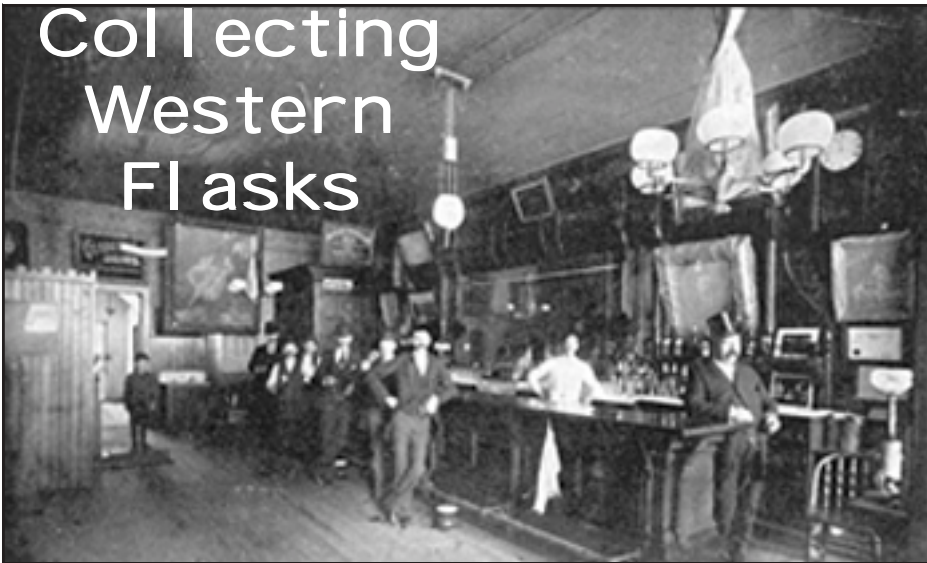


Collecting Western Flasks



Ralph Van Brocklin

The allure of Western glass can be just as strong to the modern collector as the prospect of finding gold was to the miners that utilized that glass.

The ability to re-live history through the glass, as well as an appreciation of the character and unique qualities of this early glass from the West, provide a strong draw for collectors nationwide. And, in no category does this hold more true than in Western whiskeys!

Many of today's Western collectors focus on the cylindrical fifths, of which no fewer than 800 examples have been catalogued. Early and crude cylinders are at a premium, while the tooled-top examples of the 1890's, extending up to Prohibition, tend to be more readily available. In the flasks, the earlier and cruder specimens attract the most attention, but even the tool-tops tend generally to be quite rare and comparatively difficult to acquire.

Those who collect the flasks understand that the process of compiling a sizeable collection is a gradual one which can take many years. For those who are patient, a special and unique collecting category awaits.

CLEAR VERSUS COLORED FLASKS

There are two distinctly different roads which the Western flask collector can take.

For those who have a love of history and interest in local firms and different communities, the clear flasks are the obvious choice. These tend to be a little more recent, with the earliest firms existing in the late 1870's, but most being

in business from the early-to-mid 1880's, forward to Prohibition. Consequently, the glass tends to be more uniform in character and there are only minor color variations. They offer the opportunity to collect from up to several hundred communities, and from most of the Western states. A larger and more comprehensive collection is possible than can be assembled in the colored Western flasks.

The quantity of colored Western flasks is very limited, with only sixty-two different bottles known in the more popular styles. The distribution of these bottles is also limited, with most being from the cities of Portland and San Francisco. What they lack in plentifulness, they make up for in color and crudity! Drippy tops, whittle, bubbles and colors that range from green to yellow, red to chocolate; variations in the glass in

many of the colored flasks can make runs of several of any given bottle seem like that many more totally different bottles. The history of the firms which utilized them is the history of importance, and many of these histories are truly fascinating.

CLEAR FLASKS

The styles of clear flasks utilized in the West mirror the styles used in other parts of the country. Certain areas tended to use certain styles to the exclusion of others.

Among the styles used with some frequency were the Coffin, the Dandy, the Defender, the Eagle, the Olympia, the Pumpkinseed (or Picnic), the Shoofly, the Basket-Base (or Swirl Base) shoofly and the Strap-Sided (or Banded) flask.

This article will emphasize the styles which attract the most attention with collectors: the Coffin, Olympia, Pumpkinseed, Shoofly and Strap-Sided flasks.

Pumpkinseeds

The pumpkinseed flask is undoubtedly the most popular style in the clear Western flasks, with the coffins being the next most desired.

This bottle has a rounded or pumpkinseed shape with a flattened face and back, and is found with a single roll or double roll top or ground screw-cap top variant.

The ground screw cap pumpkinseeds seem to be limited in distribution to the Rocky Mountain state region.

Coffin / Shoofly

The coffin and shoofly flasks look very similar when viewed from the front or



[Fig. 1] Left to Right: Defender, Washington, Eagle and Dandy flasks

reverse, but the bases are distinctly different. The coffin sports sharp and highly defined angles and the shoofly has more rounded sides. [See Fig 2]

The basket-base shoofly flasks seem to be particularly popular in Montana and there are a couple of variations to these fancy-based shooflies that additionally have ground screw-cap tops from the state of Colorado.

