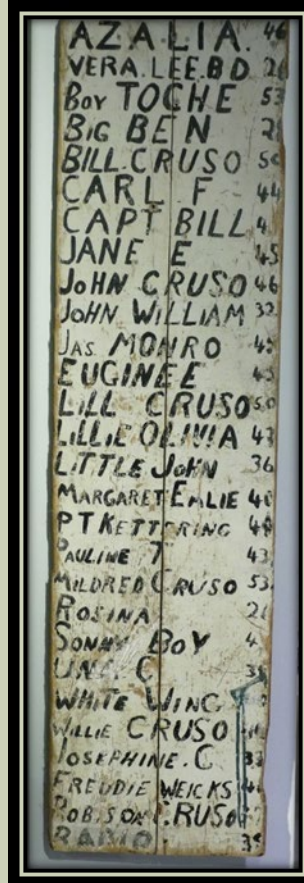
LOUISIANA
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Price Comparison of Shrimp from 1946 to 2002

Size of Shrimp	1946 Price per 20lb	2002 Price per 20lb
80-100 count	\$6.00	\$18.00
85-100 count	\$7.00	\$21.00
100-115 count	\$7.50	\$22.50

These prices show an increase in the price received for shrimp to be over 20 times more than in 1946.

Researched and produced by Leroy Dantin.



PHASE 3 – CANNING

BOHEMIANS, WOMEN, & CHILD LABOR



Many with whom I talked resent the practical slavery into which they and their children are taken . . . But with many women their spirit is broken, their wages are too low, their conditions of life too wretched for them even to protest. . . . In the shed, between 1 and 5 p. m., Miss Watson counted 142 adults and thirty-seven children working. In addition, there were eight small babies in carriages and fourteen children playing around — fifty-nine children in all. *NY Tribune, 1914*

Dunbar & Dukate, ca 1911
New Orleans, LA

PHASE 3 – CANNING

- “Other forms of child labor eat youth just as surely, but shrimp picking does it right before the eye. In the head of the shrimp, there is a certain corrosive substance so violent that it will even bite through shoe leather. Imagine, then, what it does to baby hands!” — Ben B. Lindsey and George Creel, “Children in Bondage: The Sacrifice of Golden Boys and Girls,” *Good Housekeeping*, (July 1913): 20-21.

PHASE 3 – CANNING

TO SAVE **TIN** FOR **WAR...**

Each can of Shrimp
now contains
20 to 30%
MORE
NET WEIGHT
than last year's pack

Canned Shrimp ARE RICH IN VITAL FOOD VALUES
AND DEEP-SEA FLAVOR!


