



ARMOUR'S VERIBEST ROOT BEER

By Donald Yates

We can start with a quick quiz – How many of you remember Armour Star Hot Dogs? Everybody should, unless you just fell off the turnip truck. Or you could have been a vegetarian, and pretended that hot dogs don't exist!

Okay, now let's test the other half of your brain. How many of you remember Armour's Veribest Rootbeer?

If you have heard our lecture on Root Beer, you will remember that hot dogs and root beer are American inventions developed by inquisitive Americans – not the Neanderthals, not the Mesopotamians, just us good old Americans.

Root beer goes back to the 1830s. Hot dogs are more modern. What a great combination, hot dogs and root beer and also from the same company.

The primary material for this article came from a 1919 Armour and Company Annual Report. That was a critical year because World War I had just ended, plus the whole world was plagued by the Spanish Flu during the fall of 1918. More people died world wide from this flu, than

from the war.

The entrepreneur of our story was Philip Danforth Armour. Philip was born in 1833 on the Armour Family Farm in upstate New York. I wonder if they raised cattle on the farm? He was nineteen when he headed west for the California gold rush. By age 24, he had saved eight thousand dollars.

Armour started a grain business in Chicago during the Civil War. He later opened a meat processing plant, which was called Armour and Company. This was located near the Union Stock Yard. Joseph Armour, Philip's brother, ran the business until he became ill.

Then Philip Armour moved to Chicago and took over as president. The headquarters of Armour and Company was in the Home Insurance Building. It was built by William LeBaron Jenny and was the first iron skyscraper in Chicago. Quite a historic honor.

Yes, this is the same Armour and Company, located in Chicago, that is a major meat processing plant. Armour used its "VERIBEST" trade mark from the 1800s until the 1930s. They carried a full line of groceries for many years, including VERIBEST: canned meats; canned turkey; canned chicken; canned shrimp; grape juice; baked beans; peanut butter; bouillon; potted and deviled meats

Armour also had a full line of soda fountain supplies, including fruit syrups, extracts, soda and root beer dispensers, and

stoneware root beer mugs. Their stoneware root beer mugs held 12 ounces and were made by the Sherwood Brothers Pottery in New Brighton, Pennsylvania.

Their root beer dispensers were large ceramic containers shaped like barrels. They were imprinted with the slogan: Armour's Veribest Root Beer. These dispensers were made by the American Standard Plumbing Supply Company in Toledo, Ohio. High quality.

Originally the Armour Company owned 14 acres of the Chicago Stockyards, having railroad lines and refrigerated rail cars, painted with the promotion: "We Feed the World." One of Armour's marketing promotions was a recommendation that ministers would improve their preaching if they increased their consumption of Armour sausages.

That might have helped promote food consumption.

The Philip Armour packing house utilized an efficient killing and cutting

line. Instead of one man butchering one hog, every employee stood in place and performed one task. The animals would hang from a moving over-head conveyor and would travel from one work station to the next one. Every salable piece was sent to the market. This method was very effective for the period and was copied by other meat processors.

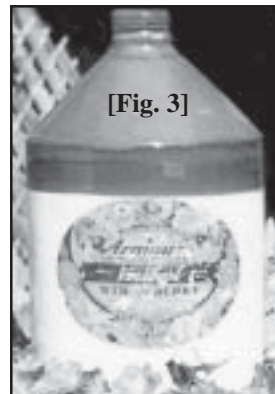
All parts of each animal were sold. In addition to meat products, Armour sold fertilizer, glue, oil, hair brushes, buttons, oleo/margarine, and drugs. Low

quality meats were canned in products such as pork and beans. The benefit of this practice was higher efficiency and less pollution. The packing houses set their own industry sanitation standards, because there were no federal inspectors during the early years.

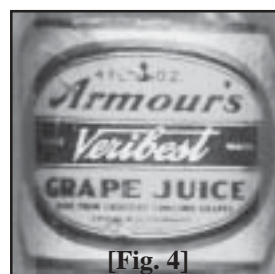
The packing houses of Chicago became tourist attractions promoting the industry. Philip Armour and his chief competitor,



[Fig. 2]



[Fig. 3]



[Fig. 4]



[Fig. 1]

Gustavus Swift, became world famous. Actress Sarah Bernhardt remembered her first visit to the butchers as shocking. It was the same process used by local butchers, except on a larger scale.

