



Borden: 150 Years in the Making

A visionary inventor and an iconic cow named Elsie help establish Borden as America's premier dairy brand

Over the years, Borden products have become part of Americana. If you ask Americans about Borden, they think of fresh, wholesome dairy products. If you ask them who speaks for Borden, nearly all of them will respond: Elsie.

Borden has been associated with virtually creating the dairy products industry and offering quality products for the past century and a half. The Borden brand maintains high industry and consumer recognition and has become a multi-generational household name, dating back to 1857 when a visionary named Gail Borden established the nation's first milk condensery in Burrville, Connecticut.

For nearly 70 years, Borden has used Elsie as spokesperson to moo-ve the market toward its dairy products. The first real Elsie was selected at the 1939 New York World's Fair. The "Borden Boys," young agriculture and dairy college students recruited to handle the cows at the Borden exhibit, were instrumental in choosing Elsie and taking care of her. Today, she has become a symbol for American dairy farmers and their products.

Gail Borden's Vision

Borden products emerged in large part as a result of Gail Borden's restless and relentless drive to create better products for American consumers. Born in New York, Borden was a bit of a renaissance man by the time he reached his 40s. He had been a publisher, a cattleman, a surveyor, a civil servant, a politician and a missionary. In the mid-1840s, he began to focus on methods to keep food from spoiling. As Louis Pasteur would later reveal, bacteria migrated into food and caused illnesses.

Borden's History – Add One

In 1853, Borden began working on a process to condense milk as a means of preventing spoilage. Four years later, he established his first condensery in Burrville and called his nascent business the New York Condensed Milk Company, later to become the Borden Company.

More factories were built in Connecticut, New York and Maine and the business really took off with the Civil War beginning in 1861 when the Union Army called on Borden to supply condensed milk in huge quantities. Borden's business made him a wealthy man and admired as well. For the first time, consumers could reliably count on his products to remain free of bacteria and so Borden's name became synonymous with quality and wholesomeness. Borden maintained that reputation by dealing only with farmers who kept their barns and cattle clean. He established the "Dairyman's Ten Commandments" which even today are the basis of many health department regulations. Borden became known as "milkman to the nation."

The Model Farm

In 1866, Borden's youngest son, John Gail, came up with the idea to establish an ideal farm, one near an urban center, a large river and a railroad, so it could be easily accessed "as a home, or a park, a resting place, a place of retreat from business and possibly a place for foreign dignitaries to visit." He found his dream site in 1881 on 261 acres about 100 miles north of New York City on the Wallkill River with vistas of the Shawangunk Mountains and the Hudson Highlands. Borden added to the site and by 1889 the farm spread over 1500 acres, including barns, grist mills, woodlands, orchards, vineyards, pastures, parkland, tenant houses and 12 miles of roads. But the main business was dairy farming. By 1889, the Borden's were milking 77 cows, including Holstein, Jersey and Red Pole.

After the turn of the century, portions of the estate were sold. Dr. Clare Hoyt purchased several hundred acres during the Depression-era and his family has kept 109 acres as a farm. The family has preserved many of the old buildings and sponsored tours of the property on an annual Borden Day. Four hundred acres are now in the hands of the Donner Trust, which recently advanced a controversial \$36.8 million proposal to build 600 homes, shops and condominiums on the property. Many residents and preservationists, including Alexander Hoyt, Clare Hoyt's grandson, are opposing the development which is pending before the Town of Shawangunk Planning Board.

Borden's History – Add Two

Borden Builds the Fluid Milk Business

John Gail and his elder brother, Henry Lee Borden, were pioneers in their own right establishing Borden also as a purveyor of fluid milk products in New York City in 1875 and a decade later selling sanitary milk in bottles. The business expanded to New York state and then to Illinois. The business grew even more with the sale of evaporated as well as condensed milk.

By the turn of the century, the company, still known as the New York Condensed Milk Company, reached \$10 million in sales and the business was reorganized to include non-family members as shareholders. In 1919, the firm changed its name to the Borden Company. The first annual report listed 21 milk plants, eight milk farms, 156 country bottling plants, 70 city pasteurization plants and 3400 horses and wagons among other assets. By 1928, Borden had expanded to all regions of the country and became a nationally-known brand. Also in the late 1920s, Borden acquired several of the nation's leading ice cream and cheese companies.

Elsie Makes Her MOO-ve

In the 1930s, Elsie was born. She first appeared as one of many cartoon cows extolling the virtues of milk in medical journals. Doctors were so charmed that they asked Borden to send reprints that they could hang on their walls.

Borden introduced a real cow to represent the already famous character at the 1939 New York World's Fair. Elsie's "hayday" was probably in the 1940s when a study showed that more people recognized Elsie than President Harry Truman.

So far there have been 50 Elsies over the years. Elsie continues on the road today making appearances at fairs, parades and special events. She is a symbol of the wholesome quality products that Borden produces.

Borden Worldwide

Over the years, Borden turned into Borden Inc. with a consumer products division operating under six operating groups: dairy, grocery, snacks, specialty, consumer chemicals and bakery. In 1968, Borden created Borden, Inc. International, a mirror image of the domestic operation with just about every Borden product distributed in America also appearing overseas.

Borden History – Add Three

In 1995, the investment firm Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Company purchased Borden. Two years later, Kohlberg Kravis sold its Borden/Meadow Gold Dairies Inc. unit to a farm cooperative, Mid-America Dairymen Inc. Mid-America later merged with other cooperatives to form the 22,000-member Dairy Farmers of America (www.dfamilk.com).

Dairy Farmers of America (DFA) is America's milk marketing cooperative, created by and for dairy producers. DFA is the nation's largest producer-owned dairy marketing cooperative and food company, representing nearly a third of the nation's total supply of fresh milk.

Borden® Cheese and Elsie are now marketed through DFA. Borden Brand Cheese products include individually-wrapped cheese slices, natural shredded cheese, natural chunk cheese, string cheese and natural cheese slices and are available nationwide at major grocery and mass merchandise stores.

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