

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: $7\frac{1}{2} \times 3$, $7\frac{3}{8} \times 3$, $7\frac{1}{4} \times 3$, $7\frac{1}{4} \times 2\frac{7}{8}$ and $7\frac{1}{8} \times 2\frac{7}{8}$. 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 $\frac{1}{4}$ inch dot in the center, one with two $\frac{1}{4}$ inch dots spaced $\frac{7}{8}$ inches apart and others with x's from $\frac{1}{4}$ inch to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to $\frac{5}{8}$ inch to $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch. There is also one with an asterisk design, another with a number three that is $\frac{3}{8}$ 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.

One of the large bottles has a sticky or open pontil. I own this bottle. Personally, I think it was an accident pontil, not from a series of bottles that were all pontiled. I have the same mold that does not show any pontil. There are two different molds that have distinct improved or graphite pontils. Both of these bottles also have non-pontiled counterparts. There are four of one and only

one of the other. It should be noted that the improved pontiled examples are shades of amber and both have deep inset pontils.

The small size bottles measure $6\frac{5}{8} \times 2\frac{3}{4}$ and vary in overall height by as much as an inch. This group, by far, has the most variants. It should be noted that some of the small sizes date pre-1864. One way you can tell if a labeled example is pre-1861 is that it will only have a black or dark blue label with gold writing. After 1860 they had two labels. It is then that they used St. George slaying the dragon; this information is available in the first almanac, 1861.

When looking at a large group of bottles this size, sometimes it appears like a lot of different sizes, but it is the embossing size that makes it seem so. The earliest ones in this group have plain bases for the most part. I've dug plain base, small size Hostetters in holes where all the other bottles were pontiled. Other examples have Xs or dots. If judging by the crudest examples, I would have to say that the ones with embossed As are the first with lettering on the base. They could be one of two glass houses: Agnew & Co., Pittsburgh, Pa., 1854-1866 or Adams and Co., Pittsburgh, Pa., 1851-1891.

One of the biggest early producers of the bottles for Hostetters was Lorenz and Wrightman (L&W), Pittsburgh, Pa., 1862-1871. The first L&W [Figure 1] has only the letters on it. There are two different, one with small letters and one with large letters; the face molds are also different.

