

***The Way We Worked Audio Tour***  
**Interview #1: Where We Worked with Gwen Trost**  
**National Orphan Train Complex, Concordia**

The food industry has a reputation for being messy, and Gwen Chizek Trost's stories from the Seymour Packing Plant are no different.

When Trost moved back to Concordia in 1962, she began a position at the Seymour Packing Plant as an egg separator. The separated egg yolks were then shipped to Gerber to make baby food and the whites went to bakeries for angel food cake. The plant was located just west of the National Orphan Train Complex on the corner of Third and State Street where a vacant lot sits today. She worked for \$1.10 an hour for six hours a day, mostly during the shift from six in the morning until noon. One shift in particular she remembers a little too well. By this time a machine was incorporated to separate the egg yolks and whites. The person running this machine had to sort out rotten eggs and ensure the machine did not jam. During this shift, she was assigned to the separating machine because she was fast enough to keep up with it. The room was dark with only one light above the conveyor where she sorted out rotten eggs. She felt like something was crawling on her hands so she started wiping her face and arms on her uniform until finally she couldn't handle the feeling anymore. She grabbed the light and saw great big maggots all over her arms and body! Her supervisor wasn't too happy that she abandoned her post, but she just had to clean up after that experience.

She had another memorable experience while cleaning eggshells off of the conveyor belt. She reached up to flick an eggshell off the belt and ended up with her thumb and forefinger trapped in the machine. It brought her hand around until she was about an inch away from having her wrist cut off before the machine jammed. Other workers were fortunately able to cut the chain with a hacksaw and she walked away with four stitches and a broken thumb.

Have you had a messy work experience?