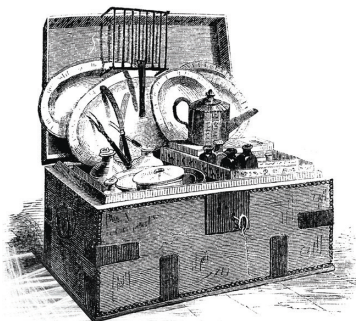


UP FRONT



CURATOR'S CORNER

By Emily Ruby, Curator

Packaging Purity

"We are packaging more than processed foods,
we are packaging a century-old reputation."

—H.J. Heinz II, Chairman of the Board, 1969

When H.J. Heinz chose to package his very first product in clear glass and use the label to advertise his pure produce, he set a precedent that the product package was just as important as the product. This commitment to quality packaging continued with Heinz personally designing and patenting many of the company's bottles, including the octagonal ketchup bottle of 1890 that, along with the Coke bottle, would eventually become one of the two most recognized product packages in the world.

In 1993, the History Center received the artifacts and archives of the Heinz Company. The collection's strength lies in its rich photographic history and extensive collection of food packaging. Dating from the late 1800s to around the 1930s, the collection includes hundreds of bottles, firkins, and crocks that show the history of how the company's packaging and products changed over time. To highlight this, a case in our current *Heinz* exhibition shows the evolution of 100 years

of packaging and products. Not only does the packaging tell the story of innovations in the field, it also documents when and why certain foods were produced. The abundance of exotic canned fruits in the 1890s are a result of Heinz's competition with home canners and exemplify their effort to provide something the typical housewife could not. The glass bottle of baked beans from the 1940s is tangible evidence of the tin shortage during WWII. Although the History Center's collection is large, there are many examples of Heinz product history that are missing from our collection.

The History Center is currently seeking specific artifacts that would fill gaps in the Heinz collection and help us tell a more complete and updated history of the company. Within the past few years some of these gaps in the collection have been filled. As the first

Heinz patent drawing for
the octagonal bottle, 1890.



Heinz Worcestershire bottle, 1968. This
polyethylene bottle was Heinz's first
foray into plastics.

HHC Collections, gift of Mark Matthews, 2016.7.2.



product to be packaged in plastic, the Heinz Worcestershire bottle marks a major turning point in packaging, not only for the Heinz Company, but for the future of all pre-packaged foods and beverages. The polyethylene bottle, designed by Henry Saenz, Heinz's manager of packaging design, debuted in 1968, nearly a century after the company's founding in 1869.

Use of the new non-breakable material quickly spread. The bottle also shows a change in the label, from the keystone shape used since the 1870s, to a square. By the late 1960s the Heinz Company, hard pressed by competition from other condiment companies, departed from some of its core branding in an effort

to diversify and gain more market share. Even though a 1950s article in the magazine *Modern Packaging* declared that Heinz would never give up the keystone label, just 20 years later the company was tweaking some of its tried and true branding, especially in the ketchup market.

The wide-mouthed ketchup jar, another recent donation, documents an attempt by Heinz in the 1960s to gain more of the ketchup market. A resounding failure, this product only lasted for a few years. The original ketchup bottle's narrow opening helped to keep the product from oxidizing and turning brown while the wide-mouthed bottle encouraged this unappetizing effect. Consumers would rather spend the time hitting the 57 to make the ketchup flow than enjoy the ease of a wide-mouthed jar that caused the ketchup to brown.

One piece of late-1960s packaging that the History Center is specifically seeking for the collection is the original Heinz individual ketchup foil packets. Now a staple of the fast food industry, they were a successful Heinz innovation at a time when the company desperately needed to regain the market lead in ketchup sales. Another top item on our wish

list is the self-heating can, made during World War II. The can was made in one of Heinz's London factories and had a central core that could be lit with a cigarette. The soup would then be warmed and could be consumed on site. As Heinz continues to innovate in packaging design, we continue to expand our collection. ⚙️

¹ "H.J. Heinz: 100 Years of Packaging", *Packaging Design*, November/December 1969, 11.

² "Heinz 57 Varieties", *Modern Packaging*, February 1950, 91.

Wide-mouth ketchup jar, 1968.

HHC Collections, 2014.76.1.
Photo by Liz Simpson.



Heinz advertisement for individual ketchup packets, 1984.

HHC Detre L&A.



Smithsonian Connection

Iron sheet of uncut gem tintypes, c. 1870

These uncut tintype portraits testify to the relentless search for ways to make more photographic images as cheaply and quickly as possible. Tintypes—images created by printing a direct positive on a thin sheet of coated metal—were an inexpensive option that became widely available around the time of the Civil War. In fact, the war increased the popularity of giving and receiving photos of friends and loved ones. By the 1870s, many different types of “multiplying cameras” could produce anywhere from 4 to 72 images.



Courtesy of Smithsonian's Museum of American History, L2016.8.3.

Photo by Nicole Lauletta.