

# The Dodson Pickle Companies

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Dodson & Braun bottled pickles, horseradish, cherry jam, strawberry preserves, apple butter, and many other products at St. Louis, Missouri, during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. A total of five different companies began with Dodson & Hils and culminated with the A. Braun Mfg. Co., using a much larger variety of bottles than have ever survived, mostly marked with paper labels. However, each firm used at least one bottle embossed with its name, monogram, and/or initials.

## Histories

### Dodson & Hils, St. Louis, Missouri (1882-1887)

### Dodson-Hils Mfg. Co., St. Louis, Missouri (1887-1897)

According to the biographical sketch of John H. Dodson (Marquis 1912), Dodson had been a “traveling salesman for Yarnall Bros. manufacturers of pickles and grocers’ sundries” from 1873 to 1882, when he partnered with Edward Hils to form the firm of Dodson & Hils. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* announced on January 25, 1887, that “the Dodson & Hils Company was incorporated to-day, with a capital stock of \$50,000, all paid. The shares are held by John W. Dodson, Ed [Edward] Hils, and C. Marquard Forster.” The correct name of the corporation was the Dodson-Hils Mfg. Co., and the company packaged and sold a large variety of fruit and vegetable products.

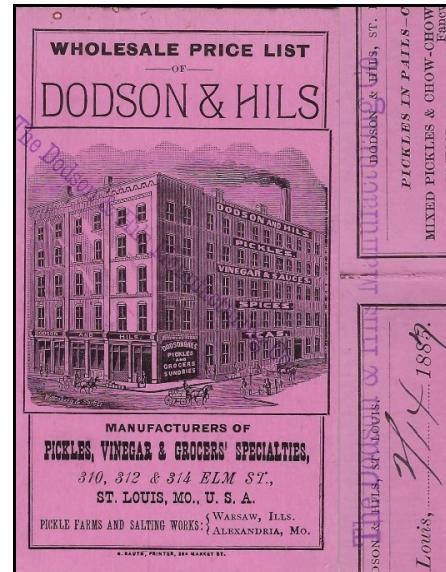


Figure 1 – Dodson & Hils Catalog – 1885 & 1887 (eBay)

An interesting catalog has survived from the years of change. The front cover was labeled “WHOLESALE PRICE LIST OF DODSON & HILS” with a woodcut of the factory showing a sign for “DODSON AND HILS.” Across the cover was stamped “THE DODSON-

HILS MANUFACTURING CO.” (Figure 1). Inside was a printed date of 1885 that had been changed in pen to “2/14/1887” – so the catalog straddled the change from Dodson & Hils to the Dodson-Hils Mfg. Co. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* included a line drawing of Edward Hils on May 9, 1896 (Figure 2).



Figure 2 – Edward Hils  
(*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*  
5/9/1886)

The *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* recorded the demise of the firm on January 21, 1897, reporting that the Dodson-Hils Mfg. Co. “filed a chattel deed of trust for \$86,936 in the recorder’s office yesterday. . . to cover the claims of all creditors mentioned in the deed” – including \$13,044 to the Illinois Glass Co. The paper added that “the concern has been in trouble for some time, and several ineffectual efforts were made to straighten things out”; although “the filing of the deed was a surprise in commercial circles, as the company was thought to be in a prosperous condition and to have good financial backing.” But, Dodson certainly was not finished.

### **Dodson-Braun Mfg. Co., St. Louis, Missouri (1897-1906)**

When the Dodson-Hils Mfg. Co. failed, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* for February 21, 1897, reported that the corporation split into two companies. The secretary of the old firm, W.C. Price, joined with Charles Geist to form the Hils Mfg. Co., while former vice president, J.W. Dodson, joined Adolph Braun to create the Dodson-Braun Mfg. Co., which remained “at the plant on Third street” – the location of the existing factory. The new firm continued the large variety of bottled and canned produce and products such as catsup, mustard, and other sauces and condiments. On February 25, 1897, the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* added that Dodson-Braun had incorporated with a capital of \$125,000. Adolph Braun, John W. Dodson, Marquard Forester, “and others” were the incorporators. Cox (1900:233) included photos of Braun and Dodson ca. 1900 (Figure 3).



