

# HUTCHINSON BOTTLE DIRECTORY TO CATALOG OVER 12,000 BOTTLES!

by Ron Fowler

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My involvement with the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* initiative began when this small notice appeared in the January 1977 *Old Bottle Magazine*:

HUTCHINSON BOOK(S) PROPOSED – STATE BY STATE: Printer and ex-commercial photographer Joe Nagy of Oklahoma City has plans for a state-by-state, comprehensive Hutchinson soda book series. He requests collectors in Texas and Illinois contact him first for the purpose of cataloguing Hutchinsons in their particular states...Sounds like a worthwhile project, Joe. Best wishes – Ed.

Wow; it was very exciting to envision the entire antique bottle collecting community enjoying the use of state Hutchinson directories! Although I was hard-pressed to believe it would be practical or even possible to produce such a series of books, I contacted Joe and quickly became a believer. In short order I found myself contributing information on Oregon, Washington, and Washington Territory Hutchinson bottles. My initial contact with Joe blossomed into a long and very enjoyable friendship (and a tremendous amount of work!).

During the next decade, hundreds of collectors from across North America contributed Hutchinson rubbings, drawings, photographs, bottle specifications, company and state histories, and other information to the project. I visited Oklahoma City twice, spending several days at Joe's home and office preparing finished bottle drawings. We also exchanged almost 2,000 rubbings via mail that I turned into finished drawings.

Sadly, a terrible series of personal and business misfortunes beset Joe in the late 1980s and he was forced to put the project on hold. Although he desperately hoped to finish the books, Joe lost a valiant battle with cancer and passed away September 12, 1993. Thanks to a very thoughtful friend, most of Joe's files were saved and I acquired them in 1994.

Based on over 30 years experience at authoring bottle collecting books, I estimated it would probably require five years of steady effort to complete the *Hutchinson Bottle*



*Directory*. Although I hungered to re-initiate work on it, I forced myself to wait until after my 2002 retirement when I would be able to devote the quantity of time required by a project of this magnitude. In late 2003 I reprioritized several other projects and decided to go for it; work on the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* began anew January 1, 2004.

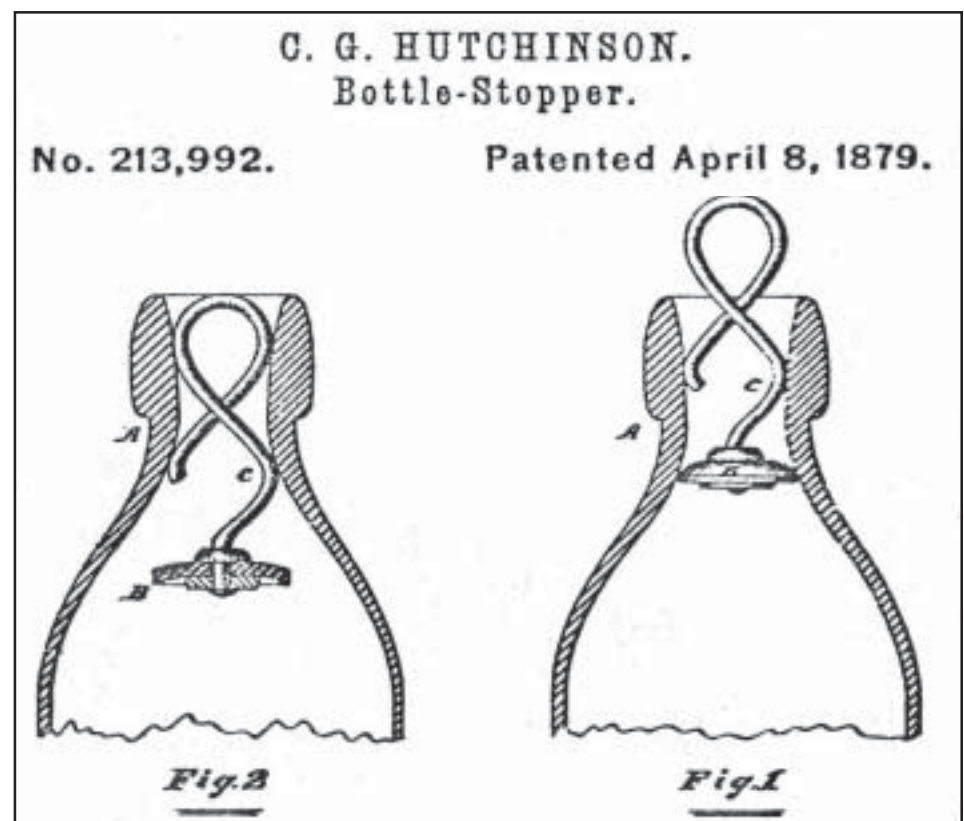
During 2004 I devoted almost 1,400 hours to sorting, purging, and merging files, and then building personal computer spreadsheets containing data on more than 11,000 different Hutchinson bottles. The total now exceeds 12,000 and may reach 13,000 by the time we go to print! The project is substantially ahead of schedule, particularly because we were using personal computers, the Internet, and E-mail to communicate and gather data.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The primary project objective is for the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* to serve as a comprehensive, detailed, accurate, and valued source of information for the antique bottle collecting community. It should also function as a highly useful reference for antiques dealers, local historians, and historical archaeologists.

