

Identifying Canned Army Rations in Early 20th Century Alaska

Examples from can dumps associated with EAG-044.
U.S. Army Signal Corps Wireless Telegraph Station. (1908-1921)
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In early 2021, I was tasked with cataloging a collection made in September of 2000. Catalog item #0004 from the collection at EAG-339 initiated my investigation of canned army rations associated with the U.S. Wireless Telegraph Station (EAG-044) near Eagle, Alaska. This hole-in-cap, key-strip opened cylindrical can has raised, embossing on its side that reads:

TWO RATION
FRESH ROAST BEEF
LIBBY, McNEILL & LIBBY
CHICAGO
4-[]
US INSP [& PSD]

Photo not present;
Embossing not legible in photo

Without the embossing indicating **ration**, I would have simply identified the cans in the collection as meat cans utilizing the Sprague Function Code as used in previous cataloging work. My initial research focused on the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps looking for army ration specifications. I discovered that the Quartermaster Corps was not responsible for rations until 1912. Prior to this date, rations were under the guidance of the army's Subsistence Department.

Subsistence Department specifications for 1900, state for: Bacon, issue, in ¾ pound tins and Bacon, issue in 9-pound tins; are to be **stamped** with:

Packer
Date of Packing
and to be properly lacquered

Specifications for 1908 require canned meat to be **stamped into the cap** of each can:

Packer
Location
Product Identification
Establishment Number
U.S. Inspd & Psd



JACOB DOLD PKG CO
BUFFALO N Y
MAY 1911
12 LBS NET BACON
42
U S INSPD & PSD
EAG-339, 2006, #9061



SWIFT & COMPANY
CHICAGO
12 LBS NET BACON
8-22
US INSPECTED & PASSED
EAG-339, 2006, #9061



LIBBY, McNEILL & LIBBY
CHICAGO EST 22
2 LBS NET.
ROAST BEEF
PARBOILED & STEAMROASTED
U.S. INSPD & PSD
EAG-339, 2000, #0001



MORRIS & COMPANY
1 LB & 8 OZ. NET WT
CORNED BEEF
U.S. INSPD & PSD
ESTAB. No 1
CHICAGO
EAG-339, 2000, #0002



MOUNT VERNON
EVAPORATED MILK

EAG-339, 2006, #0417



FRENCH SARDINES IN OLIVE OIL
ALBERT ROCHE BRAND
PACKED BY
AUGUSTE CHANCERELE & CIE
FRANCE

EAG-339, 2006, #0417



CURTICE BROTHERS CO
PRESERVERS
ROCHESTER, N.Y.

EAG-339, 2006, #9891



PREFERRED STOCK CATSUP
A & L
EXTRA QUALITY

EAG-339, 2006, #9892

Other commercially available food products are to be purchased by army contracts(s) with specifications as to container size, and packaging along with government inspection of products. Therefore; food cans and bottles can be determined to be army rations by **context**.

The references include specifications for a large number of products that are authorized as rations, army-wide and others as **authorized only for Alaska**.



SNIDER'S
CHILI SAUCE

EAG-339, 2006, #9893



EAGLE BRAND
BORDEN'S CONDENSED MILK

EAG-339, 2000, #0001

REFERENCES:

- 1900 Handbook of Subsistence Stores. United States War Department. Published by Authority of the Secretary of War, for use in the Army of the United States. Washington: Government Printing Office.
- 1908 Manual for the Subsistence Department United States Army. Prepared under the Direction of the Commissary-General; Revised to Sept. 1, 1908. (Second 1908 Edition) Washington: Government Printing Office .
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- 1916 Manual for the Quartermaster Corps, United States Army, Appendix No. 4. Washington: Government Printing Office 1917.

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