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

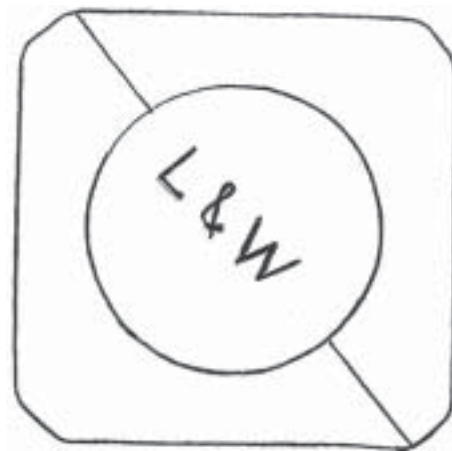


Figure 1

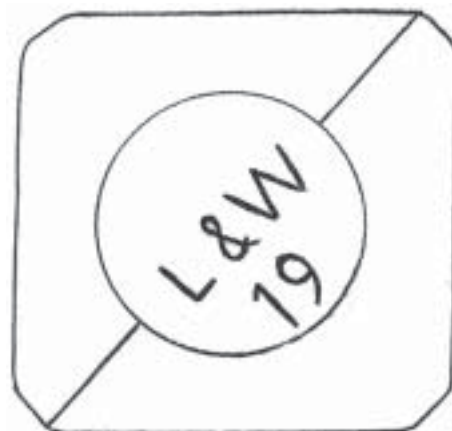


Figure 1a

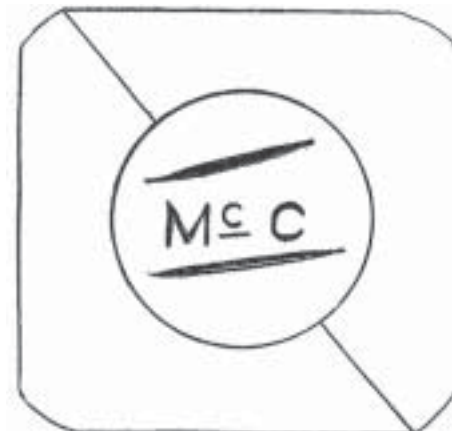


Figure 2

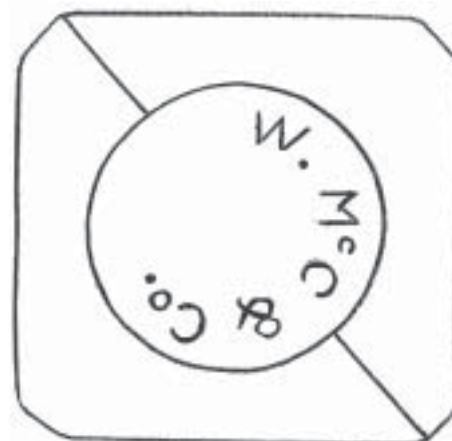


Figure 3

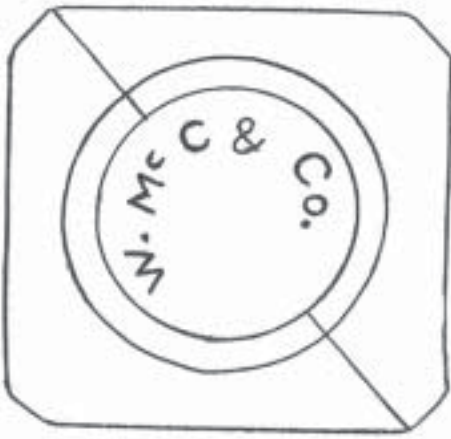


Figure 4

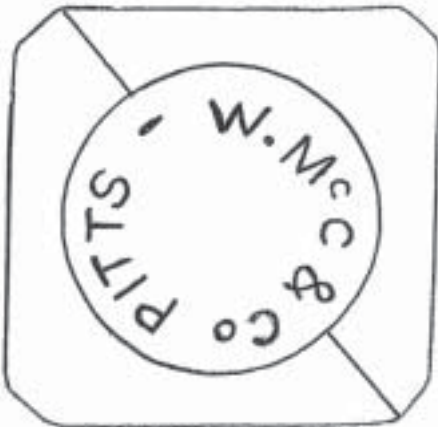


Figure 5

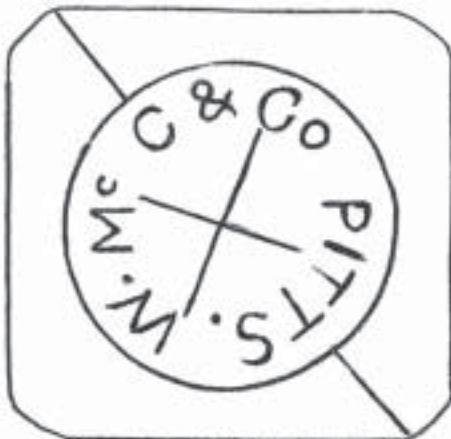


Figure 6

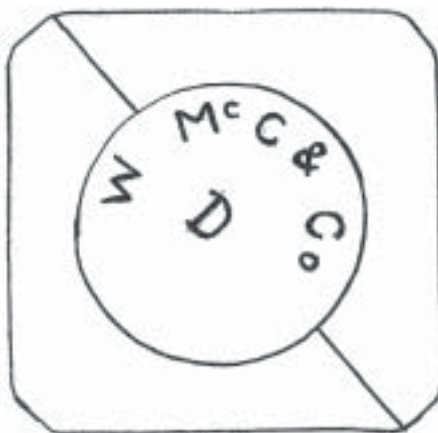


Figure 7

base remains the same. The #17 also has a backwards L but it varies from the #15. The #17 also has a correct L. The face mold is different from the one with the backwards L. There are two variants of #19; one has L&W across the middle of the base and the #19 below it while the other has the L&W above the center line and the #19 below it. Both of these #19s have different face molds, suggesting that the first one broke. My group of L&Ws only goes to 19, although there may be more.