Figure 3 – Adolph Braun & John W. Dodson (Cox  
1900:233)

The firm expanded during this period. An undated trade card included four company plants: headquarters at 3<sup>rd</sup> & Cedar streets, St. Louis; the Vinegar Factory at 6<sup>th</sup> & Gratiot streets, St. Louis; the Salting Houses at Canton, Mo.; and Salting Houses at Carlinville, Ill. (Figure 4). The company grew and prospered into the 20<sup>th</sup> century but consolidated with three other firms to create the National Pickle & Canning Co. in January of 1906.

### National Pickle & Canning Co., St. Louis, Missouri (1906-1912)

On January 31, 1906, *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* reported that the Dodson-Braun Mfg. Co., along with three other firms had formed the National Pickle & Canning Co., “an organization of pickle and canning factory men which is said to be for the purpose of fighting the Heinz interests of Pittsburgh.” In an interview, Adolph Braun stated that “This is not a pickle trust. It is simply placing the management of four companies under one direction for economical reasons.” The *Marion County Herald* (Palmyra, MO) added on May 2, 1906, that “this is a new company owning 52 plants in Illinois, Missouri and Iowa, and acquiring others as fast as possible.” The 1908 Sanborn map of St. Louis showed the former Dodson-Braun headquarters as “National Pickle & Canning Co., Dodson & Braun Branch” (Figure 5).

According to the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* for June 20, 1912, the organization formed with \$500,000 of capital to gain control of Dodson-Braun Mfg. Co. with A.A.B. Woerheide as president. However, the firms retained their own identities – in this case as the Dodson-Braun Mfg. Co. Division of the National Pickle & Canning Co. Dodson retired in 1910, and the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* June 20, 1912, reported that the National Pickle & Canning Co. was placed in receivership.

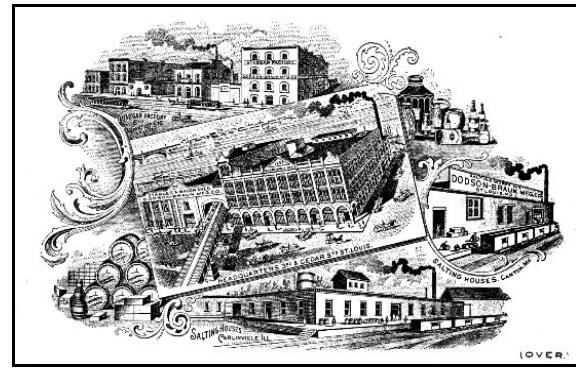


Figure 4 – Undated trade card (eBay)

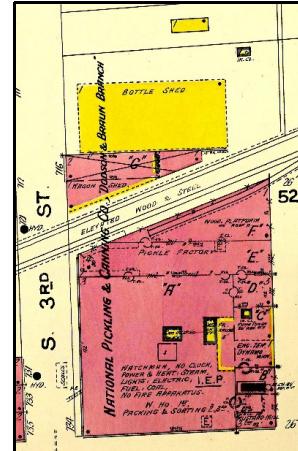


Figure 5 – Former Dodson-Braun plant (Sanborn map, 1908)

However, the property of the former Dodson-Braun Mfg. Co. at 3<sup>rd</sup> & Cedar streets, reverted to the A. Braun Co. since Dodson had retired two years earlier. After a contract dispute, John T. Millican purchased the property, eventually building a major pharmaceutical plant (*St. Louis Globe-Democrat* 11/8/1914; 3/1/1916; 8/5/1917).

