

Haskell's Dairy Operated With A Rhyme For A Reason

By Bill Baab

*Pale and skinny – it's a crime
the way some girls are wasting time.
Drink Haskell's milk and he'll not falter
to lead you blushing to the altar!*

When the applied color label process, which originated in the 1920s, was perfected during the 1930s, Alexander Cheves Haskell Sr., found it was a great way to tout the benefits of his dairy's milk to the public.

Haskell had moved from Laurens, South Carolina to the North Augusta, South Carolina area in 1912 where he bought about 250 acres of what was called the Woodlawn tract on the old Aiken Road.

There was a two-story antebellum house and some outbuildings on the property. He bought a small herd of cows and started the A.C. Haskell Dairy, according to a family history work in progress by his grandson, Alexander C. (Sandy) Haskell III.

"One of the ways my grandfather promoted the sales of his milk was to contact all the pediatricians in Augusta, Georgia across the Savannah River from North Augusta," he wrote.

"My grandfather's herd consisted mostly of Guernsey cows whose milk had a good butterfat content of 3.8 to 4.2 percent. Mothers asked their pediatricians what milk they should use and the doctors would recommend Haskell's because the high butterfat was more nutritious."

During the mid-1930s, A.C. Haskell Sr., came up with the idea of adding a poem to the glass milk bottles. Each new shipment of bottles required a new poem. The "poets" were A.C. Haskell Sr., A.C. Jr., A.C. III and the latter's mother, Elizabeth Jones Haskell. Eventually, more than 30 poems were composed, but not all of them made it onto the bottles.

"My grandfather had a little notebook in which he recorded his poems. After he had semi-retired, my mother, who had been a schoolteacher, also contributed poems, usually on the spur-of-the-moment. My dad would come running through the office where she worked as a part-time bookkeeper and demand an instant poem," Sandy Haskell recalled.

"I have had people in their 70s tell me that as children, they had learned to read from the Haskell's milk bottles on their

breakfast tables."

According to the obituary of his grandfather, who died in January 1964, the dairy was "the first in the Augusta area to produce milk considered by doctors to be safe enough for babies, the first to deliver milk by automobile and was certified by the federal government long before any other milk concern in or near Augusta."

The first Haskell bottles were round quarts and pints and embossed "A.C. Haskell / Nursery Milk / Augusta, Ga.," even though the dairy was located near North Augusta. The latter had been incorporated in 1906 and was still tiny, while Augusta was the well-known big city across the Savannah River. Many of Haskell's early customers lived in the Augusta area.

The first poems were added in green applied color labels to round quarts and

pints and later to "square" quarts, pints and even half-pints.

During its 60 years of existence, Haskell's missed delivery on just one day including Sundays. That was in 1929 when the river overflowed its banks as well as the Augusta levee and authorities were forced to close the Thirteenth and Fifth street bridges. Boats were obtained by the following day and the milk was off-loaded crate by crate into the boats, rowed across the river to be reloaded onto the waiting delivery truck and sent on its way.

"Sometimes it would take many crossings to get the milk over and the empty bottles back," Sandy Haskell said. "But from that point on, grandfather made sure there was always one delivery truck on the Georgia side of the river."

During the 1930s and '40s, Haskell's



further advertised its products with a series of calendars featuring appealing infants. Collector Tony Riley of Belvedere, South Carolina owns several of the calendars, most of which measure 30 inches wide by 42 inches tall.

In 1965, Haskell's Dairies consolidated with Better Maid Dairy Products Inc., of Athens, Georgia. Seven years later, Sandy Haskell said, Haskell's went out of business.

"It had become difficult to find good help, the cost of bottles was rising and we had to pay for grocery store shelf space and keep it clean, too," he explained.

