

Taking Aim at A-I-M A Mystery No Longer

By Harvey S. Teal

During the 1960s when bottle digging became popular with a number of us in central South Carolina, our finds sometimes included a bottle embossed with A-I-M in a diamond and the wording "Trademark Registered."

We learned what the initials meant when we found a clear, 7 1/2-high, extract-type bottle embossed vertically with the initials and the wording "Acid Iron Mineral Co., Columbia, S.C."

We could find no listing of this company in any city directory or any advertisement of it in local newspapers or other publications. We knew nothing beyond what the bottles we found conveyed to us. However, we did speculate that this bottle may have been a "national" bottle since it showed up in a number of South Carolina places without an embossed town name.

In 1976, fellow South Carolina Bottle Club member Paul Jeter and I produced a small publication entitled *Columbia's Past in Glass*, in which we included the above information about A-I-M. Until recently, we learned nothing further about the bottle. Paul did turn up a tin advertising sign for A-I-M in Sumter, S.C., but it revealed no insights into this company's origins or history.

A few months ago, a fellow collector of South Carolina paper items showed Paul a small pamphlet he recently had acquired locally. To Paul's surprise, he now held in his hands the answers to many questions about A-I-M we had sought for more than 40 years. The friend provided us copies of the pamphlet and I can now share this newly discovered information.

The pamphlet measures 3 1/2 x 6 inches, contains eight pages with sections on A-I-M history, diseases it will cure, endorsements,

guarantees and the company address. No date of the publication is recorded but the latest dated endorsement letter from an individual is Aug. 12, 1901. The pamphlet likely was published in the latter part of that year, about five years before the Pure Food and Drug Act curtailed the manufacture, distribution and sale of many patent medicines.

Information in the pamphlet appears to have been provided by the Mississippi A-I-M Company and the Columbia franchise or seller added its information such as name and address. It further appears the Columbia, S.C., A-I-M Co., had the franchise for South Carolina, although the pamphlet contains no information about

franchising or other methods of distributing the product.

The A-I-M company history found on page 2 of the pamphlet reads:

"On a farm about five miles South of Hickory (Miss.) is the great wonder of the nineteenth century. There is a mineral deposit resembling soft rock. In cutting a millrace through this in 1891, it was discovered that it would stop the flow of blood from a wound. It was also found to cure Chronic Sores, Ground Itch and many other things. This led to experimenting with it, which soon proved into stood out like a monarch over nearly all chronic diseases.

"This mineral is thrown into hoppers, and by leaching we obtain the most wonderful medicine in the world as shown by its analysis and curative powers. Its use is becoming known to suffering humanity, and many sufferer is made to rejoice again in health, even though on the verge of the grave. It seems that the All-Wise Creator brought this to light when the human family had come to its greatest need of a true and safe

medicine, one that will reach and relieve suffering humanity, for it is now estimated that at least 90 percent of the human race is burdened with ailments more or less severe. Thousands of people leave their homes in search of mineral water to cure these ailments. They leave home and all that is dear to them, neglect business and travel hundreds of miles in search of nature's remedy.

"Board and traveling expenses are incurred, and only too often no improvement in health is received. Only a small quantity of this expense is needed to restore health, and the patient may remain comfortably at home. It takes from one-half to one teaspoonful of Acid Iron



Mineral for an adult three times a day. The analysis made by the state chemist of Mississippi in 1894 shows eight prominent factors of the human body — it is truly God's prescription, compounded by his own hand.

"Those who use it rejoice in health and declare hundreds of dollars and much suffering are saved by Acid Iron Mineral. The money once spent for doctor's bills so saved, and can be used to make our homes more happy. Many homes where suffering was thought to be relieved only by death can now rejoice in health."

The section on diseases cured by Acid Iron Mineral lists about every disease known to man at the time and the ones not listed are included by an "etc." Elsewhere in the pamphlet, cures for some diseases in

mules, hogs and cows are also described. Small bottles of A-I-M cost 25 cents and larger ones 50 cents.

The endorsement letter section includes 14 from eight South Carolina towns spread across the state. As indicated earlier, all the endorsements are from 1901. Two endorsements are from the North Carolina towns of Hickory and Raleigh and three are from the Mississippi towns of Hattiesburg, Bay Springs and Springer. Dr. R.C. Johnson's endorsing letter dated in 1897 in Springer, Miss., indicates he had been prescribing A-I-M since 1893. The company could not have gone into business before the discovery of A-I-M in 1891, but certainly was in business by 1893.

The company makes five specific

"guarantees" and at the end lists M.Oats, General Manager, Bay Springs, Miss., as the company official issuing them. Bay Springs is located 40 miles southwest of Meridian, Miss., in Jasper County, about 50 miles from the Alabama line.

In conclusion, the A-I-M Company was headquartered in Bay Springs, Miss., and its product was distributed and sold by licensing, franchising or direct sales over several Southern states from about 1892 until the early 1900s. The author knows of only the Columbia, S.C., example of A-I-M to have a city and state embossing.

Readers having additional information on A-I-M bottles from their states are urged to contact the author, Harvey S. Teal, 2337 Terrace Way, Columbia, SC 29205.