Another large group of Hostetters is the bottles from W. McCully & Co., a firm which lasted from 1832 to 1909. Although I think the time they made Hostetters was from 1860 to circa 1886, they probably started making Hostetters in the early 1860s. There are different groups of molds as follows: there is one that has "McC" in the circle with a straight line above it and a straight line below it [Figure 2]. The way I have it figured, the molds without the numbers or letters are the earliest. All the bases are basically flat with a depressed circle in the middle. The rest of McCully bases are as follows; W. McC & Co. around the edge of the depressed circle [Figure 3] and W. McC & Co. around the depressed circle that is inside a larger circle and has a different face mold [Figure 4].

Then there is W. McC & Co. Pitts around the edge of the depressed circle [Figure 5] with a large X in the middle of the base and a different face mold than the other [Figure 6]. Then there are the letter variants with W. McC & Co. around the edge of the circle and the letter A in the middle [Figure 7]. I also have B, E and G.

All these bottles have a different face mold, and if there are no breaks in the letters, I need to find some more. Numbered variants have W. McC & Co. around the edge of the circle with the #1 in the middle [Figure 8]. I also have #6, #7 and #9.

Starting with #10, Pitts is added to the mold and #11 is embossed the same way. There are numbered variants with W. McC & Co. in a straight line across the middle of the circle with the number 4 below it [Figure 9]. There is a #4 that is in a smaller circle on the base in a different base mold but the face is the same. Another one has McC & Co in a straight line [Figure 17]. I have a 2 and a 5 in that mold. McCully, like L&W, numbered the molds to match the face molds and not the batches produced. I also have a #5 and a #6 embossed like the #4 in a straight line.

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 [Figure 10]. Then starts a series with S. McKee around the circle on the base with the letter tops pointed out towards the edge [Figure 11]. 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 [Figure 12]. 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 [Figure 16]. 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 [Figure 13]. I have seen letters from A to N. Ihmsem Glass Co., Pittsburgh, Pa., circa 1878-1900, with IG Co. L [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 un-identified 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

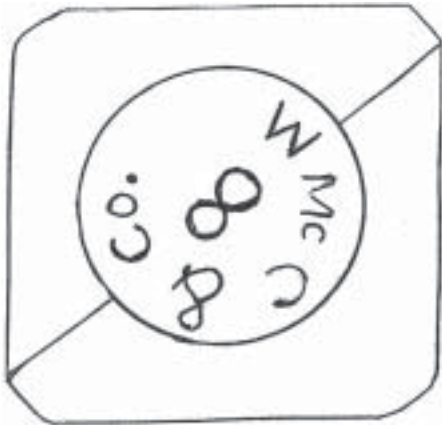


Figure 8

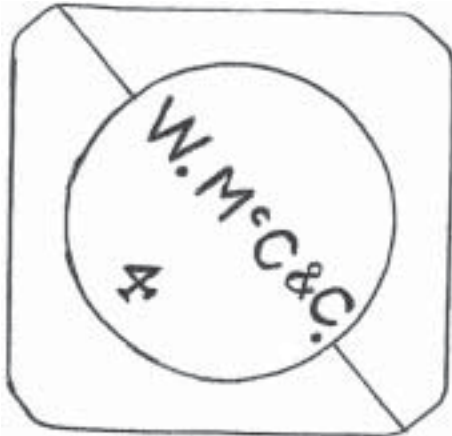


Figure 9

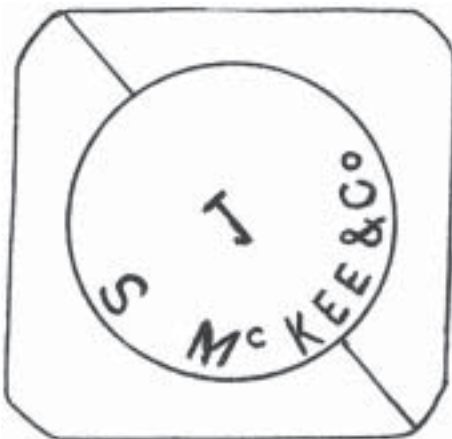


Figure 10

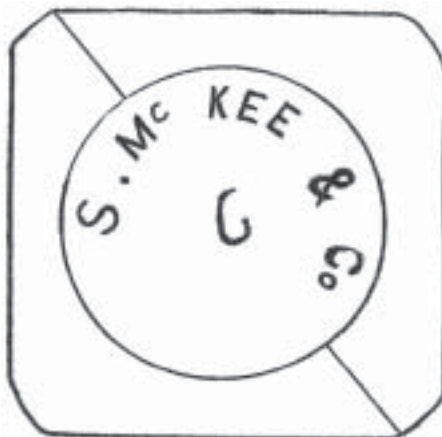


Figure 11

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.