Henry Ford was inspired by the production line and developed his own assembly line for the production of his Model T Ford automobile.

Rudyard Kipling said that you will never forget your visit to the stockyard. During the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, visitors took daily excursions to visit the Union Stockyards on the south side of Chicago.

Some observers had empathy for the cows and some were concerned by the working conditions of the employees. The labor was difficult and fast, and required sharp knives. Injuries were not uncommon.

The United States welcomed new immigrants from Europe and Asia. Armour and Company gave jobs to many hard-working new arrivals. The folks who worked in the stockyards lived in the nearby neighborhood called Packingtown; it was also called the "Back of the Yards." The negative aspects included the smell of the rendering and the smoke. Diseases spread rapidly among the meat packers, including the dreaded tuberculosis. Federal inspections greatly improved conditions.

In the early years, Armour workers lived in poor housing conditions. Philip Armour was also a philanthropist. His major charities included the Armour Mission, established by Joseph and offering a kindergarten, library and free medical care.

The Armour Institute provided technical training often on free scholarship for children. At the Armour Institute, children of the Chicago upper class were educated with their servants' children. What a wonderful company benefit.

Philip Armour often visited the Institute, often giving advice to the students: "Always Keep at it. Don't Let up. Let Liquor Alone, Marry a Good Wife, and pound away at whatever you want — and sooner or later you will make good."

What good advice. It still applies today.

Philip Armour died in 1901 from pneumonia.

During the California gold rush, a camp of Missourians at Placerville, California included Philip B. Armour. Philip persuaded the local grocery store to let him operate a meat department in the store.

It was a new concept, but successful. Philip dreamed that in

the future all stores would have a meat department and that if it was profitable, he planned to butcher and sell wholesale meat to grocery stores.

A small slaughterhouse was constructed by Plankington & Armour Co. in 1871. This was located in Kansas City at Central Avenue and State Line Road. Armour

also had two other large packing houses, one in Chicago and the other in Milwaukee.

The famous cattle trails originated in Texas and ended at the packing houses. The demand for pork and beef in the east was increasing to balance the equation. Partner John Plankington retired from the Plankington and Armour Company and Armour Brothers Company was organized. Already, by 1908, it was one of the largest meat producers in the world.

The *Kansas City Journal-Post* of Oct 16, 1904 described the operations:

Five thousand people are employed by the Armour Kansas City Packing Company. Men and women work together under one roof and are directed by Philip Armour. All jobs are precisely conducted by man or machine, all working together like a fine clock.

One of the primary and necessary rules is promptness in getting to work. All employees check in with the time keeper. Preliminary jobs start at 6:30 a.m. The cutters begin work at 7 a.m. The workmen occupied in the plant include skilled butchers, painters, blacksmiths, wagon makers, car builders, horse shoers, carpenters, tinsmiths, galvanizers, box makers, coopers, can makers, electricians, draftsmen, mechanical engineers, boilermakers, lithograph printers' ice makers chemists and firemen.

The major plant extended from the state line west to James Street, on the north side of Central Avenue, in Chicago. Floor space occupied 90 acres. Armour's business slogan was: "Meats for the World."

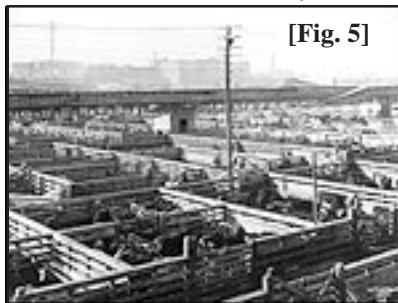
Workers who lived on Strawberry Hill and in Armourdale could hear the big steam whistle on top of the power house. The whistle was powerful and could be heard for many miles, and workers used to set their watches and clocks accordingly.

The Armour Packing Company was founded by Philip Danforth Armour. Early principal officers included Philip's brother, Simeon B. Armour, A. Watson Armour and his sons, Kirk B. Armour and Charles B. Armour. The name was changed to Armour and Company in 1910.

