

White House Vinegar

Wade Cox

The business which is now the National Fruit Product Company, Inc. had its beginning on the west bank of the Potomac River in Alexandria, Virginia, September 1st, 1908. The first plant had a clear view of the Presidential estate in Washington, D.C., which is why "White House" was adopted as the brand name, and it was then and there that the White House label was born.

As legend has it, White House Apple Cider Vinegar was delivered regularly to

the presidential mansion by horse drawn carriages from around 1908, during their very early days. For four-and-one-half years, the founders operated it as Board, Armstrong & Company. Upon the death of Mr. Board, the Armstrong family formed the present Corporation in 1913.

The original plant in Alexandria was limed to the production of sweet cider and cider vinegar. There was not a sufficient apple supply in the area, so they had to go as far as New York State to get apples. A fire in 1925 destroyed the plant, and because the location was not in the apple producing area, it was impractical to rebuild there after the fire.

In 1915 the company began operations in Winchester, Virginia. At this time, the apple plantings of the Appalachian area were developing rapidly. Then in 1918, the company added a canning plant to the Winchester operations and began canning applesauce in the early twenties. In 1919, property in Martinsburg, West Virginia was acquired.

The years 1929-1931 showed expansion with the purchase of plants in Glassboro, New Jersey; Strasburg, Virginia and a second plant in Martinsburg.

With the acquisition of more plants, other products were added to the sweet cider and cider vinegars, such as jellies, apple butter, spiced apple rings, apple juice, specialty vinegars, etc. Other plants have been added over the years.

The General Offices of the Company were moved to Winchester in 1938 from Washington, D.C., where they had been since the early days of the organization.

The original containers were glass, identified by a paper label. Some were made in different shapes and figures to attract the attention of the housewife. Also these jugs and jars were designed to be reusable, and the housewife could bring the empties back to the store for a refill from the wooden kegs in which the vinegar was shipped.

The first labels were dark blue in color and dated from the mid-1910s. In 1920, a new label began that was very similar to its predecessor. White became the predominant color, the spray was removed from the fountain, and a flag was added to the top of the White House.

In 1925, green and yellow became the signature colors of the label, and the familiar apple vignette was introduced. To make their labels distinctive, different styles began to be used. In the late 1930s, the green was made darker and the apple was slightly modified.



Significant changes occurred in 1953. The apples were placed outside the frame of the vignette, with the product's name moving inside. This also became the look for the Company's logo and slogans were also added.

With the coming age of computers, the company had to add a UPC to their labels in the 1970s. Artwork was no longer used and was instead replaced by photographs. Also, at this time, different colors were used to identify different products.

How did I get started in collecting the White House bottles? In the mid-70s, the state started construction on the Eastern Star Exit, off of I-181. My wife's grandparent's house was in what is now the middle of that exit. When tearing down their house, I found a screw-top jug, with the picture of the White House embossed on the front. I thought it would be fun to find the entire set of jugs as a collection.

Never did I realize there were so many White House bottles, jars, jugs, flasks, etc.

There are even different styles of jugs for each set. This was the beginning of my hunt for the elusive White House jar, or label, that was not in my collection.

I have visited the National Fruit Company in Winchester, Virginia, and toured the plant where White House Vinegar is produced and bottled. The President, and owner, of the company has been very helpful in giving me information, showing me the company's own collection of the bottles in which they have distributed vinegar and other products, as well as shared with me the history behind the National Fruit Company.

Frank Armstrong IV is the great-grandson of the first Frank Armstrong back in 1908, the fourth generation currently producing White House products.

The Ole Time Vinegar Society* is a vinegar club open to any and all collectors of all brands of vinegar memorabilia, not just White House. The Club holds an official meeting once each year, as well

as informal meetings timed in conjunction with various bottle shows.

Three books, to my knowledge, have been published identifying White House vinegar containers, which have been a great help in my collecting. Two of them were written by Charlie Perry** and are very useful in identifying the bottles or jars which are missing their labels.

My search for White House has taken me to Tennessee, the Carolinas, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania, just to name a few places, for over 25 years. Besides being a member of the Ole Time Vinegar Society, I am a member of the State of Franklin Antique Bottles and Collectibles club in my area, and have been learning about jars and bottles other than White House. There seems to be no end to what you can collect!

It has been a long and enjoyable road, and I am still looking for that one, elusive White House bottle that I may not have in my collection.