Canned Shrimp Nutrition Score	
✓ VITAMIN A	✓ PROTEINS
✓ VITAMIN D	✓ IODINE

MINERALS: Calcium, Iron, Copper

**No. 1
CAN**

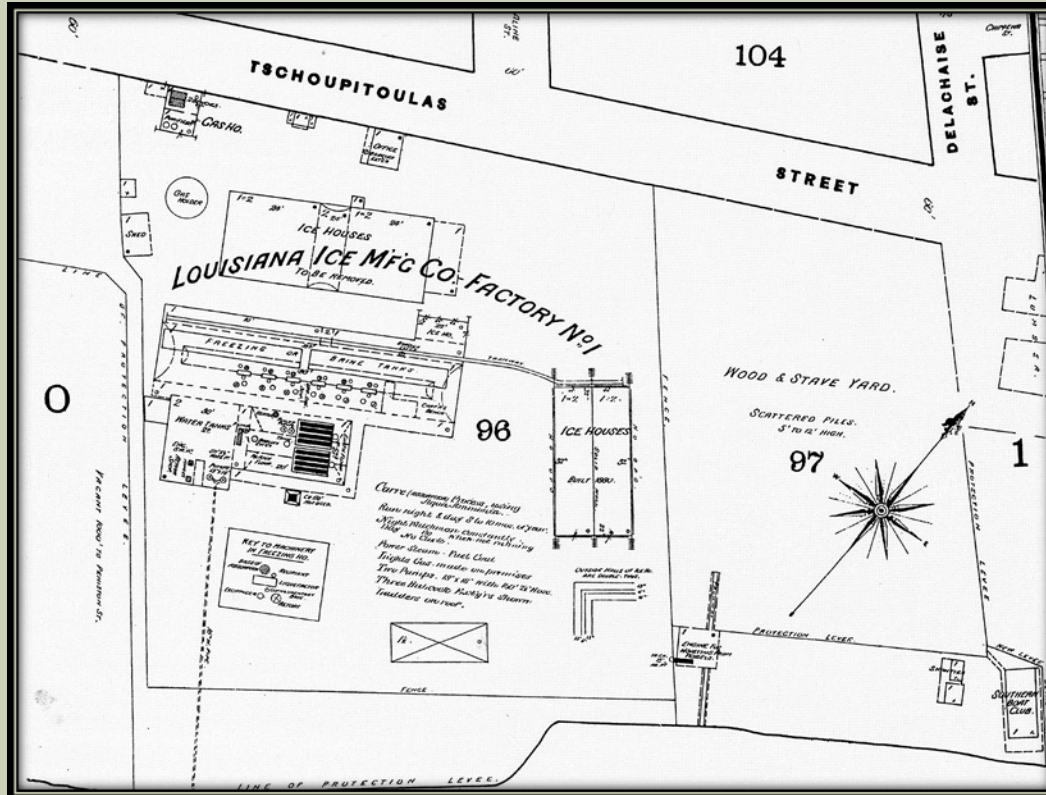
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FILL IN PRICE AND POST ON STACK OR SHELF



On March 1, 1943, the U.S. government implemented rationing of canned foods because of tin shortages. (The Japanese controlled seventy percent of the world's tin supply.) The military used tin for a variety of purposes, so non-military use of tin was curtailed, and canned products were repackaged in different or larger containers.

PHASE 4 – REFRIGERATION



Ice factories allowed the Louisiana shrimp industry to extend its geographical reach exponentially.

Louisiana Ice Manufacturing Co. (1868)
appears to have been New Orleans'
first major ice house.

PHASE 4 – REFRIGERATION

WORLD WAR I

- **End of transient workforce (Bohemians)**
- **New national emphasis on shrimp production as an alternate protein source as a result of wartime rationing**
 - **New market access**
- **Conscription of approximately half Louisiana's commercial fishermen accelerated the introduction of more efficient technologies that transformed the Louisiana shrimping industry in the postwar years**

PHASE 4 – REFRIGERATION

1920s

- **INTERNAL COMBUSTION ENGINE**
 - **1,800 sail-powered commercial fishing craft, 1904-08**
 - **57 petroleum-powered craft, 1904-08**
 - **Sailing vessels virtually a memory by early 1920s**
- **REFRIGERATION**
 - **Introduction of ice/freight boats exponentially increases the efficiency and duration of shrimp harvesting operations**

PHASE 4 – REFRIGERATION

Incremental transition: automotive engine to marine diesel, ca. 1917-1950



PHASE 4 – REFRIGERATION

New Propulsion Systems, New Boat & Trawl Designs

Lafitte Skiff



PHASE 4 – REFRIGERATION



Biloxi Trawler

PHASE 4 – REFRIGERATION

Poupier



PHASE 5 – JUMBO SHRIMP



Jumbo Shrimp and the Re-invention of the Gulf Coast Seafood Industry, 1930s-1970s



SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE ----



PHOTO BY MARVIN HARDEE

SHRIMP CATCHES last year are figured unofficially at 10 million pounds - which means an addition to local revenue of approximately \$15,000,000. Some 1200 people are employed in the industry in the tri-city area.



Boat Fresh...

