HOSTETTERS VARIANTS

by Richard Siri

Having collected Hostetters for some 35 years, you would think that I would have paid attention to the base markings. Well, I did, sort of, I mean I looked at them and made mental notes that I filed away in the corner of my mind. I know all collectors know there are lots of Hostetters, but how many different ones are there? It was when I purchased another 30-plus-year collection of Hostetters that I decided to put things down in print. The collection I purchased was put together on the east side of the country while mine was built on the west side. Both collections were built with variations of color and mold in mind.

I had some one hundred and sixty examples to look at, all in one place, and the time and space to spread them out. Generally speaking, the largest bottles are the oldest. Collectors speak of big ones and small ones. But how about five different big ones with fifteen different molds? The sizes I have are as follows: 7 ½ x 3, 7 3/8 x 3, 7 ¼ x 3, 7 ¼ x 2 7/8 and 7 1/8 x 2 7/8. I measure the height from the base to the top of the middle panels.

The other measurement is width. The total height means almost nothing as in each mold and body size there are differences in total height. All applied top bottles vary in height, hand-made you know. In this large group, there are at least fifteen distinctively different molds. The base markings in this group vary. There are bases with an embossed slash, one with a ¼ inch dot in the center, one with two ¼ inch dots spaced 7/8 inches apart and others with x’s from ¼ inch to ½ inch to ⅜ inch to ⅜ inch to ½ inch. There is also one with an asterisk design, another with a number three that is 3/8 of an inch high, and some with plain bases. In the large sizes, colors are shades of amber and green. These colors are generally dark, so finding a shade that passes light easily is a plus.

The next one has an L&W with an irregular shaped lump below the L&W. After this, it is numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and so on, up to 19 [Figure 1a]. All these examples have a different face mold. From this you can assume the numbers correspond to the face molds and are not a batch number as previously thought. Proof of this theory is the #4 which has two different bases, but the face molds are the same. This tells me that the base fell out, broke, or something equivalent. They then made a new base, with a L&W #4 on it, keeping the same face mold. On #12 the 2 is backwards. On the #15 the L is backwards on the base and the J is backwards on the face mold. On another example you can see where the J on the face mold has been corrected but the...
The glasshouse S. McKee & Co., Pittsburgh, Pa., circa 1834-1906, also produced numerous Hostetters bottles. Some of these molds are as follows: S. McKee & Co. is around the circle on the base. This mold has the tops of the letters pointed towards the center of the circle and has the #1 in the center. It starts a series with S. McKee around the circle on the base with the letter tops pointed out towards the edge. It has a #1 in the center and also has a different face mold than the #10 mold. I have molds 1, 2, 3 and 4. Another one is embossed S. McK & Co. around the edge of the circle and these have a #1, 2, 3 or 4 in the middle. There are not as many molds in the McKee’s as there are in L&W or McCully’s, but together these three glasshouses produced the bulk of the applied top Hostetters.

There were other glasshouses that made applied top Hostetters bottles. Thomas Wrightman & Co., Pittsburgh, Pa., circa 1871-1883. A & D. H. Chambers, Pittsburgh, Pa., 1841-1889. Their bottles were base embossed A & D.H.C. around the edge of the circle with a letter in the middle. I have seen letters from A to N. Ihmsem Glass Co., Pittsburgh, Pa., circa 1878-1900, with IG Co. [Figure 14] or IG Co. [Figure 15] embossed on the base of their bottles with mold numbers above or below the letters. Numbers go up to at least 79. This would indicate they produced the most variants of the Hostetters bottles. The number 6 is dated 1885 on the label and the number 52 is dated 1889. Other markings on applied top bottles are an A, three different Bs, M, Q, P and numbers 2/7 as well as a dot, diamond shaped mark and a triangle shape symbol. I have no idea who or what these marks represent but they were most likely around Pittsburgh, Pa.

Tooled top bottles are more plentiful than applied top bottles but with less variety. American Glass Works was a big player, their molds ran most of the alphabet. Owens Illinois Glass Co. made the ABM bottle that is embossed “Stomachic.” The miniature has an H in the middle of the pyramid shaped symbol. This is JH & A Hamilton Pittsburgh, Pa., 1880-1944. Other unidentified tooled top symbols are numbers 2, 4, 8, 11 and 13. Letters are A, B, L, M and C. There is also a series of bottles with a large C with a small number inside the curve, 1, 3, 4, 7 and 9. This could be the mark for Cunningham & Co., circa
1845-1870. I do not think they made Hostetters until the late 1890s or early 1900s.

The obvious rarities are the pontiled ones, the miniature, and the one embossed with Hostetters, although there are no doubt rarities in some of the other molds. I think the crude ones from the John Agnew & Co. are also rare. Aside from the above, all are rated common. The 60s, 70s and early 80s bottles have in them some great colors of amber running from yellow amber to dark almost black amber. There are greens that are citron, yellow-green to apple-green. There is an example that is close to aqua-green and one has turned up that is purple.

In the early years of collecting (1960s), I heard people speak of a milk glass example, but I have never seen one nor talked to anyone that has ever seen one. There is also talk of some of the early black glass bottles being blown in San Francisco. There is no proof of this at all. I think if any bottles were produced in the West, it would have been in the late 1880s.

All this is pretty dry reading but it gives you an idea of just how many different Hostetters that there are out there. This listing is by no means complete and it would be nice to find out the unknown makers. Also there are the ABM bottles, but that is another story.

Comments, questions or if you have molds not mentioned, let me know. I can be reached at RTSIRI@sbcglobal.net, or 707-542-6438 or P.O.Box 3118, Santa Rosa, CA 95402.