### **A. Braun & Co., St. Louis, Missouri (1907-ca. 1923)**

Although the biographical sketch of Adolf Braun, Sr. (Marquis 1912), placed the opening of the A. Braun Mfg. Co. as a reorganization of the Dodson-Braun Mfg. Co. in 1906, the date may be a year early, and the reorganization is not quite correct. A slightly earlier bio sketch of Adolf Braun, Jr. (Stevens 1909), set the date at February of 1907 with the address as 6<sup>th</sup> and Gratiot streets – the location of the former Dodson-Braun vinegar factory. The 1908 Sanborn map confirmed that the location and became the A. Braun Mfg. Co. (Figure 6). The bio further noted that the A. Braun Mfg. Co. “manufactures several different kinds of vinegar” but later in the article claimed that “they conduct a strictly jobbing trade” – an apparent contradiction. Although the senior Braun was president of the corporation, his three sons actually ran the operation.

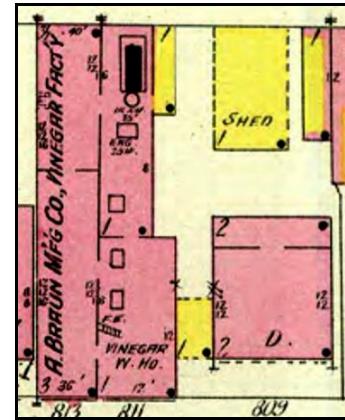


Figure 6 – A. Braun vinegar plant (Sanborn map, 1908)

The year 1906 was actually the formation of the National Pickle & Canning Co. from Dodson-Braun and three other packing firms, so the former headquarters of Dodson-Braun continued to function in that capacity for National Pickle. Assuming that the son’s bio was correct, the vinegar factory apparently was *not* part of the National Pickle merger nor was Adolf Braun. The earliest ad we have found for the firm was in the *St. Louis Star & Times* for March 17, 1915. Braun’s obituary stated that Braun was the president, but his three sons – Adolf, Jr., Marquald F. and Robert H. Braun – actually operated the company.

The date for the closing of the firm is even more murky. The last ad we found was in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* for March 7, 1920, for “Girls—to label and pack groceries, sundries” – so we know the business continued that long. A final clue was in Braun’s obituary – in the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* for January 10, 1923 – which stated that “Until a year ago, [Adolf Braun

was] president of the A. Braun Manufacturing Company, 400 South Commercial St, a pickling and vinegar business which he operated in partnership with his sons.” This suggests that the business remained open until at least late 1921 or early 1922 – although the sons may have continued longer. However, the lack of newspaper advertising – still the main mode in the 1920s – suggests that the business did not remain open long or that the sons reorganized under a new name. Although not important for this study, we selected ca. 1921 for a closing date.

The three sons found other employment after the end of the firm, and one – Adolf Braun, Jr. – provided an interesting post script. The younger Braun, the general manager of the Missouri Chemical Works, was arrested on Wednesday, August 17, 1921, charged with a violation of the Volstead Act – transporting alcohol during Prohibition. An agent, Deputy Nolan, spotted Braun “carrying a 5-gallon jug to his automobile.” Although Braun told the agent that the jug contained extract, Nolan confiscated it for analyzation. The results showed “50 per cent alcohol and fit for beverage purposes” – i.e., homemade whiskey. A check of the firm’s alcohol allotment showed that it was 7-8 barrels lower than it should have been (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch* 8/19/1921).

The *St. Louis Star & Times* for October 9, 1921, reported Braun’s hearing of the day before when “the demijohn, sealed, presumably, since the day of capture, was produced in evidence against him. It took only a cursory examination to convince the commissioner that the liquid was nothing more dangerous than grape juice.” Although the authorities were “at a loss to explain the transformation,” they nonetheless bound Braun for the next meeting of the grand jury. The only grand jury that one of the authors ever served on would have laughed the case out of the room.

