

## ARMOUR'S VERIBEST ROOT BEER

*Follow-Up Comments & Illustrations*  
From Cecil Munsey

For the recent issue of BOTTLES & EXTRAS (Vol. 14, No. 4 – Fall 2003, pp. 48-51), Donald Yates wrote an article entitled, "ARMOUR'S VERIBEST ROOT BEER." It certainly was a nice presentation that covered not only Armour's root beer but gave a good history of Armour & Company of Chicago.

I have been gathering research on Armour and his company for some time and thought it might be worthwhile to share some additional information and illustrations to compliment Donald's article.

**Comment #1:** As was pointed out in the article, VERIBEST was the trademark used by Armour & Company from the pre-1900s until 1930. In addition to the root beer, the firm produced a substantial line of bottled products.

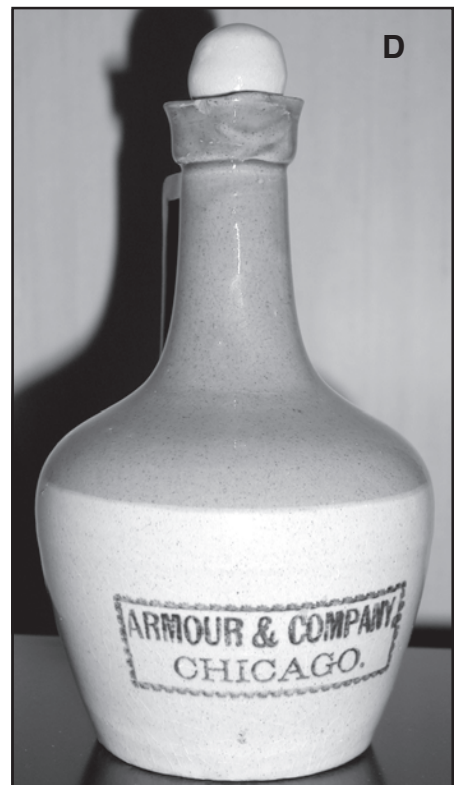
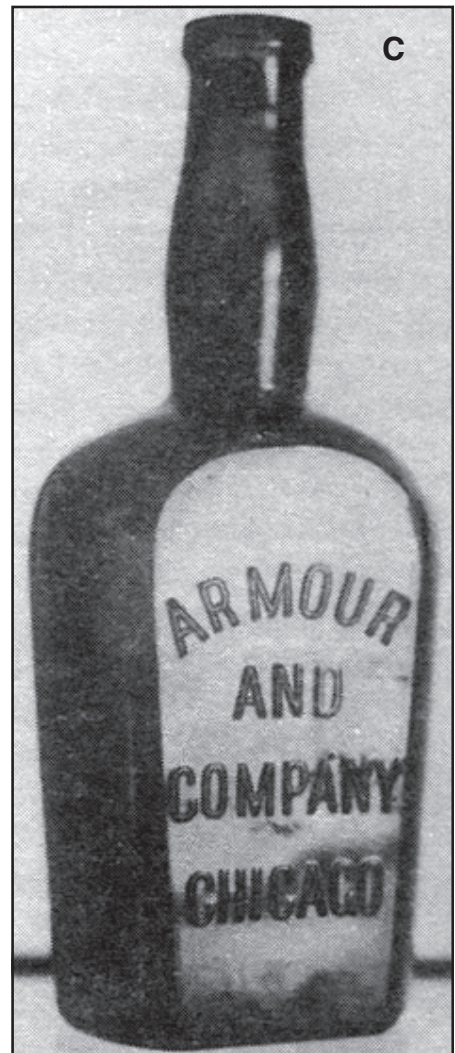
From "The Ladies' Home Journal" for May, 1919 (page 64) presented here as (Figure A), is a full-page, full-color advertisement headed, "Armour Beverages." The ad pictures and proclaims:

*"HOUSEHOLD beverages form another of the groups of foods that you can buy with assurance of highest quality under the Armour Oval Label. Pictured here are: Cocoa, rich and satisfying; Coffee, delicious in aroma and flavor; Evaporated Milk from the choicest dairy regions; Grape Juice, pressed from the pick of the Concord and Catawba crops; Extract of Beef, the housewife's standby – all typical of the Armour purpose to bring you the best for your table prepared in the best way."*

*pick of the Concord and Catawba crops; Extract of Beef, the housewife's standby – all typical of the Armour purpose to bring you the best for your table prepared in the best way.*

*With the Armour Oval Label as a buying guide, you have the nation's choicest foods to select from: packaged soups, fish, meats, vegetables, condiments, fruits, cooking fats, spreads, dairy products and meat alternatives. So wide is the range and variety that these groups help you meet every meal emergency. Your buying is simplified; your cooking likewise; and an Armour shelf in your pantry is a great aid in solving the ever-perplexing 'What-to-Serve' problem. Look for the Oval Label in blue and yellow on store-fronts, in windows and on the goods on the dealers' shelves."*