Olympia

The distribution of the Olympia-style flask is predominantly the Northwestern and northern Rocky Mountain states, although a few examples have also been found as far west and south as the San Francisco Bay area. One is known from Arizona and a very few are found from the Mid-Western states.

I have never seen this flask utilized by a North-Eastern or Southern liquor concern.

This flask has broader shoulders than its base, a flat front and reverse and a very distinctive flared ring top. The base is marked "Design Patented - Pat. Aug 9, 1898". [See Fig. 4]

Strap-Side

The strap-sided flask is also known as a banded flask. [See Fig. 4] Its popularity in the states west of the Rockies never reached the level that it seemed to in the Mid-West, North-East and South.

There exist eight amber Western strap-sides, seven of which are from California and one is from Butte, Montana.

I know of no clear examples from the



[Fig. 2] Left to Right: Shoofly, Coffin and basket-base Shoofly flasks

area west of the Rockies, although the style was quite popular in Texas and Oklahoma Territory.

Factors Which Contribute to Value in the Clear Western Flasks

Crudity and color are largely eliminated as determining factors of value in this area of collecting. There is the occasional flask which will demonstrate

nice crudity, and there certainly are flasks with varying degrees of sun colored amethyst coloration, factors which lend eye appeal and increase the value of the bottle. The more important parameters tend to be **condition, rarity and desirability**.

As in any aspect of bottle collecting, the **condition** of the bottle is important.

All things equal, every collector would love to have a collection of perfectly mint and clean specimens. In the clear flasks, limiting oneself to that high of standard would severely limit the size and breadth of ones collection. The poor quality of the glass used, in combination with the minerals in the soils of the West, results in significant staining to many of the bottles. The fragility of the pumpkinseed flasks, in particular, makes them a true hazard to clean, and most serious collectors of these bottles reach a point where stain is an acceptable flaw, as long as the price reflects it. Thus, the cleanliness of the bottle may not hamper its value as much as might be seen in other fields of bottle collecting.

Nicks, chips, bruises and other more serious damage truly does affect value. This is particularly true in the more common bottles.



[Fig. 3] A grouping of Marysville, California Coffin and Pumpkinseed flasks



[Fig. 4] Olympia and strap-sided flasks

Seldom does a severely damaged specimen warrant more than a few dollars as an example for the "Crier" shelf. But, with a very rare bottle, the occasional surprise occurs - as an instance, a Gem Saloon coffin flask from Elko, Nevada, with a blown-out shoulder recently realized \$170 on EBay. This is an instance of **rarity** (only two other specimens known) outweighing condition as a factor in determining value.

Just as condition is an important, but not exclusive, parameter in determining value, rarity is not always the most important feature.

The most common of the Colorado shoofly flasks (CROFF & COLLINS / WINES & LIQUORS / DENVER / & / SALIDA / COLO.) would command as much as many of the California pumpkinseed flasks, of which only one to three specimens are known. [See Fig. 5] That serves to point out how very important the **desirability** of the item is, and as you might guess, local appeal is a large portion of what creates the situation just mentioned.

The **influence of local appeal** derives from a number of factors, including the number of collectors for that area seeking the same item and the availability of other collectible bottles from that area.

The popularity of the clear flasks tends to be higher in areas where colored and early crude glass is not available. Because of the relative youth of many of the western states, this early colored group of bottles is very limited. This has bearing on the local appeal of the clear flasks to Colorado collectors (colored and early glass from the state is scarce) and helps explain why the prices paid for the clear flasks from that state are so much higher

than is typically commanded by a clear flask from California (where a number of categories of bottles have early, crude and colored examples available.)

Within any given state there are areas where local appeal tends to drive the market more than in others.

In the Western states the driving force of the economy at this time was mining. Much of the lore of the West was associated with these mining towns and not surprisingly the bottles from these towns are extremely seriously sought. Three flasks which would easily eclipse \$1000 include the mining town coffin flasks from Cripple Creek, Victor and Leadville, Colorado. [Fig. 6]

The local appeal effect for one given community is well demonstrated by the A. Weinberg flask [Fig. 7] from Tacoma, Washington Territory.



[Fig 5] Rare California pumpkinseed flask and common Colorado coffin

There are at least 8-10 of the half pints available, providing sufficient examples to quench the appetite of local collectors, plus answer the collecting desires of collectors out of area. Price falls within the \$500-700 range for the half-pint examples, and collectors from out of region typically would not value the pint any differently. With only two examples known in the pint-size, and more local interest than the supply can accommodate, value markedly escalates. The example unearthed last year reportedly had a \$3000 offer tendered and it was not accepted by the digger!

The **territorial embossed** flasks are a highly desired grouping, in-and-of-themselves.

The Western states with territorial embossing on their flasks include Washington (four pumpkinseeds, five coffins and one amber union oval flask), Oklahoma (one pumpkinseed, one coffin and fourteen strap-sides) and Arizona (one

straight-sided flask from Douglas, A.T.).

