

DVD Number 38

DORCHESTER CANNERIES, R. Lee Burton, 2 June 2004

R. Lee Burton, author of "Canneries of the Eastern Shore," discusses the history of the canning industry in the Dorchester County.

After graduating from Salisbury State college in 1939, Mr. Burton was employed as an elementary teacher in the public schools of Talbot County, a career cut short by the military draft in World War II and then as a reservist in Korea. He returned to his public service career in the MD State Department of Education and later the Maryland Disability Determination Program.

Upon retiring in 1973 and returning to Cambridge, Mr. Burton began to look for something to occupy his time. "My father had bought a little container of coins at an auction," Mr. Burton relates. "In there was a token with just initials on it and I didn't have a clue as to what it was. It turned out to be a canning house token and I got to thinking about that. There were a lot of canneries on the Shore and I started looking for these things." Mr. Burton's "looking" has resulted in a premier collection of canning memorabilia and his book was published by Tidewater in 1986. "The whole thing," he says modestly, "was more accidental than anything else. I just wandered into it."