



A Warehouse Complex Built on Quality

It started as a family farm; today it's a complex of cold storage and freezer buildings serving as a distribution hub for fresh and frozen foods worldwide. The businesses operated by the Sorbello family of Mullica Hill, N.J. – Garden State Freezer, Mullica Hill Cold Storage and Aldan Transportation – are the focus of a highly active and still-growing trade.

More than cold storage providers, the companies offer a spectrum of customized services in product transportation, storage and handling – including the provision of facilities for USDA inspection of food imports.

Garden State Freezer & Mullica Hill Cold Storage

“We bring the strongest possible quality orientation to our work,” says Fred Sorbello, president of Garden State Freezer

and Aldan Transportation. “It’s reflected in the fact that we’re one of the few ISO 9002-certified firms in our business anywhere – and it’s reflected in the quality of our warehouses.”

Planting the seeds of growth

It’s a long way in business terms from the South Jersey peach farming trade of Fred’s parents, Sam and Rose Sorbello, to the current services and storage complex. But on the ground, it’s no distance at all.

The family began its cold storage efforts in 1967 as a direct outgrowth of its farming, first creating cold storage for Sorbello produce, then making the facilities available to others. The actual buildings, from then until now, have been placed on land formerly part of the Sorbello farm.

The original Mullica Hill Cold Storage building was constructed in 1976 and completely renovated in 1990, then joined by another state-of-the-art warehouse in 1995. Today Mullica Hill is under the management of Sam Sorbello, son of the founder. Garden State Freezer opened in 1990 under Fred Sorbello’s leadership; it expanded in 1993 and again in 1998.

All recent phases of the companies’ construction have been designed and managed by Perley-Halladay Associates of Malvern, Pa. Perley-Halladay is one of the country’s most experienced design/build firms for large refrigerated structures. For more than 40 years, the company has planned and managed the construction of hundreds of warehouses and refrigerated processing buildings.

“Going all the way back to the first phase of the construction projects, we had four bids,” says Fred Sorbello. “It was Perley-Halladay’s full-service package and overall expertise that sold us. They’ve designed, drawn and overseen our whole construction program, even though I’ve used my own subs.

“One thing we really appreciate is how fast Perley-Halladay guides us through the construction phase. The first warehouse they did with us took only about four-and-a-half months. After that it went even better. The latest one was three-and-a-half months from slab pour to turning on the switch. I can’t imagine any building going up easier than ours have.”

Full-service warehousing

The Sorbello companies have outpaced their competition by providing far more than static freezer and cooler space. In part, the difference has been versatility.

“To give you an example, Garden State has six multi-temp rooms,” Fred says. “We can have 50-degree storage on one side of a wall, and minus-20 on the other. It makes a huge difference in what we can do for our customers. And it’s only possible with a facility that’s properly designed and constructed. That’s what we got from Perley-Halladay: effective design in the floors, walls, roofs – everything we needed to establish this kind of flexibility.”

The ability to adjust room temperatures so effectively also



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depends on the type of construction chosen for the structures. Each is assembled of factory-engineered modular panels insulated with five inches of urethane insulation – a protective barrier that helps prevent problems when compartments with large temperature differentials are operating side-by-side.

Flexibility is further supported by the facility’s oversized docks, which enable Garden State to accommodate big shipments quickly and handle them exactly as customers specify.

Much more is involved in making the Sorbello companies the location of choice for a client base that includes such important national and international firms as Chiquita, Vanguard Trading Services, Oppenheimer Group, Monfort, Perdue and On-Cor.

Garden State Freezer and Mullica Hill Cold Storage both provide their customers facilities for USDA inspection. Garden State is one of only two facilities of its kind certified for trading with the European Union. Combined with an outstanding location (central to America’s vast eastern markets) and an exceptional transportation network, these capabilities make the Sorbello companies the choice for high-volume import/export trade.

“We have meats and other food coming from all over the world – New Zealand, Australia, Mexico, Costa Rica, Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil, South Africa, you name it,” Fred says. “A lot of this imported food gets distributed to supermarket chains; a lot goes to food processors.”

Other services attract customers with specialized needs. Fruit importers can take advantage of cold

treatment services, through which fruit enters the country, then is shipped direct to Garden State and Mullica Hill. There it is exposed to cold to kill any insects. Similarly, customers opt for fumigation services on the Garden State docks. Methods and results are carefully monitored by USDA inspectors. In the case of the cold treatment, Fred says, tight temperature control made possible by the warehouses is crucial in maintaining the precise 31°-32°F temperatures needed to destroy pests without damaging the product.

Looking back, looking ahead

The accumulating growth of all the Sorbello companies has by now yielded more than 115,000 square feet of refrigerated storage space and a workforce of 50 – a remarkable change from the beginnings of the complex. The commitment to quality which is so deeply rooted in the Sorbellos’ way of doing things has now been formalized. To maintain their ISO 9002 certification, Garden State Freezer and Mullica Hill Cold Storage are audited six times a year.

“We look for that level of quality in all our vendors,” says Fred Sorbello. “The fact that we work with Perley-Halladay means that they meet the highest standards.”

High enough, in fact, to have been chosen for the next phase of construction, a warehouse for yet another Sorbello company, South Jersey Cold Storage, which will again share the Mullica Hill site. “When we evaluate a vendor, we look at the service we can expect after the sale,” Fred says. “Over 10 years of construction, Perley-Halladay has always been with us. Its not like they’ll forget us now.”

Put Perley-Halladay’s design/build professionals to work on your next project.



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