The state of Washington affords the opportunity to put together a very nice grouping, of which the Walla Walla Saloon pumpkinseed pictured [Fig. 8] is a choice example. Not only is it territorial, it is from a small Eastern Washington town and embossed "Saloon" (another feature which adds desirability).

The **saloon flasks** are all highly collectible, and of the various categories in the clear Western flasks, they are the ones with the strongest national appeal and market. Consequently, the prices tend to be higher on these. Flasks from smaller towns tend to command a premium, unless a cache of them has been found.

The Tuolumne flasks pictured [Fig 9] are highly sought due to the nice names of the saloons (Elk and Rainier), the small size of the community and the communities association with mining.

Several saloon embossed flasks are available from the town of Marysville, [See Fig. 3] another town associated with California's early mining history. Combined with the other bottles available from this town, another factor lending desirability is seen - the ability to put together a nice grouping from a single community or area. A total of nine pumpkinseeds and two coffin flasks are known from the community and with each likely existing in both the pint and the half-pint size, plus a variety of the other style flasks also available; a very appealing collection from that town, alone, is possible!

While I collect a certain number of Western cylindrical fifths associated with the companies that distributed my flasks, there is a larger number of collectors who collect in exactly the opposite fashion. Flasks which **coorespond to embossed cylindrical fifths**, such as the Lilienthal and Co and the Phoenix Old Bourbon have obvious appeal to those who collect fifths from the same concerns.

Another flask that fits this category is



[Fig. 6] Victor, Leadville and Cripple Creek Colorado coffin flasks

the Kolb & Denhard pumpkinseed from San Francisco, [Fig. 11] which also falls into the most desirable grouping of flasks - the **picture flasks**. Of the Western picture pumpkinseeds, it is hard for a flask to have much more going for it than the Kolb & Denhard - a bold picture of a stag's head on a San Francisco bottle, a one-of-a-kind flask from a famous Western firm advertising a famous brand. Truly the type of bottle that is a centerpiece to a collection!

Other very nice picture flasks include the Phoenix Bourbon with embossed phoenix [Fig. 32], the Log Cabin Portland pumpkinseed with embossed cabin [Fig. 12], The Brearley & Uniake pumpkinseed with embossed owl from Reno [Fig. 33] and the The Bureau coffin and pumpkinseed flasks from Portland with their embossed crown.

The picture flasks make up a small grouping, with only twelve known pumpkinseeds and six coffins/shooflies known, but what a desirable group of bottles to own!

Other areas of collecting that are of note include collecting flasks with **unusual sayings** such as the S.F. Rose pumpkinseed from Vallejo embossed "Straight Goods From The Wood" and flasks with



[Fig. 7] A. Weinberg Tacoma W.T. coffin flask

great bar names such as "The Delay". [Fig. 10] Could a San Francisco flask come from a bar with a more pertinent and appealing name than "The Fair Wind" or "The Arrival"??? The pictures these names conjure up place these two flasks among my most favorite of the 600 on my shelves!

Availability of Clear Flasks By State

The following listing will give an idea of what is available from each of the states west of the Rockies:



[Fig 8] Desirable Washington Territory "Saloon" pumpkinseed

Alaska - No embossed flasks are known.
Arizona - Only three flasks are known.

The Wellington Saloon olympia flask from Prescott exists in both the half pint and pint sizes. (Despite being considered the "available" flask from the state, it took me over ten years to acquire my pint example.)

There is only one example of the "Thorne's Palace" pumpkinseed from Prescott (badly damaged) and only one example of the rare straight-sided territorial "Old Crow" from Douglas, A.T.
California - As might be anticipated, there are more flasks available from California than any other Western state.

There are numerous examples of the dandy flasks scattered across the state, with likely no fewer than 75 each from Los Angeles and San Francisco.

A few of the olympia-style flasks exist with none south of the Bay Area, to my knowledge.



[Fig 9] Pioneer Saloon and Rainier Saloon pumpkinseed flasks from Tuolumne, CA

A few Washington style flasks exist, as well as the Lavanthal style

Approximately 240 pumpkinseeds and 120 coffin/shoofly flasks are known in clear.

The vast majority of the amber flasks from the west also come from this state.

Colorado - The Colorado flasks present a wonderful array of bottles.

A large number of the dandy, defender and Baltimore oval flasks complement the forty-eight known coffins, seven pumpkinseeds, four screw-cap pumpkinseeds and thirteen basket-base shooflies of two different styles.

Additional new flasks are periodically dug, adding to the interest in collecting from this state.

Prices tend to be high, with even the most common flasks in the \$100 range and many of the mining town flasks at \$500-1000, and up.

One base embossed amber flask is known.

Hawaii - Two embossed straight-sided flasks are known, with no pumpkinseeds, coffins or olympia-styles accounted for. Although not a popular style, they are rare and they command a strong price.

Idaho - The Idaho flasks are all scarce and there are very limited numbers of each bottle known.

