

(Fig. 1) Gail Borden Jr

Farmer, riverman, school teacher, surveyor, government official, newspaper publisher and inventor

Gail Borden Jr. and Company

Also known as “Borden’s”

By Jim Berry

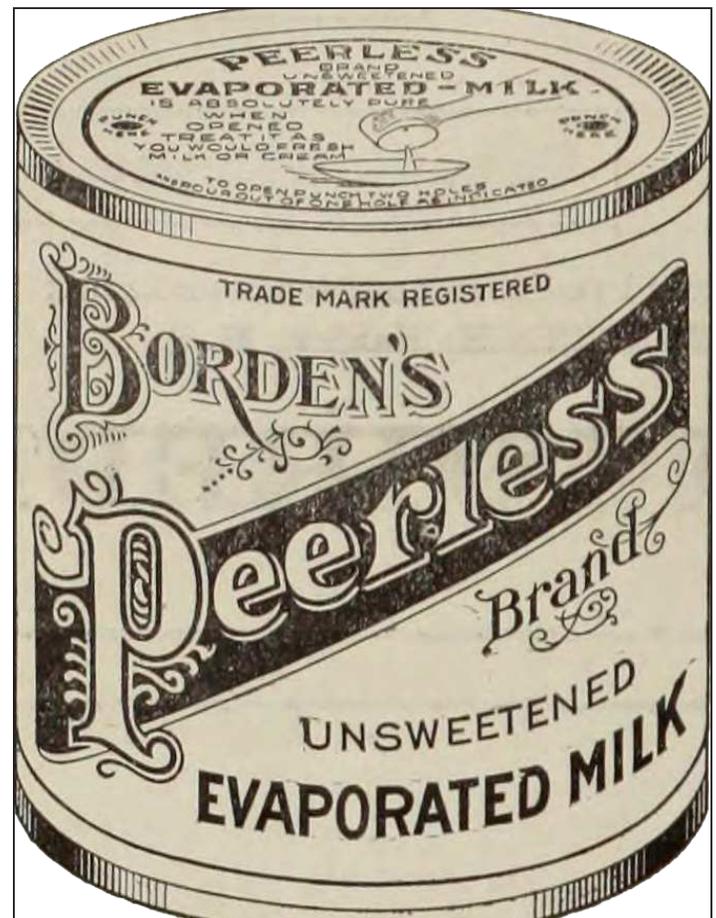
Known today as Borden’s, the company was originally named ‘Gail Borden Jr., and Company’ founded in 1857, with offices in Walcottville, Connecticut. Borden’s has become one of the largest dairy companies in the world.

Borden’s founder and namesake, Gail Borden, Jr. was born November 11, 1801 near Norwich, New York. (Fig. 1) His family moved to southern Indiana in 1814 where young Gail Borden, Jr. worked on his father’s farm until 1822 when he left home and headed to Missouri.

Borden’s interests and occupations were many and varied before he entered the dairy business. Besides being a farmer, he spent various times as a riverman, a school teacher, a surveyor, a government official, a newspaper publisher and an inventor. Although Borden had a variety of occupations in his life, he nevertheless managed to achieve a degree of success in each of his endeavors - he helped lay out the city of Galveston, Texas; published the first permanent newspaper in Texas; and is believed to have coined the phrase “Remember the Alamo!” in a headline; sat on the councils out of which came the Republic of Texas as a government official; and patented numerous and assorted inven-



(Fig. 1A) Advertisement for Borden’s Condensed Milk



(Fig. 1B) Advertisement that looked like the product would for Borden’s Peerless Unsweetened Evaporated Milk



(Fig. 3A) Here is the early bottle with large name and eagle with its wing spread.

tions, both for the consuming and manufacturing markets.

One of his early inventions which brought him some fame and inadvertently led him into the dairy business was a product called a meat biscuit which went to California with the miners in the 1849 Gold Rush. This invention won a gold medal at the Great Exposition in London in 1851. It was presented to him by Queen Victoria.

On the sea journey back home from England, Gail Borden, Jr. saw several babies die of the effects of drinking contaminated milk from the diseased cows which were kept aboard the ship. He resolved to do something about these needless deaths and upon his arrival in the United States he moved his family back to New Lebanon, New York where he began conducting experiments on the preservation of milk.

In 1853 he had produced a satisfactory product - pure, fresh milk with most of the water removed under vacuum at low temperature, and sugar added as a preservative. He called his product condensed milk.

Three years later (1856) he received a patent on his invention for making condensed milk and on May 11, 1857 Gail Borden Jr. and Company, producers of condensed milk, was formed. A factory was set up in an abandoned carriage shop in Walcottville, Connecticut and a sales office was established in New York City for public sale and distribution of the Gail Borden, Jr. and Company's Condensed Milk (Fig. 2A and 2B).

In the first year of business, the company consisted of just three employees, with all routes being established and served by Mr. Borden. Gross sales during the first year was \$48,000. Encouraged by the first year's receipts, Borden became equal partners with Jeremiah Milbank, enlarging the company and changed the name to the New York Condensed Milk Company in February 1858. Under this title, the company achieved wide acclaim and popularity when Borden successfully obtained a contract to supply Union Troops with both condensed milk and dried milk during the Civil War. Also under this title, the company began delivering fresh milk, added evaporated milk to its line and, in 1885, became one of the earliest dairies to use glass milk bottles. These early glass bottles utilized tin top, lightning-type closures and were heavily embossed with the company name and its early trademark of an eagle with its wings spread full (Fig. 3A and 3B). These bottles, as well as those used in later years, were produced by Thatcher Manufacturing Company.

The company's name and bottle embossments were changed



(Fig. 3B) Later Borden's Milk Bottle



(Fig. 4) Applied Labels Borden's Milk bottles



(Fig. 5) In 1936 Elsie the Cow became the Borden's company mascot

again in 1899, becoming Borden's Condensed Milk Company. In 1919, another name change was made, this time becoming the Borden Company.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s the Borden Company gradually changed its bottles from the earlier ribbed pattern to the new "cream-top" design made famous by the Cream Top Company of Albany, N.Y. Also about this time they began employing a labeling process which had been developed in Europe - Applied Color Labeling, a process utilizing melted colored glass applied to the bottle (Fig. 4).

In 1935, the Borden Company began packaging its store milk in fiber containers saving glass bottles for home deliveries. Borden claimed that the convenience to themselves, storekeepers and shoppers far outweighed any disadvantages the paper containers had. After a lengthy court battle with the glass manufacturers and their unions, the legality of paper cartons was proved by Borden and the first major step in eliminating glass containers was achieved.

With the perfection of homogenization in the late 1940s, the bottle type was again changed as handier, easier to stack and store, square bottles began replacing the no longer needed cream top bottles.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Borden, Inc. released an amber signature bottle in tribute to Gail Borden, Jr. (1801-1874) (Fig. 5). This bottle was released in varying sizes and today it is one of the more popular of the recent milk bottles among collectors.

Elsie the Cow was incorporated as the mascot in 1936. (Fig 6)

(Fig. 5) 1950s and early 1960s, Borden's, Inc. released an amber signature bottle in tribute to Gail Borden, Jr. (1801-1874)