Hopefully the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* will also be viewed as a fitting legacy honoring Joe Nagy's intestinal fortitude for tackling such a worthwhile and challenging project that many thought impossible to complete. Hundreds of us have contributed to this project, and we can't let those years of effort go to waste!

Personally, completion of the *Hutchinson*



*Bottle Directory* is yet another opportunity to give back to this wonderful hobby that has provided me with so much enjoyment for over 44 years. Once the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* is in print, I intend to complete several other major book projects that are currently at various stages of development.

**PROJECT SCOPE**

Joe Nagy's original concept for the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* included line drawings and (some) photographs of all known Hutchinson bottles, plus data accompanying each illustration to document bottle dimensions, glass color, and rarity. Very quickly the project scope ballooned to include state and individual company histories, and much more. Information poured in and Joe was somewhat overwhelmed when he estimated there were perhaps 7-10,000 different Hutchinson bottles.

In order to ensure this initiative doesn't become unmanageable, I am striving to

simplify, clearly define, and tightly control project scope. The *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* will include these three basic elements:

1. Spreadsheets listing all known Hutchinson bottle variants;
2. Illustrations of each bottle; and
3. Ordering information for each area-specific antique bottle book that is currently in print.

**HUTCHINSON SPECIALISTS**

Once the information in my files was transferred to spreadsheets, I estimated the magnitude of the effort necessary to acquire additional bottle rubbings, photographs, and missing data. Whew, this was definitely going to be a huge challenge! In order to accelerate the process of obtaining the desired quantity and quality of information needed, I set out to identify advanced Hutchinson collector specialists from across the continent. This approach has proven successful beyond my

wildest dream. The *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* simply couldn't be properly completed without the valued assistance and contributions of these fine folks. Today we have designated specialists for all of Canada, all but six of the U.S. territories and states (specialists are still needed for Connecticut, Delaware, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, and West Virginia), and the few foreign countries where Hutchinson bottles were utilized.

As each specialist has been identified, I have been sending them a draft copy of their geographical area's spreadsheet so they'll know exactly what data has already been obtained. This jump starts the information gathering process and minimizes the possibility of wasting their valuable time. We are then working together to obtain missing information and data on additional bottles. Lastly we will jointly edit and quality control the finished spreadsheets and illustrations.

Working closely with a team of advanced collectors from across North America is proving to be a highly rewarding and interesting experience. Although there are variations in approaches to collecting, we definitely have in common a shared, hard-to-define fondness for these wonderful glass objects known as Hutchinson bottles.

**HUTCHINSON BOTTLE VARIANTS**

Most collectors agree on bottle variations such as glass color, plate shapes, and base shapes. Beyond these basic differences, collecting preferences are a function of personal taste and the definition of "variant" becomes quite fuzzy. Some collectors differentiate between base, shoulder, and top shapes, various shades of aqua, bottle sizes, and other factors. There is no "right" or "wrong" approach and everyone is free to collect however they prefer; I certainly have no intention of dictating to others how to collect!

Nonetheless, in order to gather data and produce the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory*, it is necessary to define "variant" and establish specific guidelines. Additional information on the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* approach to variants is available on the web site. Although everyone won't agree with this approach, at least it's a starting point. The definition and guidelines aren't cast in stone and can be modified as necessary to meet collectors needs.