There exist six different olympia-style flasks, one pumpkinseed and one Baltimore oval flask

The prices have remained reasonable on the Idaho flasks, considering their rarity, with the olympia flask typically in the \$300 range or less. The Log Cabin pumpkinseed from Boise falls in the \$600-800 range. [Fig. 34]

Montana - Montana has a nice assortment of flasks, including some Baltimore ovals, "medicine"-type, defenders and dandies to



[Fig. 10] An appealing bar name



[Fig 11] Nonpareil Kolb & Denhard



[Fig. 12] A nice Oregon "Picture" flask

go with fifteen shooflies, four basket-base shooflies, three olympia-style, one screw-cap pumpkinseed and two double-ring top pumpkinseeds.

Both of the standard top pumpkinseeds have surfaced in the past year (see 'New Finds' section in this magazine).

Most flasks from this state sell for under \$500.

There exists one amber strap-sided flask from Butte (King & Lowry) to complement the clear flasks.

Nevada - There are a very limited number of flasks available from this state, with two coffins, four shooflies and five pumpkinseeds available, as well as four or five dandy-style flasks.

Aggressively pursued by the local collectors over the years, these flasks have always been expensive, but a waning in interest as the prices escalated has caused them to back up in price a little in the past three years.

One flask which has not dropped (and will likely not) is the Brearley & Uniake pumpkinseed with the embossed owl. With only about five examples of this picture flask known, it places in the top five of all Western clear flasks.

Expect to pay \$1000 and up on any Nevada flask other than the The Waldorf dandy flask from Reno.

New Mexico - No embossed flasks have surfaced to date. There are a few labeled flasks known and an embossed cylinder (broken) was discovered last year, so one day there may be one to report.

Oregon - The Oregon flasks offer the

opportunity to assemble a nice grouping, with at least eighteen pumpkinseeds, eighteen coffins, two shooflies, three basket-base shooflies and four olympia-style flasks available.

Numerous dandy and defender flasks also exist, particularly from Portland. Several amber flasks are available from Portland and a very appealing amber union oval flask is available from Salem (see article this issue from Dale Mlasko).

Many of the clear Oregon flasks are in sufficient supply that they currently sell for under \$200.

Exceptions include (but are not limited to) the The Portland pumpkinseed, the Marx & Jorgensen coffin flask, the AAA Old Valley early shoofly, the Billy Winters Log Cabin pumpkinseed, a rare crown-embossed Cutter shoofly and the Marx Baumgart pumpkinseed from Albany. This latter flask is the only pumpkinseed known from an Oregon city other than Portland and would certainly command in the \$500 range.

Utah - The flasks from Utah are very rare. There are only five clear flasks and one colored flask known.

The clear flasks include the The Falstaff and the The Crystal dandy flasks from Ogden, the John Lollins olympia-style and the The Bismark and C. Bonetti shooflies from Salt Lake City.

The clear flasks range from about \$300-400 for the John Lollins to the \$750 range for the The Bismark.

Pieces in aqua, green and amber have been found for the California Wine Depot

bottle from Salt Lake City, but to date only pieces have been found. An intact example of this flask would certainly command in the \$20,000 range.

Washington and Washington Territory - The Washington flasks have recently begun to increase in popularity.

There was a time when few of the flasks other than the Territorials would command over \$150. Most of the pumpkinseeds and coffins would now easily eclipse that mark and several of the Territorial flasks would command \$1500+.

Two of the top ten Western clear flasks come from this state - the Walla Walla Saloon pumpkinseed and the M. Gottstein, Seattle W.T. pumpkinseed featuring a picture of an Indian paddling a canoe.

Just as the states of Oregon and California offer the possibility of putting together a sizeable collection, so does the state of Washington. There are seven pumpkinseeds, five territorial pumpkinseeds, one shoofly, three basket-base shooflies, six olympia-style, seven coffin and five territorial coffin flasks accounted for.

In addition to this, there are a significant number of dandy flasks and a very rare amber union oval flask from J.C. Nixon, Seattle W.T.

Wyoming - As with most of the Rocky Mountain region, the Wyoming flasks are rare, with many of the flasks having three or less known examples.

To this point we know of six screw-cap pumpkinseeds, eight defender flasks, one olympia-style, one shoofly and four

coffin flasks.

Cities represented include Casper, Cheyenne, Kemmerer, Laramie, Rawlins, and Rock Springs.

Oklahoma Territory and Dakota Territory - Although east of the Rockies, these two states are included due to their territorial designations.

The Oklahoma Territory flasks are prime examples of bottles where local appeal drives the market, with most flasks commanding \$500 and up.

There are currently four strap-sides, one pumpkinseed and one coffin flask known. Many of these bottles are extremely difficult to obtain.

There is one pumpkinseed flask known from Dakota Territory. Embossed FROM / HENRY J. SIEMS / WHOLESALE / LIQUORS / PIERRE, D.T., it is a choice bottle to own.

AMBER FLASKS

The amber Western flasks present a challenge to collect, both from a scarcity standpoint and from a cost standpoint.