*Ole Time Vinegar Society, Chuck Wallace, 9216 Rodeo Drive, Mechanicsville, VA 23116, Phone: (804) 730-9493 or E-mail: martink@bellatlantic.net.
**White House - The Collection of Charles Perry - Bottles, Jugs, and Jars available from Charlie Perry, Route 2, Box 102-B, Norlina, NC 27563, Phone: (252) 257-4008.





Veterinary Roundtable

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I would like to start this column with a thank you to the Federation for expanding the number of collecting categories for which regular articles will be written and with an introduction.

I am a practicing veterinarian in a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia. I purchased my first veterinary patent medicine bottle in 1981 and have actively collected in this area since that time. I have published "Veterinary Collectibles Roundtable," a newsletter dedicated to veterinary patent medicine collecting for the last ten years.

My aim in this column is to update you on the state of veterinary collecting; it's past, present and future.

Future articles will focus on the history of veterinary patent medicine companies. I hope to provide this information in such a way that even collectors who have never spent a waking moment considering veterinary patent medicines before will find a bit of interesting knowledge to add to their collecting consciousness.

As long as there has been livestock in America, there have been home remedies to treat their ills. For the first three-quarters of the 19th century, veterinary medicine was in its highest form of quackery.

It was not until after the Civil War that formal veterinary education had any support. Up until that time and into the first part of the 20th Century, the majority of veterinary medicine was practiced by horsemen and livestock owners on their own animals.

Anyone could hang out a shingle as a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine. The majority of "veterinarians" were self-taught men or apprenticed under other so-called "veterinarians."

Since horses and livestock were so essential to almost every family in the growing America of the 19th century and veterinary knowledge and medicine was so limited, the patent medicine companies

were happy to take advantage of the fears of the common man.

Animal medicine could be purchased at the blacksmith, country store, or from the traveling salesman's wagon. Sure cures for every animal ailment were available in those medicine bottles.

Merchant's Gargling Oil from Lockport, New York is considered the first successful, mass produced and marketed veterinary patent medicine, manufactured to treat the harness sores on the horses pulling barges along the Erie Canal.

Later, two men without any formal veterinary education would produce competing empires. Dr. J. G. Lesure of Keene, New Hampshire and Dr. A. C. Daniels' of Boston, Massachusetts would take mass marketing of complete lines of veterinary remedies not only nationally, but world wide.

Few collectors before 1970 collected strictly in the veterinary or animal medicine field. Most were general bottle, medicine, or cure collectors to whom animal medicines were only a minor category in their collecting interests. These people were primarily interested in a bottle's embossing and color.

Many a bottle's label was soaked off so that the color and embossing could be displayed in a window or lighted cabinet.

It seems that veterinary collecting has come full circle as those once annoying labels are now the object of desire for most veterinary collecting specialists.

Collectors seeking medicines in their original condition dominate veterinary bottle collecting today. Examples with label, contents, and packaging are typically the most desired. Graphics and color on the label or packaging can add significantly to a medicine's desirability and cost.

Condition of the bottle is

important, but a nice clean, colorful label will greatly outweigh a minor lip chip.

Embossed bottles without a label are not as highly sought after in today's market. However there are a few exceptions.

The highest prices for veterinary bottles are still brought by colored, embossed, pontiled medicines. The Warner's Safe Cure animal size bottle is another highly sought and priced example. The very limited supply helps keep these prices elevated.

A fellow collector recently told me that he adds only one pontiled medicine to his collection a year on average.

The highest prices are typically paid, not by veterinary specialists, but by cross collecting pontiled medicine collectors.

Availability of quality material in the marketplace is a problem for almost all collecting hobbies. While it is true that veterinary collector numbers have grown rapidly over the last ten years, interest in animal medicines by country store and vintage advertising collectors have also bolstered the field.

Most collectors have expanded their collections to include not only medicines, but also vintage advertising, paper ephemera, and company give-aways.

Seemingly, many people believe that the "good stuff" is all in collections. Quality material is still popping up in all manor of venues for the people who seek it out.

Certainly the Internet is the current favorite, but bottle shows and antique markets still bring surprises to the table.

The future of this collecting field is bright. Quality material is highly sought and prices are strong for better and mid-range items.

Average and common items are lagging or finding no takers at any price. I predict that the next long established and diverse veterinary collection to come to auction will set benchmark prices for the next generation of collectors.

I look forward to hearing from any collector with a question or comment about veterinary collecting.

I can be reached by email at Petvet@mindspring.com or weekdays at 770-482-5100.