

Is It A Paperweight or Is It A Bottle?

By Jack Sullivan

Special to *Bottles and Extras*

A collector's passion can lead in unusual directions. My interest in whiskey jugs has morphed into a fascination with advertising paperweights. During my research I have noted that a significant number of paperweights feature bottles and jars as an important part of their design. Some depict glass containers, others are shaped that way, and at least one was a bottle that, when emptied, was meant to be used as a paperweight. These items represent a potential collecting line, or sideline, for bottle collectors.

Frequently such paperweights are from manufacturers or dealers in glass products. One example is from Gaynor Glass Works of Salem, New Jersey [Figure 1]. The bottle is three dimensional and so lifelike it appears that it might be released from the weight and used. The Gaynor firm also was a noted manufacturer of goofus glass.

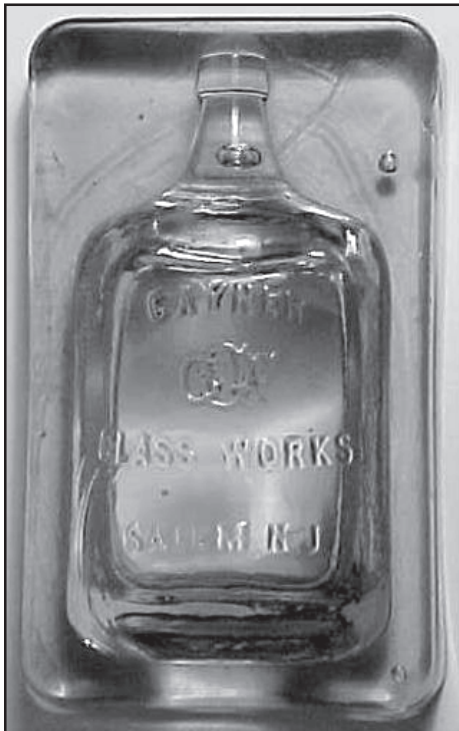


Figure 1: Gaynor Glassworks weight.

Another handsome weight depicts a canning jar [Figure 2]. The A.G. Smalley Co. of Boston, Mass., was one of the earliest firms to feature square canning jars, beginning about 1890. The company, however, was a jobber not a glass house. It dubbed its square jars with the "Royal"



Figure 2: Royal Fruit Jar weight.

brand and advertised its wares as being more space saving than its round competition. Note the similarity of the picture on the weight to an actual Royal jar [Figure 3].



Figure 3: Royal canning jar.

The Westmoreland Specialty Company was a glasshouse that pretended to be a food

purveyor. Founded in 1889 in Grapeville, Pa., by a group of investors, the firm lasted almost 100 years. In its early days, under the direction of brothers Charles H. and George West, its unusual merchandising strategy was to fill its glass items with condiments or candy in order to boost sales. It also produced paperweights, one of which [Figure 4] shows a fluted beer mug presumably containing freshly-ground mustard.



Figure 4: Westmoreland weight.



Figure 5: Westmoreland Specialty Company, Grapeville, Pa., ca. 1921.

As a photo of its expansive factory indicates [Figure 5], the company met with considerable success and grew its operations to become Grapeville's largest employer. How long it continued to sell food products in its glassware is unclear. A later milk glass item, apparently reusable as a compote dish, also has a label indicating mustard as contents [Figure 6].



Figure 6: Westmoreland milk glass.

The firm, which changed its name to the Westmoreland Glass Company in 1924, survived the Great Depression and World War II. It thrived during the late 1940s and 1950s on the production of tons of milk glass in a wide range of tableware and ornamental glass. Financial problems began to plague the organization during the 1970s and it came under new ownership in 1981. Several innovations were tried to save the company but it finally closed in 1984.



Figure 7: R.A. Swain weight.

Another merchant to advertise glassware on a paperweight was R.A. Swain of San Francisco [Figure 7]. The company gained notice after the great San Francisco Earthquake of 1868 when much of its inventory of glass and pottery was destroyed by the big shake — a loss estimated at \$1,500. At that time the Swain firm was located at the northeast corner of Sansome and Pine Streets [Figure 8]. It later moved to the 112-114 California St. address shown on the weight.



Figure 8: R.A. Swain building, San Francisco.

