



# Heinz Diecut Gherkins

A descriptive listing

*Sylvia Bunting*



15/1

An occasional paper of The Bookmark Society

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Are these actually bookmarks or trade cards? Is the product a pickle or a gherkin? A study of these striking diecut cards begins with questions.

In the USA, where the majority were produced, they are collected without hesitation by the Trade Card Collector's Association. But they differ from the many other trade cards issued by Heinz, in their proportions and diecut outline. Many have been preserved by being used as bookmarks; the safest long-term storage place for any colour printed item is between the pages of a substantial book. They have therefore a legitimate claim to be considered bookmarks.

The shape is distinctive, and was used by Henry Heinz in a great deal of his advertising including small pin brooches. Until recently, when replaced by the vine tomato, it was the mark on all Heinz products. In the USA this shape is a pickle.

But Britain and the USA continue to be 'two nations divided by one language'. In Britain, and also in France, this particular pickle is known as a gherkin, so as a European-based society we will use our local wording.

Henry Heinz (1844 –1919) was an entrepreneur

from the age of eight, and from small beginnings began, in 1876, to sell a range of pre-packaged foods and sauces including the famous tomato ketchup.

American housewives appreciated the labour-saving products and Henry went from strength to strength. The company, based in Pittsburgh, became H J Heinz in 1888, and the '57 varieties' slogan was first used in 1896.

This listing details the known gherkins and reproduces as many (face and reverse) as possible. It has taken longer to organise the listing than to present it, as Heinz pursued a 'mix and match' policy. Most designs had more than one reverse, and many reverses appeared with more than one face. I doubt if this listing is exhaustive, but it may serve as a peg on which to hang future information.

This compilation would have been almost impossible without help from several sources: Andrew Steer, a Lincolnshire collector who generously shared his knowledge; and fellow-members Georg Hartong and Norman Slark, who put their knowledge and their own collections at my disposal.

Last but not least, the work of Ron Shieber of the US Trade Card Collector's Association has been a great help. His definitive listing, issued a few years ago, confirmed that my own tentative list of

gherkins was, in fact, complete. I have retained the order of his list as collectors have used it as a guide for some time and are familiar with it.



1

## Section A – the Horizontal Designs

These were the earliest bookmarks and most of them can still be found, though in variable condition.

1. Heinz's (no logo) is shown on page 1 and features three children, respectively holding examples of preserves, celery sauce and ketchup. I have not been able to find a printed reverse for this. Printed by Gast of Chicago.



2.



3.

3. Large keystone logo, with the same images as 2. The reverse has similar design and wording to no. 2, but the red and black colouring has been largely reversed. Printed by Orcutt of Chicago.

*Note:* It is not easy to differentiate between the faces of Nos. 2 and 3. No. 2 has a smaller keystone logo, but one needs to have the two together for comparison. If looking at only one, the single difference is the full stop after 'Co.' in the Gast logo of no. 2.

There are two editions of the reverse:

3a. Paris Exhibition 1889

3b. Chicago 1893. This was the World's Columbian Exposition, where Heinz became nationally famous for his oak-carved pavilion and even more for the million pickle-shaped pin/brooches which were given away there.



4.

4. Heinz's without logo, repeating the girl and boy from earlier cards. Printed by Morgan Litho. Again two reverses:

2. This carries a logo with a small keystone, and shows a girl and boy holding preserved fruits and chilli sauce. The reverse boasts of a gold medal at the Paris Exhibition of 1889, and this was most probably issued in 1893 at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Printed by Gast.

These bookmarks show clearly the origin of the keystone outline which still features on Heinz product labels.



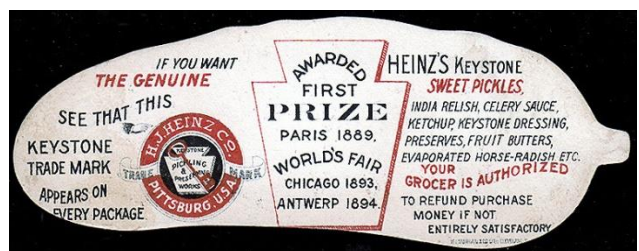
2 reverse



3a



3b



4a



4b

4a. Antwerp 1894 has now been added to the roll of gold medals.

4b. Atlanta 1895 extends the list.

## Section B – the Vertical Designs

### Individual Figures 1-14

The letters given by each are the reverse design(s)



5 AB



A 5



B 5



6/1 CEIJ



6/2 DE

Girl chef serving soup. This has two reverse versions, in English and in French. B is a direct translation of A.

Blonde girl in long-sleeved blouse, with bowl of soup. The version with Heinz Sweet Pickles has back C, the plain version has backs I, J. Almost identical to 6/1, the girl 6/2 has different eyes.

