

they formed the Georgia Pimiento Canners Association in 1933. Graefe was made the first president and also served as president of the National Canners Association.

Through the years, Georgia's capabilities for processing pimientos expanded. At one time or another, there were as many as 20 processing plants with Georgia leading the nation in processing and production.

By 1950, pimiento acreage peaked at 32,000 acres with a value of \$3 million. But during the years after World War II, production began to decline. Because growing peppers was labor intensive and provided low returns, many farmers turned to other crops. In addition, many farmers had planted pimientos on the same land year after year and

insect and disease problems built up, eventually lowering production.

Despite the decline in production over the past 30 years, the state continues to lead the nation in pimiento processing, with most of the peppers now grown under contract in Alabama and Tennessee.

Although fields of pimiento peppers are no longer a common sight in Georgia, the crop has made its mark in the state. At one time, it provided a new crop to Georgia's diversified agriculture, created thousands of jobs for Georgians and added a few million dollars to the state's economy. But more importantly, it provided the processing plants and leadership which led to the general expansion of the canning industry.