Further investigation, however, resulted in the suspension of the alcohol license of the Missouri Chemical Works. As reported in the October 21, 1921, issue of the *St. Louis Star & Times*, the firm used alcohol to prepare extracts that it sold, but “it was charged that the company had shipped single-strength Jamaica ginger to Kansas City, Mo., labeled as double strength. Single strength ginger, known as ‘Jake,’ can be used as a beverage while the double strength is too strong.”

## Containers and Marks

Each of the firms connected with John H. Dodson and Adolf Braun used a variety of packaging media including embossed bottles and ones with paper labels. The paper-labeled containers almost certainly comprised the bulk of the bottles.

### **Dodson & Hils or Dodson-Hils Mfg. Co.**

Although some bottles had the correct names, others had names that were not quite the way they were produced on paper items from the two businesses. One bottle used “DODSON-HILS” as the name (without MFG. Co.); several others “DODSON & HILS MFG. Co.” – a name never appearing on billheads. However, it is pretty clear that these bottles were used during the Dodson-Hils Mfg. Co. period (1882-1897).

#### **DODSON & HILS / ST LOUIS plus D&H monogram (1882-1887)**

A colorless food bottle was embossed “DODSON & HILS (arch) / D&H monogram / ST. LOUIS (inverted arch)” in a round plate on the front (Figure 7). The bottle was mouth blown and rectangular in cross-section with chamfered corners. The one-part finish was squared at the edges but had a ball-neck ring. The base was unmarked. This was the only bottle we found that probably was from the earliest firm – Dodson & Hils (1882-1887).

#### **DODSON-HILS / ST. LOUIS plus DH monogram (1887-1897)**

A tall, thin light blue peppersauce bottle, square in cross-section, was embossed with four circles in a downward line on the long shoulder with a DH monogram inside the lowest one. The body panel below it was embossed “DODSON-HILS / ST. LOUIS” to be read with the bottle held



Figure 7 – Dodson & Hils bottle (eBay)



Figure 8 – Dodson-Hils peppersauce bottle (eBay)

sideways, finish to the left (Figure 8). Likely, the slenderness of the bottle was responsible for the abbreviated name (without the “MFG. Co.”).

### **DODSON & HILS MFG. Co. plus D&H monogram (1887-1897)**



Figure 9 – Dodson & Hils Mfg Co (eBay)

We have discovered several types of glass food containers with identical labels embossed in round plates of the bottles’ fronts. All read “DODSON & HILS MFG. Co. (arch) / {D&H monogram} / ST. LOUIS (inverted arch)” (Figure 9).

Even though the ampersand was *not* in the official name for the second firm (Dodson-Hils Mfg. Co.), these bottles were almost certainly made during that period (1887-1897). Our examples were colorless, amber, and green. One interesting bottle had the Dodson & Hils Mfg. Co. embossing but a Dodson-Hils Mfg. Co. paper label (Figure 10).



Figure 10 – Dodson & Hils Mfg Co (eBay)

### **DODSON-HILS MFG. Co. plus DH monogram**

A few were embossed “DODSON-HILS MFG. Co. (arch) / DH monogram / ST. LOUIS (inverted arch)” each in a round plate on the body – the same as the ones above but with the hyphen instead of the ampersand (Figure 11). One of this type was the most crude of our entire sample (Figure 12). This was an aqua pickle bottle mouth blown with an applied finish. Since the full name and the monogram with no ampersand were not used until 1887, this was quite late for the use of this older technology. All other finishes were tooled. Dodson-Hils may have ordered these from a small, local glass house, possibly because they needed a rush order. Because of the poor quality, the firm likely never reordered from the firm, seeking other sources for future suppliers.



Figure 11 – Dodson-Hils Mfg Co. (eBay)

## D.H.M.CO. (1887-1897)



Figure 12 – Crude Dodson-Hils (eBay)

One paper-labeled chili sauce bottle was embossed “D.H.M.CO.” across the base (Figure 13). On the paper label were the words “CHILI SAUCE / OR / TOMATO CHUTNEY / {drawing of peppers and a tomato} / WARRANTED TO KEEP IN ANY CLIMATE / PREPARED FROM THE CHOICEST INGREDIENTS ONLY / DODSON-HILS MFG. Co. / St. Louis, Mo.” As above, this came from the same period.