Food and Medicine

Bottles and jars containing food and drug products also are frequently featured on paperweights. An interesting food jar

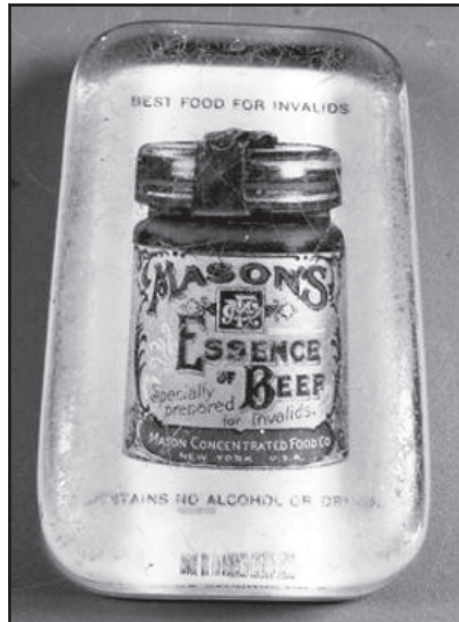


Figure 9: Mason's Essence of Beef weight.

appears on a weight advertising Mason's Essence of Beef [Figure 9]. The striking red color of the label and contents render this a particularly interesting antique. The jar itself features an elaborate closure with a metal clamp. The paperweight and the product were from the Mason Concentrated Food Co. of New York City. Note the claims that its beef essence is “the best food for invalids” and “contains no alcohol or drugs.” My research was unable to find any additional information about the company.



Figure 10: Colton Flavors weight.

Similarly obscure are details about Colton Select Flavors of Westfield, Mass., a firm that issued a paperweight featuring the image of a bottle that might have contained any one of a variety of flavors in the firm's inventory [Figure 10]. To believe its advertising weight, when compared to the competition, Colton products were “perfectly pure...more delicious...unequaled in strength...more economical.”

Sal Hepatica is a better known product, shown on a paperweight in a slightly



Figure 11: Sal Hepatica weight.

waisted bottle [Figure 11]. It was Bristol-Myers' first nationally recognized product, a laxative mineral salt that, when dissolved in water, had the taste and effects of natural mineral waters. Introduced in 1895, the product soared to national prominence in 1903 and — along with Ipana toothpaste — made Bristol-Myers a major national pharmaceutical and home care products firm. Its ads, showing Sal Hepatica in the bottle, emphasized the benefits of its “dose of salts” to happiness and eating a good lunch [Figure 12].



Figure 12: Sal Hepatica ad.

Bottle Shaped Weights

Some glass advertising paperweights actually are shaped like bottles. For example, Perrier has been known for the distinctive shape of its container so perhaps it was a natural to adapt the shape for a paperweight [Figure 13]. Compared to examples like Mason's Essence, however, it appears positively dull in its gray, lumpy appearance. More invigorating is Perrier



Figure 13: Perrier weight.

advertising, which has emphasized the positive effects of the potable on attractive and scantily clad women [Figure 14].



Figure 14: Perrier ad.

A attractive bottle paperweight is a solid glass example from the Consolidated Ice Company [Figure 15]. This was the first company in Pittsburgh to manufacture ice rather than ship it down river from upstate New York and storing it for sale. Consolidated Ice had huge freezing tanks, ice storage warehouses and a fleet of wagons that plied Pittsburgh streets during the first part of the 20th Century. At its Factory No. 2, the company made its last ice in 1950 and shut down. The building, now an artist's studio, is on the National Historical Register at 100 43rd St. The ice