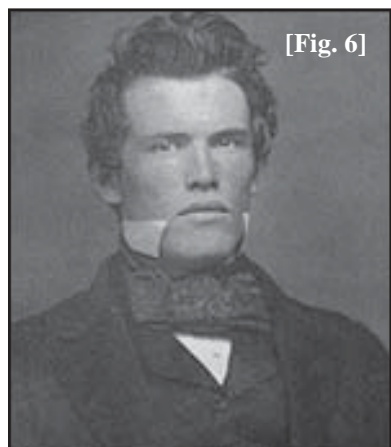
Operations for the new Martin City, Kansas Armour Plant began in March of 1973. Processed meats such as hams, bacon, lunch meats, smoked meats, and hot



[Fig. 7]



[Fig. 5]



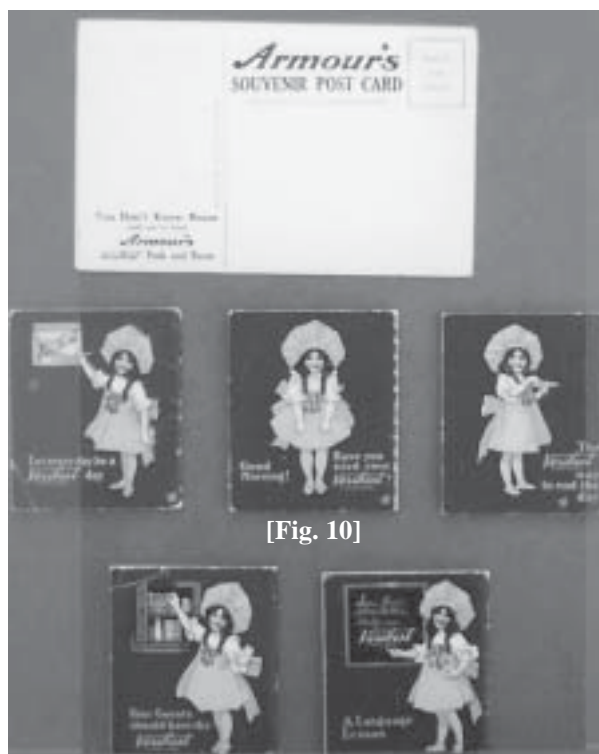
[Fig. 6]



[Fig. 8]



[Fig.9]



[Fig. 10]

dogs, are produced and packaged in the new 100,000 square foot plant. --- Kansas City Times, November 10, 1978.

From the 1919 Armour and Company Annual Report:

This was a vital year for Armour and the whole world. World War I had just ended and the Spanish Flu had killed millions of people, more people than did the war.

Armour was already feeding much of the United States as well as Europe. The company faced a rapidly expanding market to accommodate the food demand.

At this time – 1919 – J. Ogden Armour was the president and son of A. Watson Armour. Charles W. Armour was the vice president.

Photos:

Header Photo: “On the right, trainload after trainload, bringing the products of all soils, all seasons and all climes to the world’s greatest kitchen. On the left, a steam-propelled chain of endless distribution, filling the larders of America with the bounty of Nature, and feeding millions beyond the sea.”

Fig 1: J. Ogden Amour, Amour & Company.

Fig 2: Armour’s VERIBEST Root Beer Mug.

Fig. 3: Stoneware jug for Amour’s VERIBEST Strawberry.

Fig. 4: Label of a Amour’s VERIBEST 4-oz Grape Juice bottle.

Fig. 5: Amour and Company owned fourteen acres in the stockyard, with rail lines and refrigerated cars bearing the phrase: “We Feed the World.”

Fig. 6: Philip Danforth Amour, born in 1833.

Fig. 7: Advertisement for Amour, in French, which translates as: “Amour & Co. Extract Meat. The flavor of fresh meat.”

Fig. 8: Philip Amour, 1833-1901.

Figs. 9 - 10: “Helpful Hints” booklets from 1905, “For The Informed Housewife.”

Fig. 11: Advertisement for Armour’s Grape Juice from the *National Druggist*, March, 1916.

Fig. 12: The April-May-June page from Armour’s 1909 calendar.



[Fig. 11]

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Ginger Beer & Root Beer
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This book also includes a section of photographs of the great artifacts in the Root Beer Museum, Pottsville, Pennsylvania, Bob Averill, proprietor.

Armour's
Art Calendar
1909



S. Cullen Gilbert
1908

APRIL						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

MAY						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

JUNE						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

[Fig. 12]