Here are some of the better poetic examples:

*The one best food for young and old
Whose merits have not half been told.
Haskell's milk builds strength and pep,
Makes sparkling eye and springy step.*

*Girls, let's talk just heart to heart
Your diet plays an important part
And if you'd glamorize your "pan,"
Drink Haskell's milk
And get your man!*

*Is your milk right up to date
Boxed the modern way?
Can't see in, sure tastes thin, hope it is OK.*

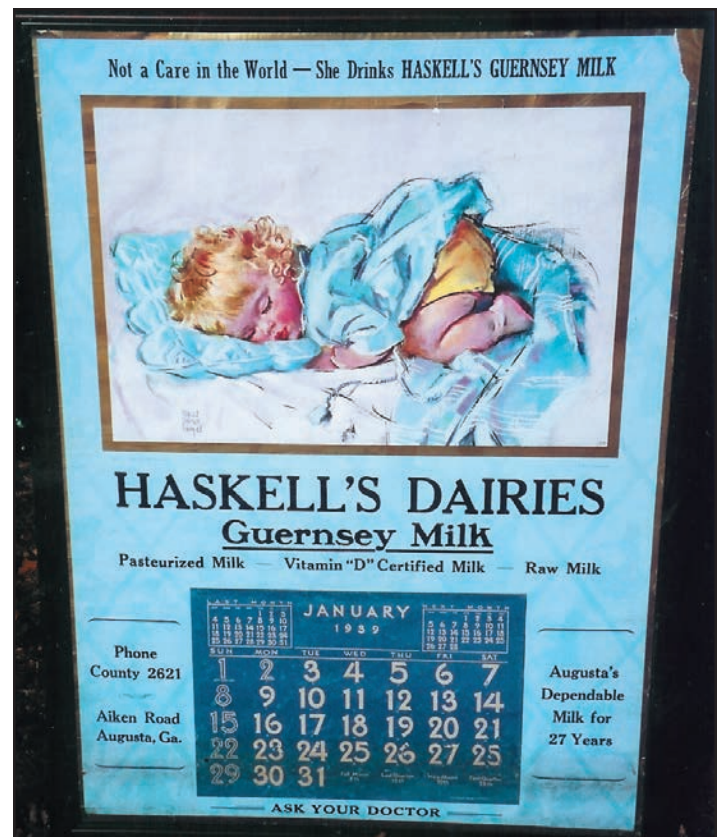
*Standardized, homogenized
Surely does confuse.
But Haskell's milk is real rich milk
Like Grandma used to use.*

*When the Good Lord first made babies
To feed them the best way.
He made milk just like Haskell's
and found it was OK.
Men analyze and theorize and change it all about,
But they can't improve a perfect food
By taking something out.*

Many dairies used patriotic themes like "Keep 'em Flying" during World War II, but none has been found on Haskell's bottles. However, there exists a poem geared to those times:

*With the youngsters at the front,
At home the oldsters bear the brunt,
And when they feel all tuckered out,
They drink Haskell's milk and it makes 'em shout!*

No Haskell's bottle has been found with that inscription.



A sleeping tot was featured on Haskell's 1939 calendar.

Tony Riley of Belvedere, S.C., shows off a Haskell's 1932 calendar from his collection. Note the baby inside the bottle.

More Haskell's Dairy Rhymes

*Weddings daily, by the score
Babies coming – more and more !
Haskell's Milk in great Demand
Keeps "Mom" and
Baby looking Grand.*

*Safety First!
Let these two precepts
Be your guides,
Whatever you may do besides,
For health, long life and
Full of Pep
Drink Haskell's Milk, –
And watch your step.*

*If you are quite lank
And lean
Like the proverbial "String Bean"
You can get help – Don't
Give up hope.
Drink Haskell's milk. It's
Your best "DOPE"*

