

# Cows on Pot Lids

By Bruce R. Pynn

Many different species of animals adorned pot lids. Perhaps the best known animal pictorial is that of a bear which was used on pots of bears grease. During the seventeenth to nineteenth century, bears grease and pomades were popular for strengthening, beautifying and promoting the growth of hair. Cows were perhaps the second most common animal pictorials on pot lids. The cow pictorials were featured on pot lids in both the food or hair products categories.

## Pomades

With the diminishing bear population, and ready access to a steady supply of cow bones from domestic herds, cows marrow

became an alternative to bears grease. The fatty marrow from cows was mixed with perfumes and placed in attractive containers. The pomatum was marketed to invigorate, and strengthen hair, nourish whilst beautifying the hair, prevent baldness and turn grey hair back to its natural color. The cows were pictured on lids from North America and Europe.

Jules Hael of Philadelphia was one of the most prolific users of transfer-printed wares in the United States as seen by his many pots lids and designs. He sold pomades in three varieties; larger multi-colored containers with cows in pastoral scenes, solitary cows on black and white pot lids and small overglazed pots.

The products were sealed with a paper label securing the lid to the base with the following phrase "Ox Marrow Pomatum, a vegetable oleaginous mixture for the growth and preservation of the hair. Composed of purified marrow and hazelnut oil and coumpound with grateful perfumes which promote the effect and composition, and are delightful to the sense. The highest premium awarded at the Great Worlds Fair to Jules Hael, Philadelphia."

Jules Hael sold these products through his small perfumery between 1839 and 1860 at various addresses on Chestnut Street in Philadelphia. After 1860, he apparently sold wholesale only, with other retailers using his brand of products.

Eugene Roussel also operated a small perfumery on Chestnut Street in Philadelphia in 1842. He sold many products including, "odontine" hand and shaving cream, soap as well as beef marrow. He was best known for his "Genuine Bear's Oil" products and having a large stuffed bear in his shop window. He eventually sold the perfume shop in 1849 to Xavier Bazin, who headed up the perfumery part of his business, so that he could concentrate on his mineral water business.

Xavier Bazin continued on at the 114 Chestnut Street address until 1852 when he relocated to 166 Chestnut Street. He advertised extensively after assuming control of the shop and expanded the line of pictorial potted products. He used a similar cow design on the "Genuine Beef Marrow Pomatum" with the "Succ to E. Roussel" scripted on the lid at both Chestnut addresses. The business continued in the Bazin family with new partners added throughout the years until 1884 when it was sold to George Wright.

Ed Pinard and L.T. Piver, perfumers in Paris, France produced a variety of "Moelle de boeuf" (bone marrow) products in beautiful small blue transfer pots, with a wrap around pictorial of a nice pasture farm scene on the base of the pot. This design was mimicked by both Bazin and Hael.

## Food

Manufacturers of edible products also took advantage of this attractive form of packaging. Caviar, fish (anchovy and herring) and meat (chicken, turkey, beef and tongue) pastes were frequently sold in ceramic pots because of the impracticality of transporting fresh food from the coasts of England to the inland towns. The paste was packaged in vinegar which increased





its shelf life and proved to become a popular food alternative for the Victorian middle classes, and most importantly became a staple as a delicious tea time treat. One of the most common fish paste products was Yarmouth "Bloater" paste which got its name from the fact that salted herrings tended to swell up during smoking and were quite unlike the rather shrivelled dried salted herrings.

In the United States, cows were featured on product jar lids of the Liston Beef Company of Chicago, Illinois in the 1880s to 1890s. The paper labeled jars of "Pure Beef Extract of Beef and Bouillon" came in three different sizes. The company also produced multi-colored tradecards catering to the ladies and nursing mothers since it marketed the product as a remedy for indigestion, and sleeplessness as it contained 'strengthening and sustaining properties.'

One of the most striking pomades is unrecorded, Ox Marrow Pomade, that was found in St. Louis, Missouri in 1973. It shows a remarkable pictorial of a resting oxen and is believed to be an American product.

It is interesting that the domestic cow was used so extensively to market these products. It was likely a sign of the times as the cow was an integral part of everyday life.

#### Reference:

Barbara and Sonny Jackson, *American Pot Lids*, 1987



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