There are only sixty-two known amber flasks in the more popular styles, many of which have less than five known specimens.

A few of the newer ones were put out by saloon proprietors or grocers, while the older ones were associated with large liquor distillers or distributors. For the older examples, then, the history tends to be a history of the firm rather than a community or merchant within a community.

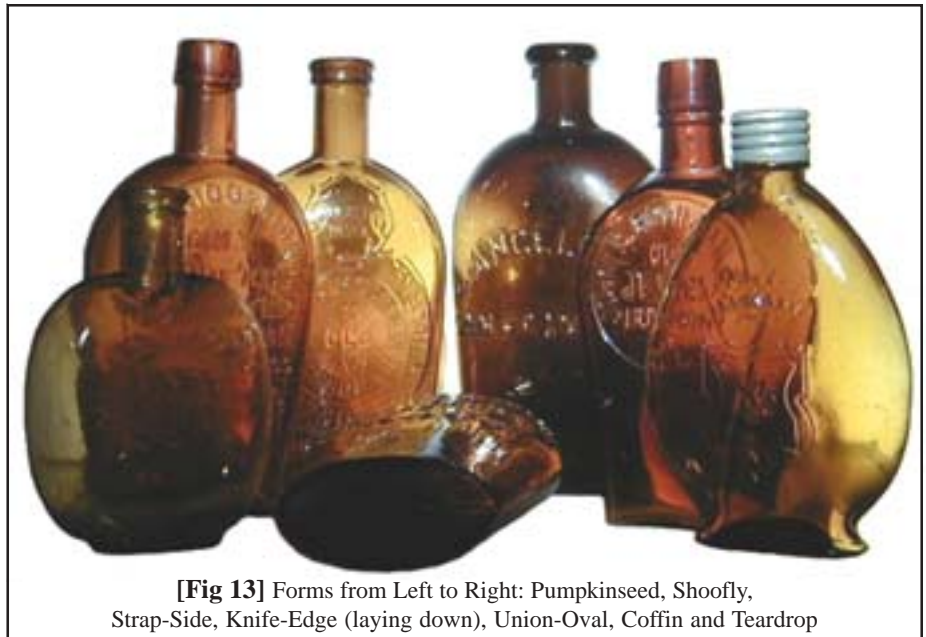
Several different styles of bottles are represented in the Western amber flasks. Known examples include two pumpkinseed flasks, six coffins, eight shooflies, ten strap-sides, thirty-three union ovals, two knife-edge flasks and one teardrop.

The Union oval and knife-edge flasks both demonstrate a rounded shoulder and are a little broader at the shoulder than at the base. Their difference lies in the angle at the junction of the edges of the flask and the base. Where the union oval is rounded, the knife-edge has a more "pointed" projection.

The teardrop is a unique form and appears as the name would imply.

The other forms have been discussed, previously.

Only six of the Western states have flasks in this grouping. Oregon has one knife edge, three union ovals and two shooflies. Washington Territory and Utah each have one union oval, Colorado has



[Fig 13] Forms from Left to Right: Pumpkinseed, Shoofly, Strap-Side, Knife-Edge (laying down), Union-Oval, Coffin and Teardrop

one base-embossed union oval, while Montana has a single strap-sided flask. California is the most significantly represented, with two pumpkinseeds, six coffins, six shooflies, one knife-edge, nine strap-sides, twenty-seven union ovals and one teardrop.

Many of the factors which lend value to the clear flasks are applicable to the colored flasks.

Certainly condition, rarity and factors promoting desirability all pertain.

Collectors of the cylindrical fifths love to include a Fleckenstein & Mayer, a Jesse Moore or J F Cutter Star & Shield flask to their cylinders from the same company.

A collector of Territorial bottles would love to have the J C Nixon Seattle W.T. flask on their shelf, as would a "saloon" bottle collector enjoy having the Peppertree Saloon coffin or shoofly flask from San Pedro, California.

Add to this the crudity and tremendous color variation noted in these flasks and the demand for them becomes understandable. The most ardent collectors try to assemble a complete collection of the colored flasks. To my knowledge no-one has ever been able to make the claim that they once owned an example of every bottle. This is a testimony to the extreme rarity of certain of the bottles.



[Fig. 14] Group of: Fleckenstein & Mayer bottles

Typically, the first 25 of the flasks can be obtained in a five-year period of time and those first twenty-five tend to be available in the \$200-\$2500 range. After that, there are another ten or so that may become available with some patience and a willingness to spend in the \$2000-\$5000 range. The remainder of the flasks are tough to acquire, no matter how industrious you are and, to a degree, no matter how much money you have available to acquire them. Several of the top flasks become available only when a collection breaks up, or if a new find of the bottle occurs.

Considering the above, it is easy to understand why a number of collectors sub-categorize the ambers and collect only a fraction of them. Some desire only the flasks from their own state. Others collect only those that correspond to an embossed cylinder they own (up to forty-three of the flasks apply to that criterion). Others seek the Territorial or Saloon designations mentioned earlier. The very specialized collector is the bitters collector, who has only one embossed Western flask to choose - the union oval Wilmerding & Co Peruvian Bitters flask.

