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Continued

An office manager at the plant, Ketcheson looked after the company's bottling operations and the 13 member staff — six indoors, five delivery truck drivers and two men with the Refreshment Services Ltd.

"Our delivery trucks, each carrying about 180 cases, would go and cover all of Prince Edward County, all of Hastings and would end up just shy of Algonquin Park. They also used to go to a place near Bancroft twice a week, Maple Leaf and St. Ola areas in Eastern Ontario."

Leo Orr, Carl Salisbury, Jack Culhane, Sid White, Jack Lynch and Bill Lynch (no relation to the former) were employed as drivers, said Ketcheson, and the two employees for Refreshment Service Ltd. in 1940 were Fillmore Reid and Howard Rainbird.

"We had our fair share of celebrities as well," laughed Ketcheson recalling summer time employees such as Dr. Robert Vaughn, Bobby Hull and Paul Russell.

"They were just high-school

kids then and working with us during the summer months," he explained.

Bruce Hunt was the manager of the plant in 1940, he said, and the next one to follow was Aubrey Coe.

Pondering on the company's activities in the early '40s, he said: "During the war years we used to bring in the big name bands like Guy Lombardo and Mart Kenny into Mountain View for dances for the soldiers. It was a lot of fun."

The bottling machinery used at the Church Street plant was a manually operated product made by the Dixie Cup Company. This machine allowed only two bottles to be filled and capped at a time. Bigger machinery came along with the bigger plant built at the Sidney and Bridge streets location. In 1952, company operations moved to this new location. Loyalist Market is situated on that site today.

Belleville-resident Art Bunnett joined the Sidney plant in 1967 and worked numerous positions over the years. He recalled the plant fell outside Belleville limits and Sidney and Bridge streets were unpaved at the time. The bottling operations and the warehousing facilities were located on the main floor, he recalled, while the upper floor was used as office administration space.

In later years, the company moved its bottling operations to

Kingston but it was still there in Belleville when Bunnett began working at the plant. As a truck delivery serviceman, he drove around the city restocking vending machines.

"They were very much smaller than the ones we see today. They were meant to hold only 6 oz bottles. The machines, back then, actually had a handle on them and after inserting the coin, you'd push the handle down and the end of the bottle would show up at the exit just below the handle," said Bunnett.

The company, actively involved in promoting its product, annually rented the Belle and McCarthy Theatres downtown and packed them with area children offering them a free show and a free Coke, recalled Ketcheson.

"We also used to go to the playgrounds and the schools, send buses out and bring kids in by the bus loads to tour the plant on Sidney Street and give them little miniature Coke bottles as keepsake. Of course, they had Cokes when they were in there."

Among many of his fond memories of the company that he worked for for decades, one stood out.

"In the early years, we had this company policy, which I enjoyed very much, and it had to do with the fact that we never laid anyone off in the winter months when we were slack. Everybody who worked there worked year round.

We found work for them."

Ketcheson also recalled an unforgettable incident at the Church Street location.

"I remember one night I was working a little past quitting time and a fellow walked in and wanted to do this and that and I said, 'No way, I don't know you.' It turned out that he was the president of the American Company coming to Canada checking on plants. He came back the next day and everything was fine.

"Twenty-five years later, the same man came to the Sidney Street location, walked up to the counter and at the time, my office was at the back corner and he waved at me and said 'Can I come in this time?' He sure had a long memory," he chuckled.

The company's bottling operation was, in later years, moved to Kingston and for a while, the plant here was used as warehousing and distribution facility. It closed in 1979 and operations moved to Kingston.

Keith Parry was the manager when the plant closed in 1979, recalled Ketcheson.

"The plant closed in July of 1979 but I stayed on till December of that year cleaning up the odds and ends, shipping stuff out etc. I locked the door for the last time on December 29 or 30 of 1979."

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