



H.J. Heinz commemorated "The House Where We Began" in the company's literature, including picture postcards. Here, an inset depicts the Sharpsburg home where Heinz started his internationally successful business. Image from author's collection.

## "The House Where We Began": H.J. Heinz's Sharpsburg Home

BY MELANIE LINN GUTOWSKI

Though the internationally famous Heinz brand is synonymous with the city of Pittsburgh, the company originated six miles upriver in a modest house and garden in Sharpsburg. In 1849 Henry John Heinz moved to the town at age five with his parents, John and Anna Margareta Heinz, who were German immigrants. John, a brickmaster, built the family a two-story, four-room brick home with a Palladian doorway, two chimneys and nine large front windows. Completed in 1854, the structure sat in the present-day 1700 block of Main Street. The property included two-thirds of an acre devoted to a garden.

The business that would change the food industry forever began when Heinz was eight years old, tending part of that garden. He began by peddling his family's

excess horseradish to the neighbors. To increase profits, he pre-grated the product, a convenience appreciated by Sharpsburg's residents, as it was difficult and smelly work. Heinz gradually expanded the business, offering celery sauce, pickles and the company's best-known product, tomato ketchup.

Heinz moved to Pittsburgh at age 25 and built a new factory in Allegheny City (today, Pittsburgh's North Side) in the 1890s. Though he and his family came to own far larger and more ornate homes in Sharpsburg and its surrounding communities, Heinz never forgot what he referred to as "The House Where We Began." In 1904, he decided to have the home moved, intact, to the courtyard of his factory. It took over two months to slowly roll the house to the Allegheny River and float it

downstream by barge, but by mid-1904 the house reached its new location.

To make amends for the loss of the house, Heinz gave Sharpsburg several gifts, the most prominent of which remains a bronze statue of Chief Guyasuta, which originally sat atop a fountain and watering trough.

The Heinz house remained in Pittsburgh until 1954. It was dismantled and reassembled at Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan, founded in 1929 by Henry Ford and Thomas Edison. The village contains buildings and artifacts from over 300 years of America's history, and the small Sharpsburg home that John Heinz built now stands as a monument to his son's ingenuity and hard work. ■

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