For those who collect the flasks as an entity in-and-of-them-own, there are a couple of very significant divisions for collecting. There are those who limit collecting to only the older private mold embossed flasks and those who collect only bottles that have applied (gloppy) tops, but not the flasks with tooled tops.

Collecting the Private Mold Embossed Flasks

This group includes all of the flasks distributed by Western firms prior to the advent of the slug plate (patented in 1875, and beginning to see widespread use in the West by the late 1870's).

The full-faced embossing on many of these bottles is very eye-appealing and the value of these flasks comes from this and the tremendous variations in color and crudity they demonstrate, rather than simply from rarity.

The twenty-one flasks in this grouping are:

AAA OLD VALLEY WHISKEY - Ca 1871-1882

These show tremendous variation in color and crudity. They are quite desirable, although not rare. Over 100 specimens of this union oval exist.

J ANGELI & CO SAN FRANCISCO -

Ca 1868-1872

With only 6 known examples, it is in the top five of Western flasks. Union oval.

OLD BOURBON CASTLE WHISKEY - Ca 1875-1880; F CHEVALIER & CO

Rare, with less than 15 examples known. These union ovals show nice variation in color and crudity. [Fig. 17]

JF CUTTER EXTRA OLD BOURBON - Ca 1870-1880; Star and Shield

Available in a wide array of colors and crudity, they have the added popularity of the Cutter name. Scarce, but not rare, with over twenty-five examples of this strap-side in collections. [Fig. 18]

J H CUTTER OLD BOURBON, E MARTIN - Ca 1873-1877; Crown

Another top Western flask, a rare strap-side with 10-15 known examples. They are typically found in golden amber colorations. Olive colorations are in particular demand. [Fig. 19]

C P MOORMAN SAN FRANCISCO - Ca 1873-1879

The Moorman is the only shoofly flask in the early private mold group. It is a fairly common bottle ranging from dark amber to yellow-green and can be incredibly crude. The possibility of collecting a run of colors at a reasonable price adds to its appeal.

MILLERS EXTRA (TRADE shield MARK) OLD - Ca 1871-1879; BOURBON, E MARTIN & CO (large pattern)

This is another fairly common union

oval flask, with over 100 examples in collections. [Fig. 20]

This bottle comes in a wide variety of colors and, as with the C P Moorman, nice color runs can be put together affordably. **MILLERS EXTRA (TRADE shield MARK) OLD - Ca 1871-1879; BOURBON, E MARTIN & CO**

The small pattern embossed Millers flask is considerably more rare, with on the order of thirty examples known of the union oval. [Fig. 21]

Colors in the green spectrum are actually more common than the ambers - an unusual circumstance for a Western flask. **FLECKENSTEIN & MAYER, PORTLAND - Ca 1877-1885; (knife edge)**

This full-face embossed flask is comparatively scarce, with less than twenty-five specimens known. The key to collecting is to find one with strong embossing. [Fig. 22]

FLECKENSTEIN & MAYER, PORTLAND - Ca 1877-1885

Very rare in the applied with two pints and less than six of the half pints known. It is an example of a flask that bridges over into the tooled top era, despite being a private mold bottle. Interestingly, the tooled examples are also rare. Union oval shape

THE GENUINE OLD BOURBON WHISKEY - Ca early 1870's; N. GRANGE

In the top three of Western flasks for desirability. Very rare with three known examples, two of which are damaged. Union oval

THE GENUINE OLD BOURBON WHISKEY - Ca early 1870's; NG monogram, SF [See Front Cover]

Pairs with its brother as one of the top three Western flasks. Three examples are known-- one electric green, one citron and one golden amber. Union oval.

JESSE MOORE & CO - Ca 1878-1882; antler motif

Approximately twenty-five examples are known ranging from dark amber to olive in coloration. [Fig. 16]

Although not rare, it is a top example of a Western flask and very tough to acquire as no-one ever parts with theirs. Strap-side.

"HIGH S. F." LILIENTHAL & CO - Ca 1872-1880

This large union oval was distributed through the mining camps of the West. An early and fairly common flask, the key to collecting it is to find a nice yellow green



[Fig 15] Private Mold Embossed flask





[Fig 28]



[Fig 29]



[Fig 30]



[Fig 31]



[Fig 32]



[Fig 33]



[Fig 34]



Hildebrandt & Poster
pumpkinseeds



or green specimen with good strike.

"LOW S. F." LILIENTHAL & CO - Ca 1872-1880

Identical in shape and size to the above, the placement of "S.F." is a little lower on this flask. Tough to find with a good strike. **LILIENTHAL & CO (L & Co) - Ca 1876-1880; Teardrop**

Unique in design for a Western flask, it is comparatively scarce with about twenty specimens in collections. [Fig 31] **LILIENTHAL & CO, S.F. - Ca 1878-1882; (banded)**

A recent dig produced about half a dozen of these, but it still remains a rare flask with only about a dozen example known. It is known as the "Lilienthal Cognac" due to being the same diminutive size as the banded Wormser Bros "Fine Old Cognac".

