

WRAP IT UP!

History Hidden in the Paper World of E P H E M E R A

Jars of peanut butter on the shelf, cans of soup in the cupboard — what kind of history is hidden in their paper labels? Memorable symbols, charming pictures, unusual colors, or clever phrases are printed on food labels to help the food producers sell their products. As tastes and interests change over time, food packaging changes, too, to keep the customers coming back for more.

Food packaging is one kind of *ephemera* — printed items produced for quick use and soon tossed away. Ephemera old and new help us understand how people lived in the past and how they live today. Try and find some food wrappers at home or in the store that can be compared to the ones below, which date from long ago. What changes in people's tastes and interests do they reveal?