Looking at the reverses together, a progression in design becomes clear. Those on this page, presumably the earlier ones, had a plain back. They are deceptively similar, but no two are identical. As time went on, a more elaborate green edging representing a slice down the gherkin came into use. C, E, J and M mention only the Pittsburgh factory; P and Q mention others in the USA, and London also appears – alone on I, which was obviously printed for the European market. Cleanliness was a focus from the beginning, and in fact Heinz was a leading campaigner for the US health and cleanliness laws which were finally passed in 1904. Visitors were first welcomed, then provided for with guides and official opening hours. Some of the products, such as evaporated horseradish, raise a query in modern European minds.



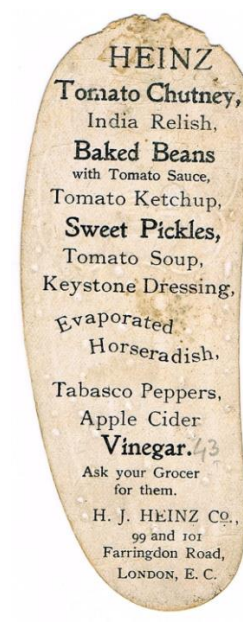
C 6/1



D 6/2



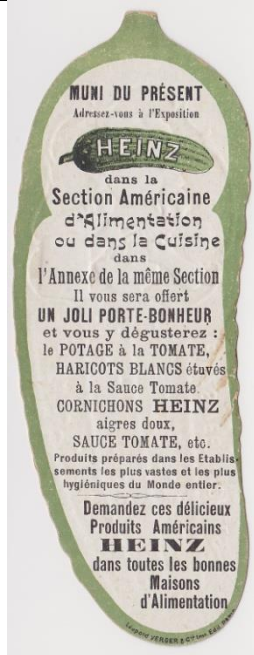
E 6/1,6/2



I 6/1



J 6/1



7 FH F 7 H 7 G 29 8/2 K Lu  
 Brunette girl in short-sleeved blouse with bowl of soup. This design, with both reverses in French, has clearly been produced for Europe.  
 Girl in pinafore with dish of small pickles. 8/1 has a dish of large pickles.

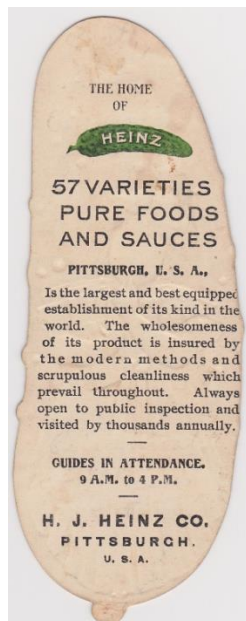
Four French reverses are known. **B** is a straight translation of **A**. **F**, from the 1900 Paris exhibition, offers a free gift and the chance to taste their goods (tomato soup, baked beans, gherkins, tomato sauce etc) at the Heinz pavilion. **H** lists some more of the 57 products, adding mustard sauce, chow chow and India sauce; and notes two gold medals at the Paris Exhibition. Both invite 'Ask for these products at any good food store'. **G**, a later issue, has another list, this time starting with tomato ketchup, and includes the guarantee that grocers will refund their money to any dissatisfied customer. It also offers a free gift (often these were gherkin-shaped badges or charms) to customers attending the 1905 exhibition at Liège in Belgium.



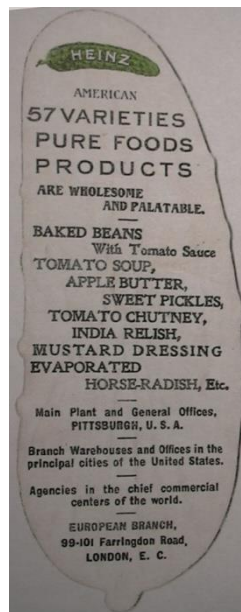
K 8/1 Lu 8/1,8/2 9 Q W Q 9, 27, 28, 29 W 9,28  
 Girl in pink dress with plate of pickles.



10 Ld N  
Girl in dance dress  
with jar of pickles.



Ld 10



N 10



O 14



14

O

The chef is unique – the only man in the series and the only figure to break the outline of the gherkin.

**Ld** and **Lu** have identical wording and very similar layouts, but a distinction has been made as in **Lu** the gherkin stalk points upwards and in **Ld** it points downwards.

The style of the gherkins has varied subtly as they progressed. In the earlier examples (2-7) the aperture was ornate and gilded with the figures firmly inside. Later (8, 9, 11-14, 27, 28) the aperture became more naturalistic and in some cases the figures are reaching out or even perched outside the gherkin. Subsequent figures appear superimposed against the background, usually from the waist up. In no. 29, uniquely, the girl appears to be part of the gherkin.



11 P  
Woman in oval  
circle.



P 11, 12



12 P  
Young woman with  
necklace.



M 13



13

M

Woman with rose in her hair. The reverse carries an invitation to visit the Heinz stall at the St Louis World's Fair, 1904. The original 'Meet me in St Louis, Louis'?