Louisiana Brand Shrimp come to you fresh frozen from the Gulf waters. For freshness, flavor and top quality order Louisiana Brand Shrimp now!

Telephone 2681-2-3

P. O. Box 809

Teletype MC 67

TWIN CITY FISHERMEN'S COOPERATIVE ASS'N., INC.

MORGAN CITY, LOUISIANA

July, 1952

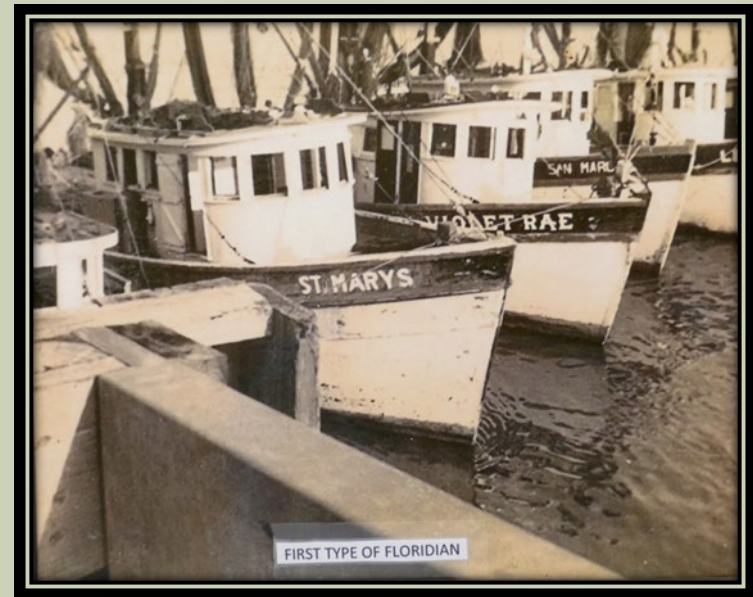
Tell them you saw it in SOUT

PHASE 5 – JUMBO SHRIMP

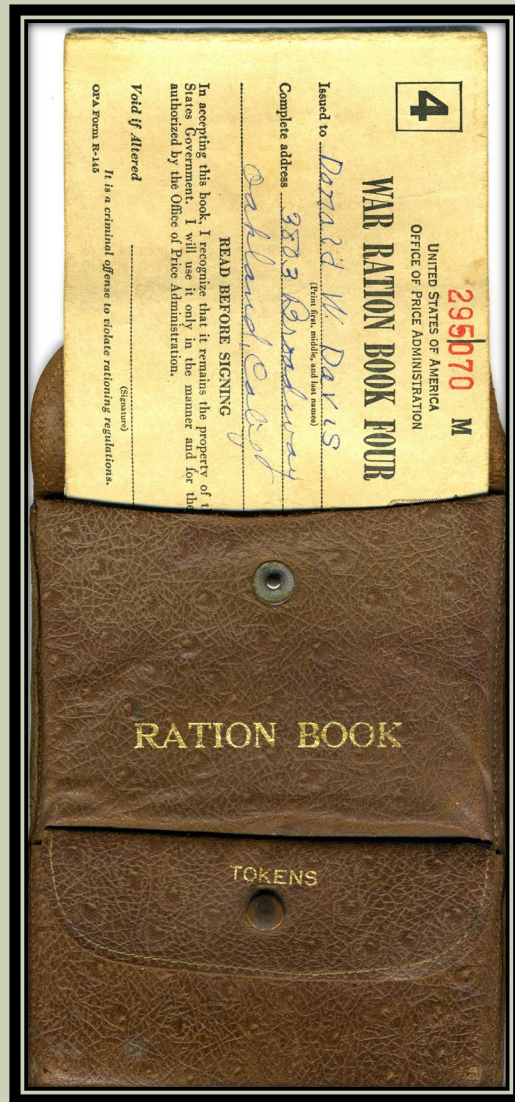
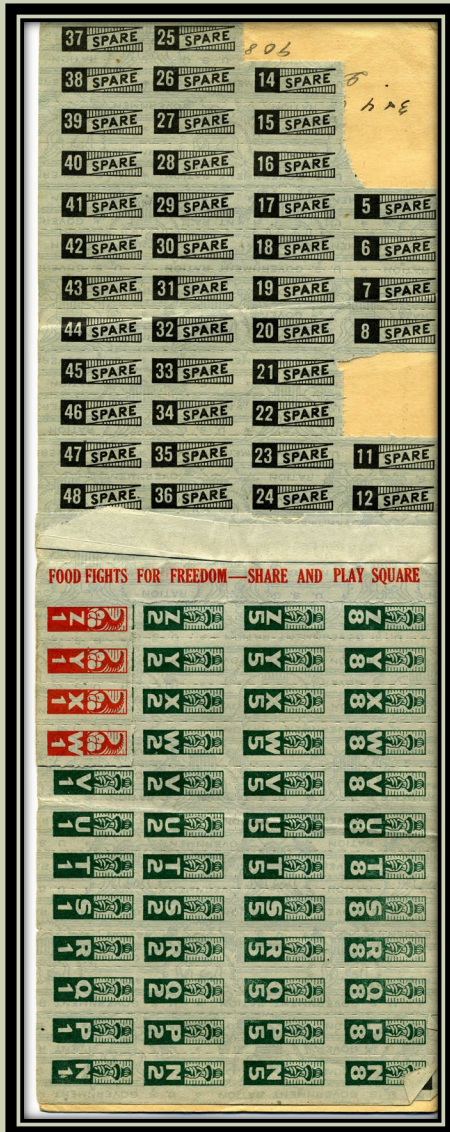
The Florida connection