**PLANNED BOOK FORMAT**

*Hutchinson Bottle Directory* pages will be printed in landscape fashion on 8.5" x 11" paper. Each spreadsheet page will provide detailed bottle listings and data, while the facing page will display illustrations for those bottles listed on that spreadsheet page.

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Mead Extract,	Root "	
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Club "	Spruce Beer "	Folk, Wire Cork Fasteners,
Strawberry "	California Pop Extract,	etc.
Raspberry "	Strawberry Coloring,	Ginger Ale Taps and everything else.
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Sarsaparilla "	Silver Frost,	Mineral Water Soffs used by the
Soluble Lemon Extract,	Blue Juice.	trade.

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 Style 104. Diam. 2 1/2 in. Hgt. 5 1/2 in. Cap. 7 1/2 oz.  
 Style 105. Diam. 2 1/2 in. Hgt. 5 1/2 in. Cap. 7 1/2 oz.  
 Style 106. Diam. 2 1/2 in. Hgt. 5 1/2 in. Cap. 7 1/2 oz.  
 Style 107. Diam. 2 1/2 in. Hgt. 5 1/2 in. Cap. 7 1/2 oz.  
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Respectfully, American Glass Works.

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Sample pages illustrating the format will be posted on the web site in weeks to come.

#### SPREADSHEETS

The spreadsheets for each country/state/territory/province list bottles alphabetically by city and bottler. Individual listings include all available data on front, back, and base embossing, mold, glass color, height, diameter, plate shape, base shape, and rarity. Detailed explanations for each data category are available on the web site.

Thanks to the Internet and the Hutchinson collector specialists I am continually adding new listings and filling in missing information. We will be able to add data right up to the as-yet-to-be-determined date of publication. Once the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* is in print, additional bottles and data will be identified and continually added to the master data base. I am exploring the possibility of offering a fee-based service to periodically send subscribers updated pages.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS

Extensive surveying of many long-time Hutchinson collectors indicated that most prefer line drawings to photographs because accurate drawings better show bottle details such as punctuation, plate shapes, pictures, and monograms. Obtaining useable photographs of over 12,000 bottles isn't

practical, and the cost of publishing them would make the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* prohibitively expensive.

Many of the finished drawings I prepared for Joe 20-25 years ago were missing from his files. When I was really on a roll, I could complete ten drawings per hour, but my hands tire quickly and I could only complete a limited number of drawings per day. It would take far too long to complete the illustrations at that rate, so I purchased graphics software that will both speed up the illustration process and facilitate the production of high quality, professional drawings. Even with the use of graphics software, much work remains in order to complete the illustrations.

#### OTHER BOTTLE BOOKS

I am aware of bottle books containing varying degrees of Hutchinson bottle information for Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland (Baltimore), Michigan (Upper Peninsula), Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon,

Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming, the Territories, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, and Canada. Hopefully collectors will inform me of others that are available.

Including advertisements for those books that are still in print in the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* will provide collectors desiring additional information an easy means of obtaining it. Many of these books are hard to find and publication of the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* is expected to increase their availability to each of us!

#### YOUR SUPPORT IS WELCOMED!

All Federation of Historical Bottle Collectors members are encouraged to follow the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* initiative as it matures. Heres a sampling of what you'll find at the [www.SeattleHistoryCompany.com](http://www.SeattleHistoryCompany.com) web site:

- *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* Overview – this detailed project overview document is continually updated as decisions are finalized;

- *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* Updates – track project progress and press releases, e.g. announcement of the target publication date;

- Can You Identify These Unknown Hutchinsons? – these maverick bottles need to be identified and properly assigned;

- Hutchinson Stopper and "Soda Pop" History – review a brief history of the Hutchinson closure and the term "soda pop;" and

- Books For Sale – check out the growing list of advertisements and ordering information for state and other bottle books.

Please feel free to add the Website [www.SeattleHistoryCompany.com](http://www.SeattleHistoryCompany.com) to your favorites list and track progress on the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* initiative! For any questions, please E-mail me at: [HutchBook@yahoo.com](mailto:HutchBook@yahoo.com).



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