## Twin Figures 15-28

The 'twin' figures appeared in matching pairs. Nos. 15-26 featured identical girls in each pair, one with baked beans and one with spaghetti. But beware, 15 and 16 each have two versions. As far as we can tell, the reverse designs on each pair were the same. 27 and 28 show the same girl but with different products.



15/2 RS 16/1 RS R 15/2, 16/1, 16/2 S 15/1, 15/2, 16/1, 16/2, 17, 18 17 S  
 The first version of these girl cooks shows a broad ribbon bow at the neck, and a spoon/fork piled high with food. The second shows a narrower neck ribbon and a smaller helping on the spoon/fork. The tins of beans are also different colours (15/1 is on the cover) and the jagged edge would worry modern health and safety fanatics.

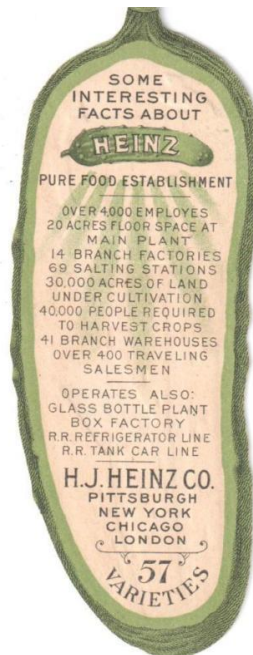
These gherkins featuring girls were called 'The Little Ladies Series' by Heinz.

No attempt has been made to put the gherkins into date order, though it is clear from the '57 varieties' slogan that they are all post-1896. No. 29 with its reference to the 1905 exhibition is late, and it seems likely that the lists with New York at the top are later than those beginning with Pittsburgh, as Heinz became a national enterprise.



20 T T 19, 20, 21, 22, 21 T Y 23, 24 24 T, Y, Ycode  
 Girl calling out. 23, 24 Long-haired girl. Girl with two bows.

and finally...



25 U  
Girl in glasses. No. 26 (on front cover) holds spaghetti.

U 25,26

27 QV  
Dainty girl holding apple butter.

V 27, 28

28 QVW  
Dainty girl dropping peach preserve.

How easy is it to find examples of these today? It seems to vary with the continent and the gherkin. The versions in French are much rarer, particularly in North America, and H appears very infrequently indeed. Most of the others appear from time to time on US ebay, but 17, 18, 19 and 20 are difficult to find. 30 is probably the rarest, and ebay bidding for this goes into three figures in any currency.



29 GQX  
A green girl, almost part of the gherkin, with a tin of tomato soup.

X 29

Ycode 23, 24.  
Identical to Y but with one (or more?) printer's code.

Z 30

30

Z

Possibly the last of the series, and certainly the rarest. This trio of children holding baked beans, India relish and tomato soup, attracts fierce bidding on its rare appearances.

## Quick Reference List

1	Heinz's 3 children	15/1	RS	Girl cook, beans, broad ribbon
2	2 children, small keystone, Gast	15/2	RS	Girl cook, beans, narrow ribbon
3 3a, 3b	2 children, large keystone, Orcutt	16/1	RS	Girl cook, spaghetti, broad ribbon
4 4a, 4b	No logo	16/2	RS	Girl cook, spaghetti, narrow ribbon
5 AB	Girl chef serving soup	17	S	Girl feeding beans to doll
6/1 EIJ	Girl in long-sleeved blouse, soup	18	S	Girl feeding spaghetti to doll
6/2 DE	Girl in long-sleeved blouse, soup	19	T	Girl calling, beans
7 FH	Brunette in short-sleeved blouse, soup	20	T	Girl calling, spaghetti
8/1	Girl in pinafore, dish of large pickles	21	T	Long-haired girl holding beans
8/2 LuK	Girl in pinafore, dish of small pickles	22	T	Long-haired girl holding spaghetti
9 QW	Girl in pink dress, dish of 4 pickles	23 TYYcode		Girl with two bows, beans
10 Ld N	Girl in dance dress, jar of pickles	24 TYYcode		Girl with two bows, spaghetti
11 P	Woman in oval	25	U	Girl in glasses, beans
12 P	Woman with necklace	26	U	Girl in glasses, spaghetti
13 M	Woman with rose in hair	27	QV	Dainty girl holding apple butter
14 O	Chef	28	QV	Dainty girl dropping peach preserve
		29	GQX	Green girl
		30	Z	Trio of children

## The Inspiration – or the Pirate Version?



This Dutch gherkin, in Georg Hartong's collection, needs some explanation! Is this (issued in 1892 or 1893) the model for the Heinz gherkins? Heinz staff were certainly travelling to Europe from 1889 onwards, the date of the Paris exhibition. A good idea will always find imitators: so it is not impossible that some

sharp-eyed Heinz employee saw one of these in Holland in 1892 and realised its advertising potential for his own company, in time to issue the first Heinz version the following year at the Chicago exhibition. Or did the inspiration travel the other way, and this is just an imitation of the Heinz advertisement? If so, it crossed the Atlantic with remarkable speed.