CALIFORNIA WINE DEPOT, AM SMITH - Ca 1874-1875; SALT LAKE CITY [See inside back cover]

This is an extremely desirable flask with no known intact examples in any collection. It is a union oval form with champagne top and the examples that have been unearthed have been green, aqua and amber in color. It would clearly fall in the top three of all Western colored flasks.

WORMSER BROS SF, FINE OLD COGNAC - Ca 1870-1872

This short, squat banded flask tends towards olive colorations. Rare with less than six specimens known.

WORMSER BROS, SAN FRANCISCO - Ca 1865-1867; (horizontal embossing)

Early and tending towards the olive colorations, this union oval flask is a top five bottle. Less than ten examples are known, most with significant damage. Three examples have a champagne top, a feature seen in only one other Western flask. [See Fig. 15]

WORMSER BROS, SAN FRANCISCO - Ca 1867-1872; (vertical embossing)

As rare as the horizontal Wormser is, this one is common. Well over one-hundred examples exist, some with a large top and others with a small top. Color variation is an appealing feature of this flask, with coloration varying from yellow to olive and into the orangish and reddish ambers. [Fig. 28]

Collecting the Slug Plate

Embossed Union Oval Style Flasks

Dating from about 1878 to 1895, the flasks in this grouping are a mixture of applied top and tooled top bottles. They

are generally less crude and demonstrate less pronounced color variation than the private mold embossed flasks.

Their desirability is largely based upon their relative rarity, with the acquisition of applied top examples (where they exist) and specimens with color and crudity the focus.

There are eighteen examples known in this style of flask:

S ADOLPH & CO, SALEM O. - late 1870's-1885

This is a very rare flask, with only two applied top pints and one tooled top half-pint known.

F BRASSY OLD BOURBON - Ca 1881-1883; SAN JOSE

As with the Adolph, this is a "small" town flask, a feature which lends interest. Less than ten total specimens known. Pint and half-pint tool top flask.

F BRICKWEDEL & CO, SF - Ca 1880-1883

Considered an "available" flask, there are probably still less than forty known. They come in applied top and tooled top in both the pint and half pint size.

FLECKENSTEIN & MAYER, PORTLAND - Ca 1880-1885

This flask is found as a tooled top in both the pint and half-pint sizes. It is a nice later addition to the private mold bottles from this company.

GILMAN WALKER & CO, SF - Ca 1878-1886

A very rare and desirable tooled top flask, with six known half pint union ovals and one pint that has been attributed to being a knife-edge rather than a union oval.

KANE, O'LEARY & CO, SF - Ca 1881-1882 [Fig. 25]

Another very rare flask with only one tooled top pint and a total of six half-pints in tooled top and applied top known.

LIVINGSTON & CO, CALIFORNIA ST - Ca 1878-1883

Very rare. Four applied top pints are known.

LIVINGSTON & CO, FREMONT ST - Ca 1883-1885

Very rare, with four tooled top examples known.

MILLER'S OLD BOURBON WHISKEY - Ca 1878-1883; WEIL BROS, SF

There are reported to be two examples of this flask, but I have never been able to confirm its existence. A rare and very desirable flask.

NANSCAWEN & CO, VISALIA - Ca

1881-1889

This is a small-town Central Valley flask. Very rare with only one or two specimens in existence. Tooled top. [Fig. 23] **NEWMARK, GRUENBERG & CO, SF - Ca 1883-1885**

Another rare flask, it comes in both sizes in both the tooled and applied tops. 10-12 examples known.

J C NIXON & CO, SEATTLE W.T. - Ca 1882-1889

This is a very appealing flask that has the distinction of being the only colored flask with Territorial designation. Rare, with only five or six examples known. One applied top pint is known. All of the half-pints are reported to have tooled tops.

PHOENIX BOURBON, PALMTAG - Ca 1890-1895; BERNHARDT, HOLLISTER AGTS [Fig. 24]

Found as a tooled top half-pint, it is very rare and an extremely desirable small town flask. Four specimens are known.

STEVENS & CO, VISALIA - Ca 1881-1891

One tooled top pint is known of this flask. Very desirable.

TAUSSIG & CO, BATTERY ST, SF - Ca 1881 - 1883

This flask reportedly exists in an applied top, but it is much more likely that all have tooled tops. Both sizes exist and the bottle would be considered scarce to rare.

TAUSSIG & CO, MAIN ST, SF - Ca 1884 - 1886

Tooled top half-pints and pints exist. A few more examples exist of the Main Street than the Battery Street address.

WILMERDING & CO, PERUVIAN - Ca 1885; BITTERS, SF

This is superb piece for the flask collector or the collector of Western bitters. There are less than six examples known. Found as a tooled top in both the pint and half-pint sizes.

