PART II — PACKAGING METHODS

DESCRIPTION OF WASHHOUSES

Celery is trucked from the field to a central plant (washhouse) for further stripping, root trimming, washing, sizing, packaging and precooling.

Celery washhouses in Florida are built on the same general pattern, consisting of an unloading platform, a conveyor chain on which the celery is placed either before or after stripping, a pressure washer, conveyor chain from which the washed celery is selected for packing, packing tables, a series of conveyor chains to move the filled crates to the precooler, sometimes a sorting room, a precooler, and a loading platform parallel to a railroad siding. Most of the washhouses have these features. In a few cases the celery is packed in one plant and hauled to another for precooling and loading into refrigerator cars. In the latter case the packing plant usually is located on the farm and the precooling plant on a railroad siding.

Washhouse capacity is adjusted by varying the number of packing chains and to a lesser extent by varying the length of the stripping and packing chain. Florida celery washhouses have from one to four chains. In some of the smaller houses only one side of one chain is used. A typical floor plan of a two-chain washhouse is illustrated in Fig. 37. For this type of house the celery is unloaded from the field trucks by means of hand clamp-trucks. These trucks move the field crates from the truck to the temporary storage platform (1),[11] where an individual grower's celery is accumulated until there is sufficient quantity (400-800 field boxes) to begin packing.

There are two common procedures from this point. The more common procedure is to run each grower's celery on a seperate chain, simultaneously. The alternative is to run the celery owned by only one grower on all chains and then change over all chains when the floor stock of rough celery for another grower has been built up. The former system has the advantage of fewer change-overs for an individual chain with less lost time. The latter has the advantage that all of the celery supplied by one grower comes off all chains at the same time. This reduces accounting and sorting work after packing.

Under either system the celery is moved again by means of

[11] Number in parentheses refers to Fig. 37.