Floridianes, designed by Italian and Greek immigrants and introduced into Louisiana by Fernandina Beach transplants, were responsible for deep-sea harvesting of shrimp—i.e., jumbos—off the Bayou State coast.



WORLD WAR II



RATIONING

Monthly Allotment
Per Person

48 Blue Stamps/Points
(Dried, canned, bottled foods)

64 Red Stamps/Points
(Meat, fish, dairy products)

WORLD WAR II
Rationing

Super Suds

2 Med. Pkg. 19c
Lge. Pkg.

Palmolive Soap

3 Reg. Bars 20c

Palmolive Soap

2 Bath Size 19c

SWEETHEART SOAP

2 Bars 13c

FINE QUALITY MEATS

GRADE A

Round Steak 15 Red Points lb. 40c
Sirloin Steak 13 Red Points lb. 40c
T-Bone Steak 14 Red Points lb. 47c

FRESH

Ground Beef Not Rationed lb. 27c

DRESSED AND DRAWN

FRYERS Not Rationed lb. 53c

DRESSED AND DRAWN

HENS Not Rationed lb. 46c

FULLY DRESSED

TURKEYS Not Rationed lb. 54c

SEALED CANS

OYSTERS Not Rationed pt. 75c

JUMBO

SHRIMP Not Rationed lb. 39c

COOKED

SHRIMP Rationed lb. 95c

FRESH

CHEESE CAKE lb. 39c



SUPER MARKETS

OWNED AND OPERATED BY THE GREAT ATLANTIC & PACIFIC TEA CO.

MEATS AND FISH • FRUITS AND VEGETABLES • GROCERIES • BAKERY • DAIRY

Wilmington, NC, *Morning Star*, Nov 10, 1944.

1 LB. OF ROUND STEAK=1/4 MONTHLY RED STAMP ALLOWANCE

JUMBO SHRIMP NOT RATIONED

Inventions That Made a Difference:

REFRIGERATION

- **Clarence Birdseye** applied for a freezing machine patent in 1927. As American consumers quickly became dependent upon their new status-symbol freezers, the Bird's Eye Frosted Food Company's brand paved the way for consumption of frozen products.
- **Following the invention of flash-frozen food, processors packaged shrimp (usually breaded tails) in cardboard containers—smaller containers for home consumption, larger ones for the hotel and restaurant trades.**
- In the 1930s, there were sixty-one wholesale fresh-frozen wholesalers in the Pelican State. Thirty-three were in the coastal zone and twenty-eight in interior parishes. Twenty percent went to New Orleans' French Market retailers.