WOLTERS BROS & CO, SF - Ca 1884 - 1885

Recently unearthed, there is only the one half-pint tooled top example known.

COLLECTING THE SLUG PLATE EMBOSSSED STRAP-SIDED FLASKS

Just as the union ovals are found in a mixture of applied top and tooled top bottles, so too are the strap-sides

Although these are a popular style in many regions of the country, in the West they tend to be among the least sought of

the colored flasks.

Adding specimens with applied tops, lighter colors and some crudity is the focus among those collecting these flasks.

Five examples exist in this style:

KING & LOWRY, BUTTE MONT - Ca early 1880's

This is a scarce flask and only one of two from the Rocky Mountain states. Approximately a half dozen applied top examples are known in each of the pint and half-pint sizes. [Fig. 26]

LILIENTHAL & CO, CINCINNATI, SF & NY - Ca 1880-1885

This flask is found in both the applied and tooled top in both the pint and half-pint sizes. A comparatively rare bottle.

LILIENTHAL & CO DISTILLERS - Ca 1883-1889

This flask is very common in the tooled top and scarce in the applied top. It is found in both sizes. [Fig. 29]

ROTH & CO, SF - Ca 1880-1885

This is considered one of the most common of the slug plate Western flasks. It is found as a tooled top and applied top in both sizes.

There additionally exists a rare double slug plate variant with applied top.

SPRUANCE, STANLEY & CO, SF - Ca 1880-1885

This flask is found in both sizes as a tooled top bottle. Applied top pints are also known. It is scarce in the tooled top and rare in the applied top.

COLLECTING THE COLORED PUMPKINSEED, COFFIN AND SHOOFLY FLASKS

For those that collect the clear flasks of similar style, the impetus to collect the ambers often begins with the addition of one or more of the flasks in this grouping.

These flasks add the elements of color and crudity to the overall collection that are missing in a grouping of solely clear flasks.

Cohesiveness of the collection is attained through the overlap, which these fifteen bottles, along with the C P Moorman previously mentioned, provide.

COFFINS AND SHOOFLIES

JOHN BOWMAN OLD COMET BOURBON - Ca 1886-1890

This is a very rare coffin flask, with one broken pint and three half-pints known.

JOHN BOWMAN OLD JEWEL

BOURBON - Ca 1886-1892

A very rare coffin flask with three pints known.

J H CUTTER, A P HOTALING, PORTLAND - Ca 1879-1885; (Newman patent)

A very rare screw-cap pint shoofly, with only two examples known.

J H CUTTER, A. P. HOTALING - Ca 1884-1886; (slugged out "Sole Agents")

A rare shoofly flask, with approximately six examples in collections. A recent find of one with "Sole Agents" on the bottle finally answered the question as to what the slugged out area originally said.

JOHN FERGUSON, ABC HOUSE, SF - Ca mid-1880s

This is an early crude and rare coffin flask. Two are reported, with only one known to exist.

GOUDIE & McKELVEY PEPPERTREE SALOON - Ca 1915-1917; San Pedro

Desired for the "Saloon" embossing, there are approximately three of the half-pints and five of the pints known of this shoofly flask.

C N McKELVEY, PEPPERTREE SALOON - Ca 1916-1917; San Pedro

This is a rare coffin flask, known only in the half-pint size. Five to ten known.

J.D. HEISE & CO, SAN FRANCISCO - Ca 1900-1903

This is a rare shoofly flask, with less than five examples known.

LILIENTHAL & CO DISTILLERS - Ca 1900-1903

This is a rare coffin flask, with five to ten known, in the pint size only.

PHOENIX BOURBON, NABER, ALFS & BRUNE - Ca 1888-1895; SF, Sole Agts

A common shoofly found in the pint only. Nice color variations exist, and with the embossed Phoenix, are a popular flask.

PHOENIX BOURBON, NABER, ALFS & BRUNE - Ca 1895-1899

A common coffin flask found in the half-pint size only. Nice color variations exist, and with the embossed Phoenix, they are a popular flask.

PHOENIX BOURBON, NABER, ALFS & BRUNE - Ca 1880-1885; Hollister Agts

An extremely rare coffin flask with only two pint examples known. [Fig. 27]

PUMPKINSEEDS

THE ARLINGTON, M A LINDBERG, BAKERSFIELD - Ca 1907-1917

This is a scarce flask with less than fifteen examples in amber. Found in both sizes in both clear and amber.

HILDEBRANDT, POSNER & CO, SF - Ca 1885-1890

A rare pumpkinseed in the amber shades, it is found in both sizes, in amber and clear. Green examples exist, and are highly desirable. [Fig. 31]

Ambers, clears...

when you appreciate the form,
it is hard to resist the temptation
to try to put them ALL
on the shelf.



Ralph Van Brocklin is a collector of Western glass, miniature advertising jugs and shotglasses. His collecting emphasis is clear and colored Western flasks. He is an oral surgeon living in Johnson City, Tennessee, and currently serves as president of The Federation of Historical Bottle Collectors. He can be reached at thegenuine@aol.com or (423) 913-1378.