Figure 13 – D.H.M.CO. (eBay)

## Dodson-Braun Mfg. Co. (1897-1906)

All of the bottles we have found may be dated to the entire tenure of the Dodson-Braun Mfg. Co. – 1897-1906).

### DODSON & BRAUN

The base of a colorless, 12-sided pickle bottle was embossed “DODSON & BRAUN (arch) / S<sup>T</sup> LOUIS, Mo. (inverted arch)” (Figure 14). The bottle probably had a paper label. Although there never was a firm named Dodson & Braun (no ampersand in the actual moniker), the company used the hyphenated and ampersand versions interchangeably on their bottles.



### DODSON-BRAUN'S / TABLE SAUCE

Figure 14 – Dodson & Braun (eBay)



Figure 15 – Dodson-Braun's (eBay)

An aqua peppersauce bottle was embossed “DODSON-BRAUN'S / TABLE SAUCE” to be read with the finish to the left (Figure 15). The abbreviated company name was almost certainly because of the limited area of the bottle body.

## DODSON & BRAUN MFG. Co.

This bottle was solarized to an amethyst color (originally colorless) and was embossed “DODSON & BRAUN MFG. Co. (arch) / D&B monogram / <sup>S</sup>T LOUIS (inverted arch)” (Figure 16). Aside from a slightly superscripted “S” in “ST LOUIS,” this is virtually identical to the colorless bottle marked “DODSON & HILS.” This comparison makes it likely that this Dodson & Braun bottle was used during the first years of Dodson-Braun.



Figure 16 – Dodson & Braun (l); Doson & Hils (r) (eBay)

## DODSON BRAUN MFG. CO. plus D&B monogram

Probably an error bottle, this was embossed “DODSON BRAUN MFG. CO. (arch) / D&B monogram / ST. LOUIS (inverted arch)” in a round plate mold with no hyphen or ampersand (Figure 17). Since this bottle had the ampersand in the monogram, the same probably was intended in the name but somehow was left out.



Figure 17 – Dodson Braun Mfg. Co. (eBay)

Our final example from this firm was a colorless, round bottle embossed “D.B.MFG.CO.” on the base (Figure 18).

## National Pickle & Canning Co.

As with most of the other firms, it is virtually certain that National Pickle used paper labels to identify its products. We only discovered a single embossed bottle.



Figure 18 – D.B.F.M.G.Co. (eBay)

## National Pickle & Canning Co.



Figure 19 – NP&CCo (eBay)

Although we have only found the logo on paper labels, the National Pickle & Canning Co. continued the habit of using a monogram, this one consisting of NP&CCo initials. Our example was on a paper neck label (Figure 19).



Figure 20 – National Pickle (eBay)

The only embossed bottle we have uncovered from the National Pickle & Canning Co. was a colorless, machine-made bottle with a continuous-thread finish and rings at shoulder and heel. The side was embossed “NATIONAL (slight arch) / PICKLE CANNING CO / ST. LOUIS, MO. (both horizontal)” to be read with the finish pointing left (Figure 20).

## A. Braun Mfg. Co. (ca. 1913-ca. 1921)

As above, it is certain that most of the bottles used by A. Braun had paper labels as the only markings. However, we found a single example with both embossing and a paper label.