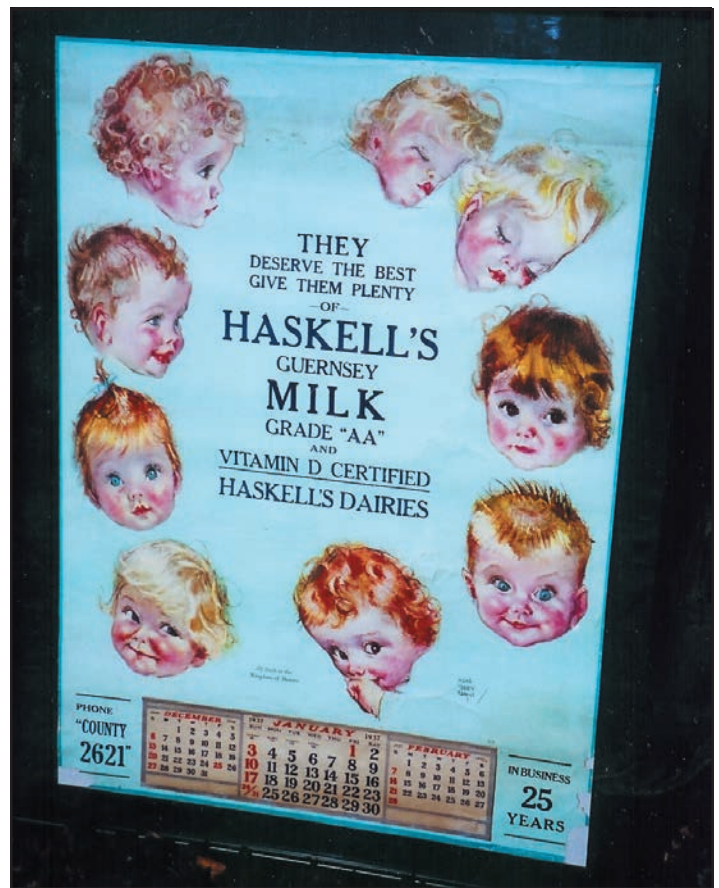
*Girls, drink milk, but don't be dumb.
Drink Haskell's milk. It's best – by gum!
To give you glamor – it's the trick,
And boys fall for a real slick chick.*

*Milk is the best food when it's all there.
Haskell's milk you don't take on faith with a prayer.
You see what you get – and just a suggestion –
It can't fool your eyes and won't "gyp" your digestion.*

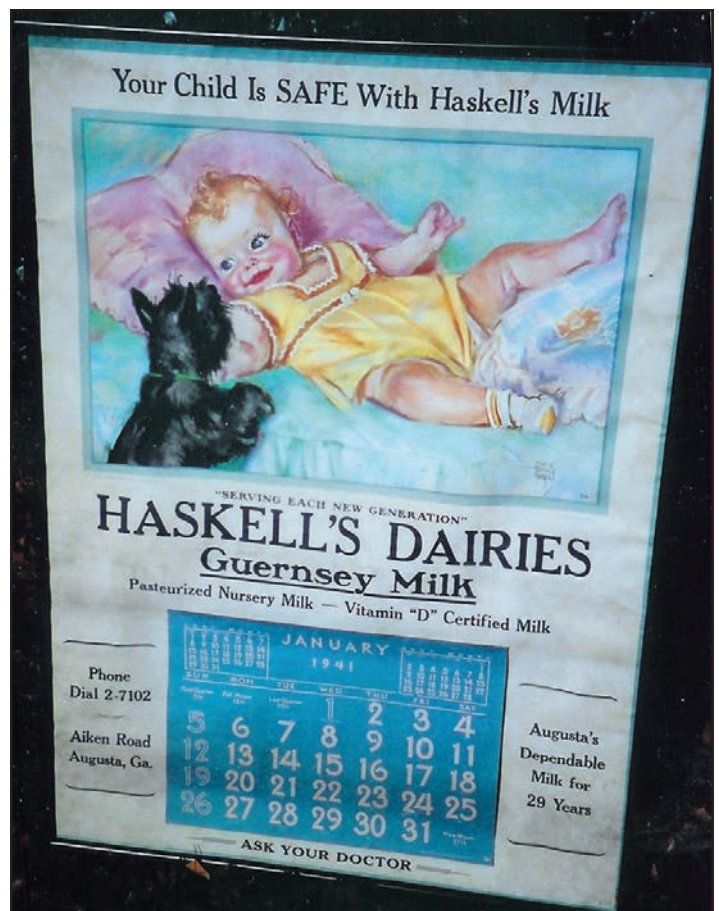
*What is so appealing as the bloom of youth?
Haskell's milk, used daily, puts it there forsooth!
Until one day some nosey dame says, "You're getting fat!"
Out goes the milk, off goes the bloom
And, alas, that is that!*

All photos by Bill Baab.

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Take your pick of these photogenic babies, all on the 1937 calendar.



A couple of 'pets' were featured on Haskell's 1941 calendar. >