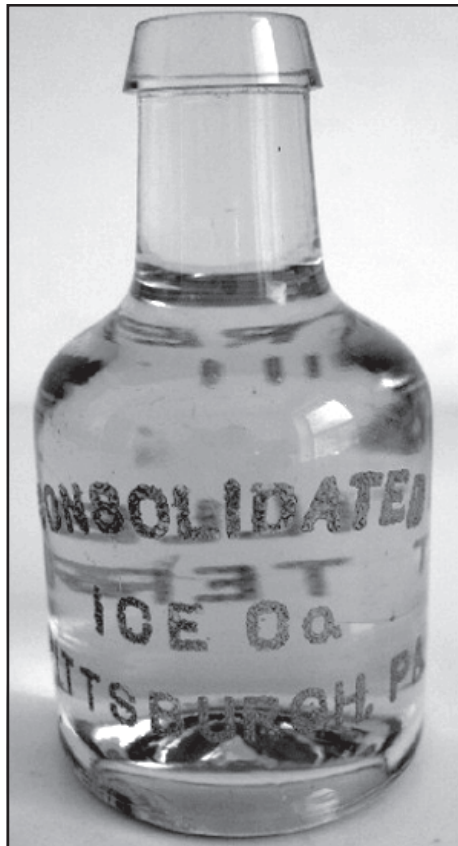


Figure 15: Consolidated Ice weight.

house dimly can be seen in a stock certificate [Figure 16].

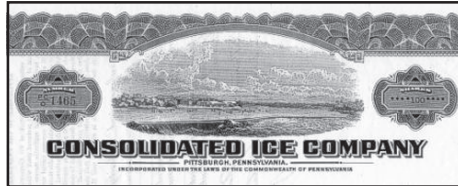


Figure 16: Consolidated Ice stock certificate

A third example was the product of the Hannis Company of Baltimore. Its signature brand was Mount Vernon Rye (see my *Bottles and Extras* article of Jan-Feb 2007), whose bottles were a distinctive square shape. The paperweight is a miniature bottle in amber glass with a paper label [Figure 17]. In raised letters on the sides it states, "Purity guaranteed by Hannis Distilling Co."

Weights and Whiskey

Like Mount Vernon Rye a number of whiskeys featured their bottles on paperweights. The Fleming Old Export Whiskey weight shown here [Figure 18] was issued about 1910 by Jos. Fleming and Son, wholesale druggists of Pittsburgh. The item includes the admonition that "physicians should recommend" their brand, a whiskey-is-medicine theme intended to emphasize the therapeutic



Figure 18: Fleming Whiskey weight.



Figure 19: Fleming Whiskey mini bottle.

nature of imbibing as Prohibition loomed. The weight was made by the Abrams Paper Weight Company of Pittsburgh.

The Fleming organization was in business in Pittsburgh for 61 years. Found

in 1858, the first 26 years it located at 84 Market Street. In 1884 it moved to 422 Market where it remained for 35 years before closing in 1920 with the coming of National Prohibition. Like Mount Vernon Rye, Fleming fancied square bottles for his liquor, like the mini-whiskey bottle shown here [Figure 19]. Even Fleming's shot

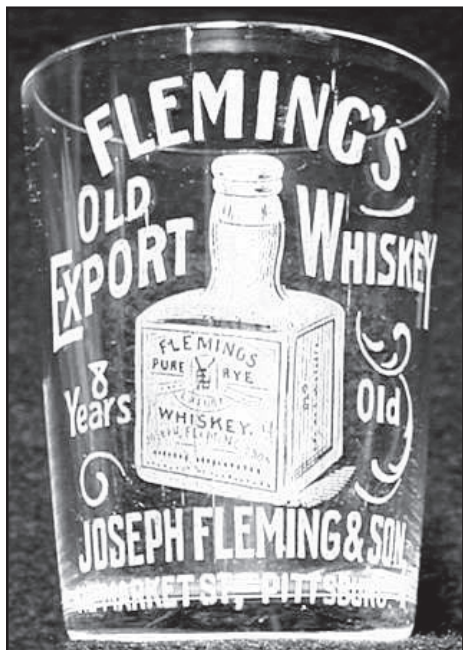


Figure 20: Fleming Whiskey shot glass.

glasses repeat the motif [Figure 20].

Another distillery featuring its bottles on paperweights was William Lanahan and his Hunter Rye Brand (see my article in *Bottles and Extras*, Mar.-Apr., 2007). The Lanahan firm issued at least five paperweights extolling their rye whiskey. All of them feature somewhere the picture of a man on horseback. On this example the horseman appears twice — once on the label and again on the neck [Figure 21].