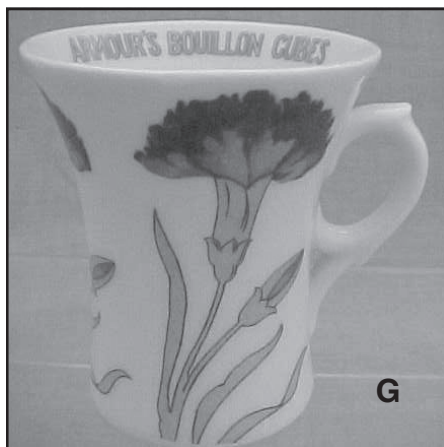
**Comment #2:** Of interest is a fact that I recently discovered. From an Internet document issued by American Heritage, "The Forty Wealthiest Americans of All Time," I learned that Philip Danforth Armour (1831-1901) is listed as being in 31st place. The listing deals with the men's phenomenal wealth in today's







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dollars. At his position on the list, Armour was worth the equivalent of \$20.2 billion. John D. Rockefeller (1839-1937) was the first place winner with \$189.6 billion in today's dollars. The list, by the way, includes today's wealthy entrepreneurs. Bill Gates of Microsoft (1955-), at 6th place, is reported to have \$61.7 billion. Sam Walton of Wal-Mart (1918-1992) at 11th place had \$37.4 billion. Warren Buffet (1930-) came in at 13th place with a current \$34.2 billion. And Paul Allen of Microsoft (1953-) was reported to have \$25.4 billion.

**Comment #3:** Bottle collectors have long collected the glass and ceramic containers of Armour & Company. Besides the rare paper labeled bottles illustrated in Figure A, there are numerous other collectible bottles and other memorabilia used by the great Chicago firm. Figure B features two Armour salad oil bottles. Figure C shows an Armour bottle for "Asperox,"—a sauce that was recommended for basting fowl and game. Figure D is one of several ceramic bottles used by Armour & Company. Figure E features one of a numerous milk glass bottles used to contain Armour products. Figure F shows one of a number of trade cards used to promote P. D. Armour goods. And Figure G pictures a beautiful bullion cube cup advertising Armour Bullion Cubes.

**Comment #4:** At the end of his life, a Chicago newspaper described P. D. Armour as follows:

*"No one better personified the entrepreneurial spirit than Philip Danforth Armour, who helped build the meatpacking industry that would later prompt poet Carl Sandburg to dub Armour as the 'Hog butcher for the world.'"*

*Armour's recipe for success was less poetic. He built his empire by using all of the animal, pioneering refrigerated boxcars and working long hours.*

*A bull-like man with a bald head and sandy side whiskers, Armour arrived at the Union Stockyards--or Packingtown as it was called--at 7 a.m. every day.*

*'I have no other interest in my life but business,' Armour once said. 'I do not love the money. What I do love is the getting of it, the making of it.'*

*When he died Jan. 6 [1901] at age 68 in his mansion at 2115 S. Prairie, Armour was exporting food all over the globe and had earned more than \$45 million [\$20.2 billion in today's dollars].*

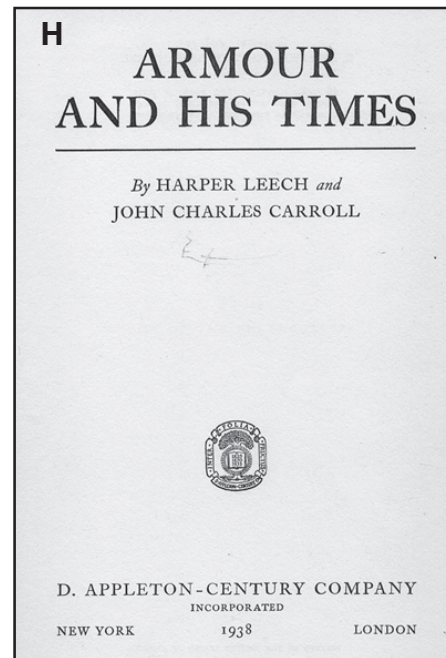
*His legacy is mixed. He helped put Chicago on the map and create what would become the Illinois Institute of Technology. But he also was a mover in an industry that muckraker Upton Sinclair would show treated many workers little better than the animals they slaughtered."*

**Comment #5:** While a 1982 article by Annette O'Connell (see references) is a very good one, as is the recent article by Donald Yates (see references), the 1938 Armour biography and history (see references and Figure H) is 377 pages, including an extensive listing of related books and articles, is most likely the best source of the Armour story.

### References:

#### Book

Leech, Harper & Carroll, John Charles. *ARMOUR AND HIS TIMES*. New York & London: D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1938



#### Periodicals

O'Connell, Annette. "Armour & Company of Chicago," *Old Bottle Magazine*, Volume 15, No. 12, December, 1982, pp. 9-15.

Yates, Donald. "Amour's Vertibest Root Beer," *Bottles and Extras*, Volume 14, No. 4, Fall, 2003, pp. 48-51.

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