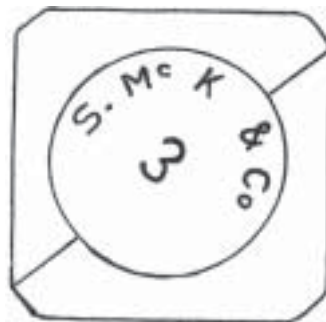


Figure 12

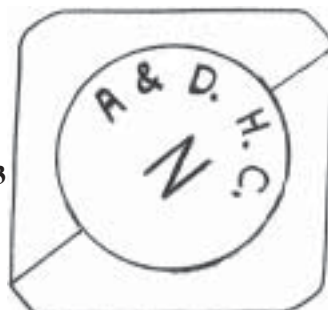


Figure 13

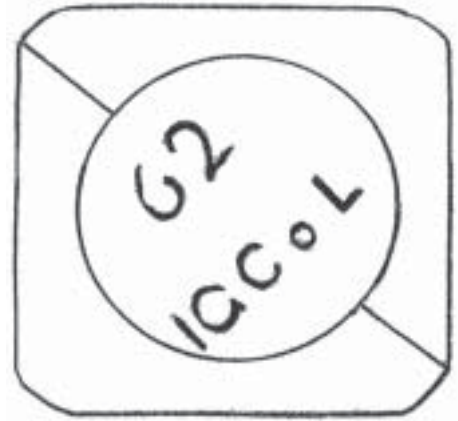


Figure 14

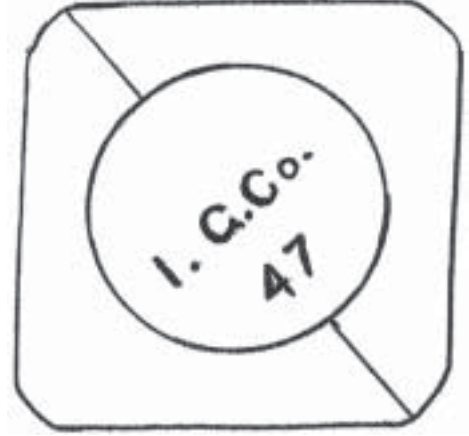


Figure 15

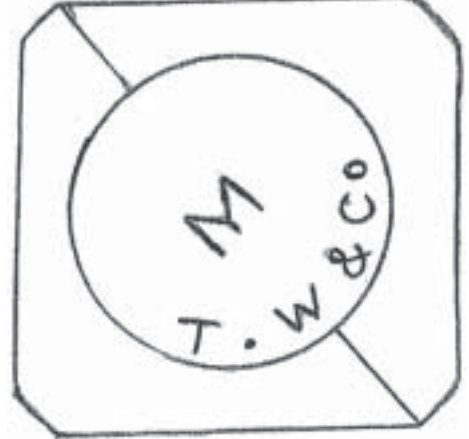


Figure 16

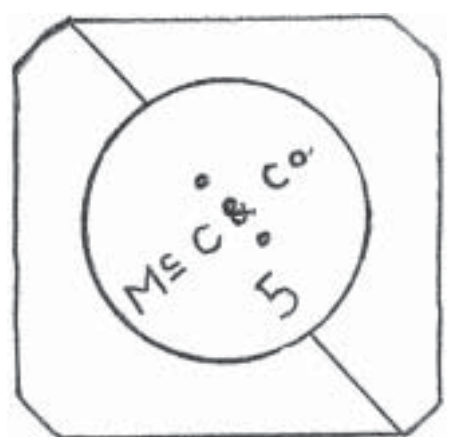


Figure 17