Figure 21: Hunter Rye weight

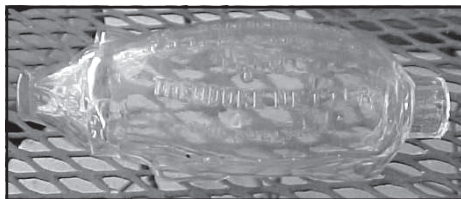


Figure 22: Netter pig bottle weight.

Our final example is a pig figural that began as a bottle containing whiskey, but empty was tagged as a paperweight [Figure 22]. It was the product of the Theodore Netter Company of Philadelphia. Leaving the Netter Bros. whiskey distributors in 1901, with wife Hilda, Theodore set up his own wholesale liquor operation at 54 N. 13th Street. In 1905 the firm moved to Market Street, listed in city directories at several locations there — 1232 (1905-1909), 1215 (1910-1917), and 1315 (1917). Netter had a Chicago outlet from 1907 to 1914 and, if a giveaway corkscrew is to be believed [Figure 23], a distillery in Cincinnati. With the advent of Prohibition, he closed up his liquor interests and opened a restaurant.

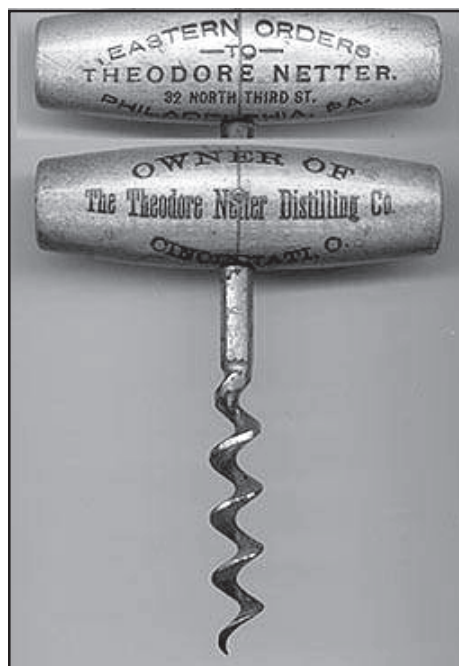


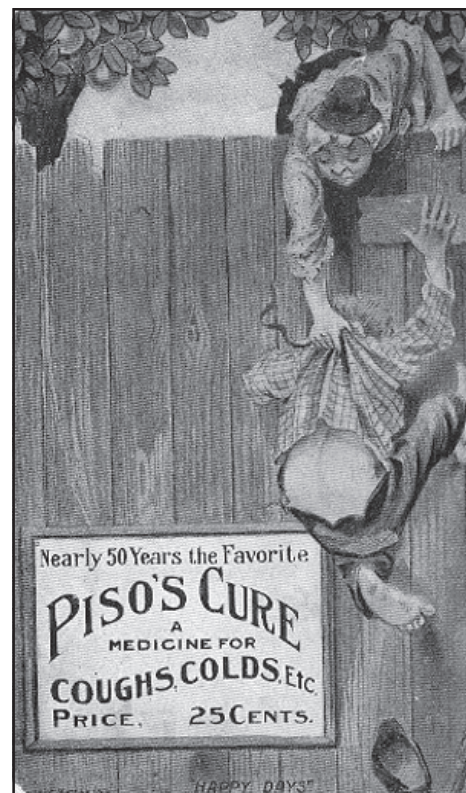
Figure 23: Netter corkscrew

The pig figural was a giveaway item, embossed, "Compliments of the Theodore Netter Distilling Company." The embossing is horizontal along the spine of the porker. Embossed vertically down its haunches is the word: PAPERWEIGHT. Apparently, once the liquor was consumed, sand or metal filings were substituted in the bottle; it was capped and the pig was ready to go to work, sitting on papers.

Is it a paperweight or is it a bottle? The answer: At least sometimes, it's both.

Notes: The materials for this article were obtained from a number of Internet sources. The photo of the Swain Building is courtesy of the University of California. The Fleming & Son shot glass and the Netter corkscrew illustrations are from Robin Preston and his [www.pre-pro](http://www.pre-pro.com) website. Portions of this article previously have appeared in *The Pontil*, newsletter of the Potomac Bottle Club.

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I wonder if the "etc." part of what PISO's cures is falling off a fence, as illustrated by this tradecard. (Courtesy of Carl Sturm.)