EVOLUTION OF INDUSTRIAL ICE APPLICATIONS IN THE SHRIMP INDUSTRY

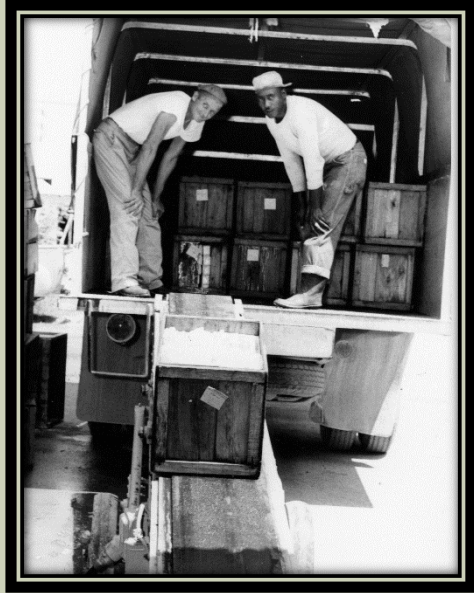
- **Block** – large solid piece of ice that could weight up to 500 lbs.
- **Shaved** – crushed ice scrapped off a block
- **Blast** – the workhorse method of freezing seafood products in the shrimp industry.
- **Brine** – Technique consists on the immersion of shrimp in a concentrated solution of sodium chloride, followed by a rinse of refrigerated water designated “glazing” which permits the creation of a film of water that protects the fish from oxidation and avoids loss of quality during the refrigerator storage
- **Plate** – Freezers are used to freeze flat products, such as shrimp that are packaged in brick-shaped containers. The food is firmly pressed between metal **plates** that are cooled
- **Individual quick frozen (IQF)** – A freezing technique that consists of freezing individual pieces of food., often called super freeze.

Bertoul Cheramie – Louisiana’s “Shrimp King”



- At the height of his career (early 1950s), Louisiana native Bertoul Cheramie owned a fleet of at least 60 boats that provided seafood to nine processing plants operated by approximately 5,000 employees.
- Once the shrimp and/or oysters were processed, seven company-owned refrigerated tractor-trailers distributed his “HO-MA” brand products to destinations not easily accessible by rail.
- His trucks, often loaded with ready-to-eat breaded shrimp, typically traveled to Eastern markets and return to Houma, LA loaded with Chesapeake Bay oysters. He was the first Louisiana seafood wholesaler to send fresh shrimp to Northern and East Coast markets.

