

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Andrew E. Masich  
President & CEO

## Pickles of Pittsburgh



When people around the world hear about Pittsburgh, they often think of steel or ketchup or sports or pickles.

Wait, pickles? Yes, pickles.

In honor of everyone's favorite fermented cucumbers, the History Center is throwing a pickle party of historic proportions through the end of this year. Visitors will find a jar of perfectly-preserved, 160-year-old pickles—still green in their original glass jar—from the massive cargo of the steamboat *Arabia*. The pickles are one of nearly 2,000 objects featured in the History Center's *Pittsburgh's Lost Steamboat: Treasures of the Arabia* exhibition, on view through Jan. 11, 2015.

The story begins in 1856 when the locally-built vessel carrying more than a million objects hit a snag and sank in the Missouri River near Kansas City. A group of modern-day treasure hunters discovered the *Arabia* buried 45 feet below a cornfield a half-mile from the river. Remarkably, the anaerobic (oxygen-free) environment preserved most of the boat's cargo in excellent condition, including fine dishware, clothing and yes, even the still-edible (one of the diggers actually ate one!) bottled pickles. Packaged by Wells, Provost & Co. of New York, the "sweet pickles" were bottled 13 years before H.J. Heinz founded his famous company in Sharpsburg.

Speaking of Heinz, young H.J. began his career by selling produce from his mother's garden at age eight and packaged his first product—horseradish—around 1861 and his first jar of pickled cucumbers 10 years later.

At the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, H.J. Heinz needed a way to draw visitors to his booth, which was located on the second floor of the exhibition hall, away from major attractions.

His idea involved pickles, or more accurately, pickle charms. An intuitive marketer, Heinz hired young boys to sprinkle the showroom floor with shimmery cards offering a free souvenir to visitors at his booth.

Show attendees climbed the stairs and stormed the Heinz booth by the hundreds, by the thousands, by the hundreds of thousands to redeem their prize – a small green Heinz pickle charm. Needless to say, Heinz quickly became the hit of the World's Fair.

Visitors to the History Center's new *Heinz* exhibition will enjoy seeing the first pickle pin from the 1893 World's Fair, along with a variety of innovative displays on the history of Heinz, a life-like figure of young H.J. Heinz, and hundreds of rare artifacts from the History Center's Heinz collection, the largest of its kind in the world.

Nearly 125 years after H.J.'s invention, the Heinz pickle pin remains one of the most iconic reminders of any brand in the world. Now that's something we can all relish.



This illustration shows the early process of filling bottles with products in the Heinz factory.

HHC Detre L&A

(Below)  
Salesmen used this pickle sizer to illustrate the variety of Heinz pickles that a grocer could purchase.

HHC Collections, 93.240.2750.



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Local company takes pickles seriously.



The Hawley family recovered this 160-year-old bottle of pickles from the cargo of the *Arabia*.

Arabia Steamboat Museum.  
Photo by Paula Andras.