



Habbersett Bros. Inc. – Scrapple the “Original Brown and Serve Food”

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Ashtray with distinctive pattern commemorating 100th Anniversary. Donated by Margaret Moor.

In 1863, the year of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address and the Emancipation Proclamation, Isaac Habbersett began making sausage and scrapple on his farm in Middletown. It was sold from the tailgate of a horse-drawn wagon. The sausage was wrapped in corn husks and scrapple was cut from 15-pound slabs. This beginning led to Habbersett Bros. Inc. becoming one of the leading sausage and scrapple makers in the Greater Philadelphia area. They were truly a small company doing a large volume of business, with frozen scrapple distribution in 25 states including Pennsylvania and as far away as Hawaii.

The firm prospered under the leadership of Isaac’s sons, Isaac and E. Harper, and became known as Habbersett Brothers. In 1914, a plant was built on Knowlton Road west of Middletown Road, a few hundred yards from the original farm building. It was enlarged in 1941. The plant produced scrapple, sausage, bacon, smoked pork butts, and lard shortening.

Scrapple was the keystone of the company business. It was made according to a secret recipe which had been in the family for four generations. According to the Habbersett family, the scrapple had a rare authentic colonial taste from a recipe that dated back to 1780. Scrapple originated in Delaware County (then Chester County) where the earliest Dutch settled near Middletown. They brought with them their Dutch sausage-making skills and crafted one of the truly local meat dishes. Colonial Americans were “browning and serving” a pre-cooked food. Its name was - and still is - scrapple.

Habbersetts continually improved on the packaging of their products. The packaging served to enhance and protect the meats. They were one of the first meat packers to use a new coated Patapar, assuring customers of products of the highest quality and freshness. In the early 1930’s they developed a distinctive design for wrappers, an interlocking field of oak leaves printed in red with the Habbersetts shield

dominating the design. The slogan was “Make sure the brand you get is Habbersett because there is no substitute for quality.”

The company published a series of recipe booklets prepared to provide many new and unusual recipes and menu suggestions for scrapple, sausage, and bacon. You may have one of the Habbersett recipe booklets tucked away among your cookbooks.

After 125 years in the Habbersett family and in Middletown, JohnsonvilleFoods acquired the business in 1985. It was sold to Jones Dairy Farm in 1988 and the original plant in Middletown was shut down. The business was moved to Delaware. Linvilla Orchards purchased the plant, and it is now used for the various needs of their business operations.

References -

- Butchers’ Advocate 1959
- Pennsylvania Folklore SPRING 1973,
- Traditional Food on the Commercial Market: THE HISTORY OF PENNSYLVANIA SCRAPPLE by Susan J. Ellis