Trucks and the Seafood Business



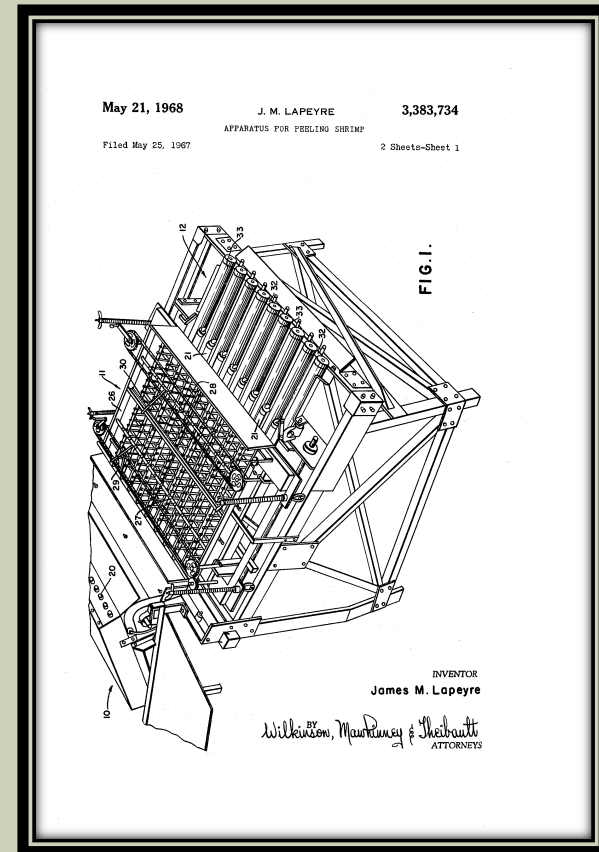
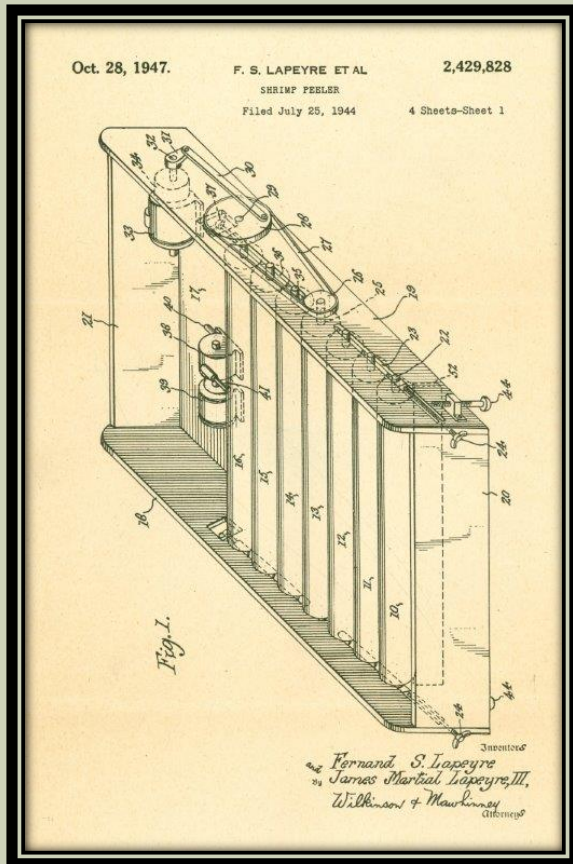
In 1949, the Interstate Commerce Commission authorized unlicensed trucks to carry shrimp, from the packer to the distributor or directly to the market.



In 1954, 17,347,000 pounds of frozen shrimp arrived in the Chicago market. Ninety-seven percent delivered by refrigerated truck. By contrast, railway freight made up only three percent.

INVENTIONS THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE

Lapeyre Automatic Shrimp Peeling Machine, Model “A” (patent No. 2,537,355), filed December 9.



LAPEYRE AUTOMATIC SHRIMP PEELING MACHINE MODEL 'A,' NO. 572

1979

THE MASS PRODUCTION OF FOOD WITH MACHINERY HAS MADE POSSIBLE THE FEEDING OF AN EVER-INCREASING POPULATION. IN 1943 JAMES MARTIAL LAPEYRE, WHILE WEARING RUBBER BOOTS, STEPPED ON A SHRIMP. OBSERVING THAT IT POPPED FROM ITS SHELL, HE DESIGNED A SHRIMP-PEELING MACHINE DERIVED FROM THAT PRINCIPLE. THIS MODEL 'A' MACHINE OPERATES LIKE THE ORIGINAL, PEELING APPROXIMATELY 1,000 POUNDS OF SHRIMP AN HOUR, DOING THE WORK OF 30-150 PEOPLE PEELING BY HAND.



THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERS-2004

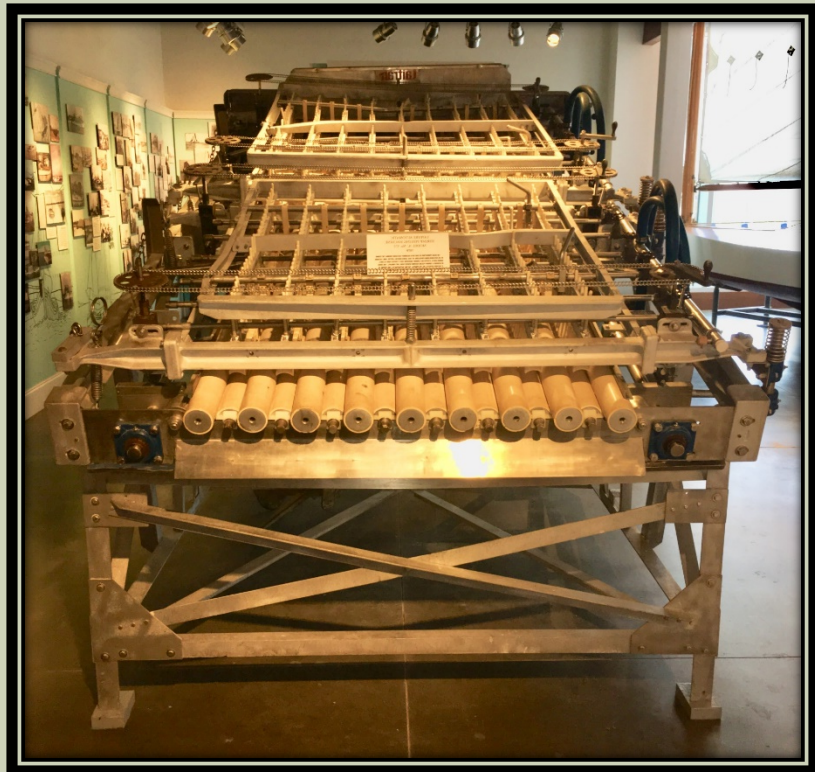
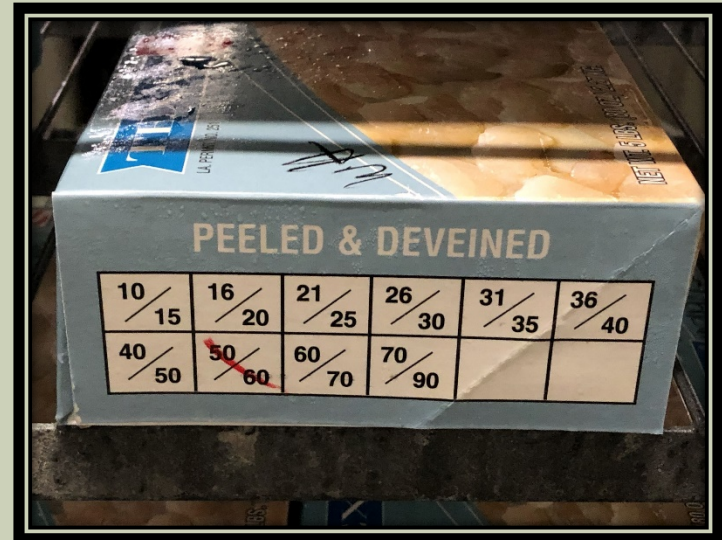
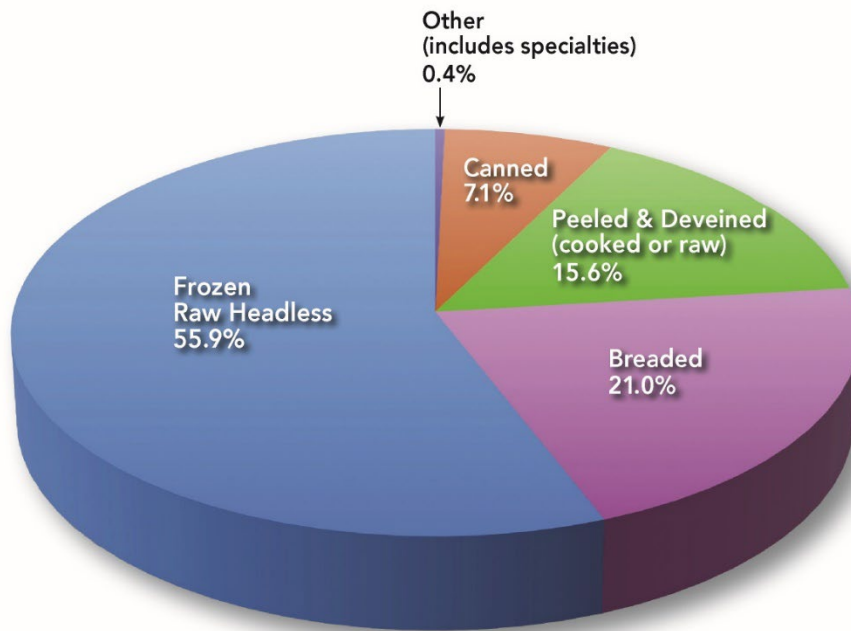