### A. BRAUN MFG. CO.

We only have found a single embossed glass container from the A. Braun Mfg. Co. – one was a gallon jug with two round finger loops, one on each side of the single-ring finish plus a ball neck just below the loops. The front was embossed “THIS BOTTLES CONTAINS / A / VINEGAR / MANUFACTURED BY / A. BRAUN MFG. CO. / ST. LOUIS.” with “TO BE RETURNED WHEN EMPTY FOR DEPOSIT” around the heel (Figure 21). The base of the machine-made bottle had an Owens machine scar plus an elongated diamond surrounding “799.” Although both the Diamond Glass Co. and the Illinois Glass Co. used diamonds with enclosed numbers, only Illinois Glass had the Owens license for large bottles. Since Illinois



Figure 21 – A Braun (eBay)

Glass did not receive the Owens' license for carbouy machines (i.e., large bottles) until 1917, this bottle could not have been made prior to that date. However, a similar bottle appeared in a drawing in the March 17, 1915, issue of the *St. Louis Star & Times* (Figure 22). Along with the drawing, the ad included a list of other A. Braun products.



Figure 22 – A Braun ad (3/17/1915)

## Trademarks and Paper Labels

### Dodson-Hils Mfg. Co.

We only found one trademark for the Dodson-Hils MfG. Co. – from 1892.

#### Blue Point Oyster Catsup

On August 25, 1892, J.W. Dodson applied for a "Trade-Mark for Tomato Catsup" and received Trademark No. 21,793 just a month later on September 27 of that year. The drawing consisted of "a dish of oysters on the half shell" with "Dodson's Blue Point" above and "Oyster Catsup" below. The trademark had been used since August 16, 1892 (Figure 23). The trademark continued to be used by Dodson-Braun.



Figure 23 – Oyster Catsup label (eBay)

### Dodson-Braun Mfg. Co.

The Dodson-Braun Mfg. Co. entered the 20<sup>th</sup> century by registering trademarks, one in 1901 and another in 1902. The trademarks then appeared on trade cards, paper labels, and advertising.

#### Oyster Catsup

On May 23, 1901, Adolf Braun applied for a "Trade-Mark for Catsup" and received Trademark No. 36,723 on July 9, a bit over a month later. The description stressed a "conventional representation of Mephistopheles in connection with the word 'FAUST'" but

noted that other words, colors, and parts of the drawing could be changed or eliminated and still be covered by the trademark registration. The drawing showed Mephistopheles pointing with his left hand above “FAUST’S” / OYSTER / COCKTAIL / CATSUP” with the final word in a banner. The corporation claimed that the trademark had been used continuously since March of 1898 on catsup.

A Dodson-Braun trade card included a drawing of a fancy square catsup bottle (filled with catsup) with embossed waves on the neck and an aluminum screw cap. The label depicted the exact trademarked Mephistopheles drawing and noted that the catsup was “A Special Condiment for / OYSTER COCKTAILS / STEWS, FRIES, ROASTS, BOILS AND / RAW OYSTERS. / PREPARED BY / DODSON-BRAUN MFG. CO. / ST. LOUIS, MO.” (Figure 24). The card also included a drawing of the Cupid Brand Trademark (see below) and drawings of the various St. Louis plants on the reverse (see Figure 4).

The trademark drawing was very similar to ones we discovered in our study of Seven-Up bottles (Lockhart & Brown 2020). In an appendix to that study, we discussed Anthony “Tony” Faust who opened the Faust Restaurant and Fulton Market in 1870, serving such notables as Adolphus Busch, a friend of Tony. In fact Tony’s son married one of Busch’s daughters. With his last name, it is no surprise that Tony Faust selected a drawing Mephistopheles and the word “FAUST” to represent Tony Faust Coffee. The drawing was virtually identical to the one used by Dodson & Braun; however, Faust’s use of the trademark was a few years later beginning in December of 1933 (Figure 25). The *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* provided another interesting connection on July 6, 1898, when it reported that two of the guests for a steam ship excursion sponsored by Dodson-Braun was none other than Tony Faust and his wife.