Plate and IQF



Value of Shrimp Products of the Gulf States, 1976



Note: Some of the products have been processed from raw products imported from other states or from foreign countries.

Source: National Marine Fisheries Service, Processed Fishery Products, Annual Summary, 1976 (Washington D.C.: Department of Commerce).

Paradigm shift from canned to frozen product



Arrival of the Vietnamese in 1975



As with the Chinese, most Vietnamese vessels were underwritten by benevolent groups. By 2018, 60% of the state's trawlers were Vietnamese-owned.

21st Century Imports and the Domestic Shrimp Industry

With the advent of shrimp farms in India, Thailand, Mexico, Indonesia, Vietnam, and elsewhere, the United States runs a sizable trade deficit on seafood. Often fueled by government subsidies, the lower cost of these products greatly effects Louisiana's shrimp fleet. India, in the 1960s, became the number two foreign dealer. Panama, throughout the 1960s, was the third retailer. By the 1970s, India was the leading source, followed by Pakistan and the Persian Gulf region. By 2017, the Republic of India provided 32 percent of the 1.5 billion pounds of shrimp imported by the United States. In 2018, India exported nearly 5 billion pounds.

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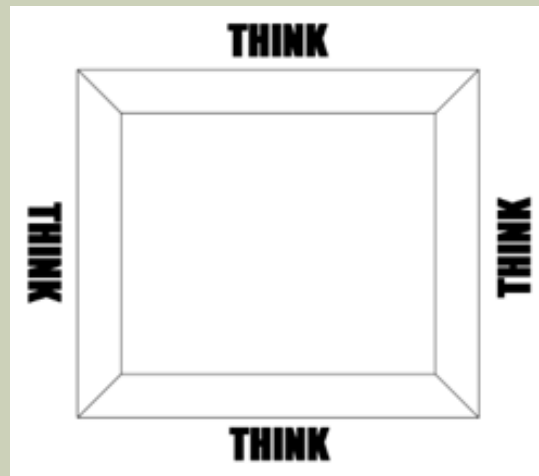
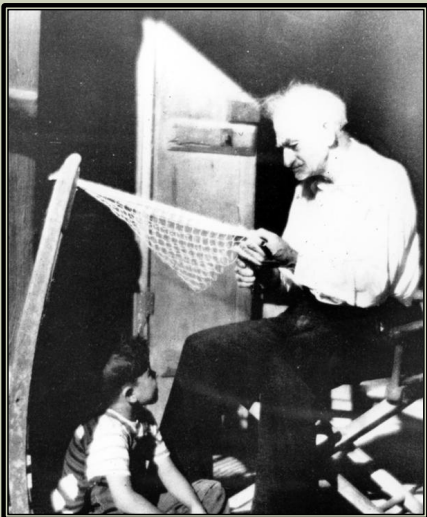
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