Probably because of the connection, Adolphus Busch bottled Faust Beer, at first using only the name but adopting a drawing of Mephistopheles and the word “FAUST” in 1905 –

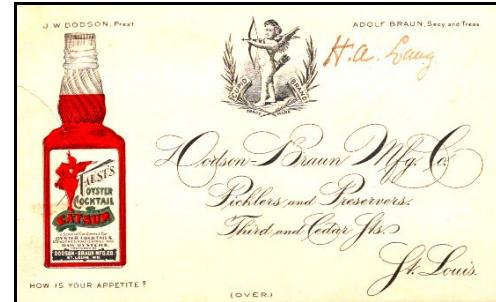


Figure 24 – Faust catsup postcard (eBay)

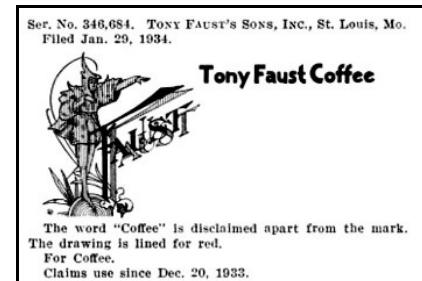


Figure 25 – Tony Faust Coffee (*Official Gazette* 1934)

although this version had a hand extended but not pointing. The Blanke-Baer Chemical Co., also of St. Louis, adopted a similar label for ginger ale in 1907 – this time with Mephistopheles holding a bottle of the drink (Figure 26). Harry Woerman applied for another similar Mephistopheles drawing in 1910 for use on various food products, but he never received a trademark – probably because the Dodson-Braun mark was already similarly used.

## Cupid

On March 11, 1902, Adolf Braun applied for a “Trade-Mark for Certain Named Foods and Relishes” and received Trademark No. 38,395 on June 3 of that year. The trademark consisted of “the word ‘CUPID’ and a representation of a winged cupid” (see Figure 24). Braun claimed that the mark had been used by Dodson-Braun continuously since October 30, 1901. The trademark was used on

“foods and relishes of the kind known to the trade as ‘table goods’ – followed in the document by a long list of specific foods, including capers, catsup, chili-sauce, honey, mustard, horse radish, pickles, and many more. The mark could be affixed to labels, boxes, bottles, or barrels. The firm used the mark on advertisements and even had at least one pin made (Figure 27). The National Pickle & Canning Co. continued to use the Cupid logo on paper labels, such as one for Cupid Brand Choicest Tomato Catsup and in ads (Figure 28).



Figure 28 – Cupid ad (*Journal of the U.S. Cavalry Association*)

Ser. No. 29,742. (CLASS 45. BEVERAGES, NON-ALCOHOLIC.) BLANKE-BAER CHEMICAL CO., ST. LOUIS, MO. Filed Sept. 3, 1907.



Figure 26 – Faust Ginger Ale (*Official Gazette* 1907)



Figure 27 – Cupid pin (eBay)

## Discussion and Conclusions

Historically, the names and dates for the various Dodson, Hils, and Braun firms mostly are well defined. Once the companies began using the term “Mfg. Co.,” the two principals’ names usually were separated by a hyphen (occasional exceptions). However, the original firm,

Dodson & Hils, had an ampersand between the two names, and this continued through the Dodson-Hils Mfg. Co. and Dodson-Braun Mfg. Co. periods on many of the *embossed* bottles, even though paper labels during the same time frames used hyphens to separate the names. Therefore, embossed bottles using the term “DODSON & HILS MFG. CO.” should be dated to the Dodson-Hils Mfg. Co. period (1887-1897), and those with “DODSON & BRAUN MFG. CO.” belong in the Dodson-Braun Mfg. Co. time slot (1897-1906).

Bottles embossed “DODSON & HILS” with no abbreviations (i.e., MFG. CO.) probably belonged to the earlier firm – 1882-1887. Although we found very few examples, embossed bottles from the National Pickle & Canning Co. and the A. Braun Mfg. Co. should be dated to those two periods with no confusion.

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Posted 12/15/2025