

THE TOP 25 OF NEVADA

By Ralph Van Brocklin

The history of Nevada is a history of gold and silver... a history of boom and bust... a history that bears testimony to the ever-present urge to find one's fortune. That history is seen throughout the mining towns and camps of the state, remnants of which are found as preserved old structures in some towns, but more of which are found as ruins and the occasional artifact left behind by those who sought their fortune. Those artifacts, present as tokens, mirrors, mining supplies, bottles and an occasional piece of stoneware, are highly sought by many in Nevada and surrounding states. History — and what a history! — is integral to the collections these individuals build.

The first white to set foot in Nevada was reportedly Peter Skene Ogden, who traveled through part of Nevada on his Snake River expedition in 1825. By 1830, a route was established between Los Angeles and Santa Fe through the Las Vegas Valley. Abundant artesian spring water made the environs which would later become Las Vegas a key point in the route. In 1842, Captain John C. Fremont made his initial trek through Truckee Meadows (present day Reno-Sparks) and through the Sierras. With the 1848 discovery of gold at Sutter's sawmill near the present-day town of Coloma in California, this route became the path to the gold fields for the thousands of prospectors who poured into the Golden State starting in 1849.

1848 was also notable because that was the year the United States acquired from Mexico the land that now makes up Nevada through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. In 1850, the United States Congress established the Utah Territory which comprised much of what is now the states of Utah, Idaho and Nevada. A separate Nevada territory was established in 1861 and the state was admitted into the Union in 1864.

Reportedly, some 22,500 individuals passed through the Truckee Meadows in 1849, 45,000 in 1850 and as many as 52,000 in 1852. Not all of these prospectors made the journey into California — a number began a search for gold and silver in northern Nevada.

1849 saw the first discovery of gold in Nevada at Gold Canyon, near Dayton. The first major find, the Comstock Lode, came in 1859. Virginia City boomed, gaining a population of over 25,000 by the mid-1870s. A number of the items in the top 25 of Nevada are from Virginia City and correspond to this period.

The top vote-getter in the survey of Nevada bottles and artifacts was a green whiskey cylinder embossed *Thos. Taylor & Co. / Importers/ Virginia, N.* [Figure 1] Although there was some disagreement among the panel of Nevada collectors as to whether the fifth was better than the sixth (or vice-versa), the whiskey picked up a total of 278 points, outpacing another Virginia City bottle that received 258 points for second place. Embossed *R. L. Higgins / Virginia City*, the second place bottle is a 6-1/2-inch amber master ink [Figure 2], of which there are three known examples. Although my digging partner at the time, Randy Haumann, is listed in the Spring 2003 issue of *Bottles and Extras* as the one who dug the example that came out of San Francisco in 1981, I have to boast of being the one who proudly brought it out of the hole!

Two other Virginia City inks placed in the top 10 items in the survey. A 7 1/2-inch aqua master ink with the same embossing as the amber master placed sixth and the *R. L. Higgins / Virginia City* aqua-green 2-inch cone ink placed ninth [Figures 3, 4]. Bryan Grapentine's article "The Virginia City Nevada Ink Bottles of R. L. Higgins" ⁽¹⁾ indicates that the Higgins inks were believed to have been produced by the San Francisco Glass Works around 1875. He indicates that there are currently three of the amber masters, two of the aqua masters and four of the cone inks in collections.

The *Thos. Taylor* cylinder whiskey is reported as corresponding to the period 1870 – 1880 in *Whiskey Bottles of the Old West* ⁽²⁾. In Bill Ham's update of this book, he indicates that building on the numbers presented in a survey of top western fifths by Tom Quinn in 1997, he can account for approximately thirty of the cylinders, with five of these being the sixth capacity. Most are in shades of amber. Produced in this same time period was a clear pint shoofly

flask embossed *Thos. Taylor & Co. / Sole Agents / P. Vollmers / Old Bourbon / Louisville, Ky. / Virginia, Nev.* [Figure 5]. There are presently less than 10 of the flasks known, helping it to a tie for 25th place in the survey. The whiskeys certainly fit right in with the "boom-time" of Virginia City. And, so do the five other bottles from Virginia City placing in the top 25.

At number four in the survey is a lovely blue-aqua cylinder with applied top embossed *Geo' P. Morrill / Apothecary / Virginia City* [Figure 6]. Fred Holabird ⁽³⁾ ascribes a date of 1863-65 to this bottle of which 6-8 examples are known. Another bottle from this same era is the number fifteen bottle in the survey — a green *W.S. Wright* blob top soda. William S. Wright began his Virginia City endeavor in 1861, operating into 1867. Of the 15-20 reported whole specimens, only one is known in dark green. An early and historically significant bottle, this green example would command several thousand dollars if offered for sale.

Bottles from slightly later in Virginia City's annals include number 18, an aqua gravitating stoppered soda embossed *Stephens & Jose / Virginia City / Nevada / (SJ monogram)* [Figure 7], an aqua rectangular medicine bottle that tied for 22nd place embossed *J. B. B. LeFevre / Virginia City* [Figure 8], and the only "non-bottle" making the top 25, in a tie for 25th place, the A. M. Cole pot lid. This pot lid has the address 88 South C Street included on it, dating the lid as no earlier than Allen Cole's move to this address in 1878 and probably from that general period. Roughly a half a dozen examples are known. The Stephens and Jose enterprise in Virginia City lasted only one year (1874) and their bottle is rare with only a dozen or so known examples. The J. B. B. LeFevre aqua medicine reportedly dates from the early to mid 1870s.

Moving a few miles west to the town of Reno, we find bottle number three, a clear pumpkinseed embossed *Brearley & Uniacke / (embossed owl on a branch) / Reno, Nev.* [Figure 9]. This bottle is not just a choice Nevada bottle, but one of the top three Western clear flasks, as well. Approximately a half-dozen of these flasks are in collections, with all whole specimens



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 5



Fig. 4



Fig. 6

Fig. 7

Fig. 8



Fig. 9

in the half-pint size. One broken pint has been reported. The bottle dates between 1902 and 1904.

Also from Reno are bottles number 5, an amber cylindrical whiskey embossed *The Crystal / Thyes & Reese / Reno, Nev.* and a clear flat flask with the same embossing which places 12th [Figure 10]. These date

to the partnership of Herman Thyes and Raymond Reese, a period from 1906 – 1916. Only two of the cylinders are known and only one example of the flask has surfaced, to date. Coming in at number 20 is a clear pumpkinseed *From Wine House / Liquors / & Cigars / Reno, Nev.* which is felt to pre-date another pumpkinseed from

the same establishment embossed *From / The / Wine House / Liquors & Cigars / Reno, Nev.* [Figure 11, 12].

Coming in at number seven is the first of three pharmacy bottles in the top 25 list. Found in a variety of sizes, the impressive larger size clear *The / Owl / (embossed owl) / Pharmacy / Co. / Seven / Troughs, / Nev.*



Fig. 10



Figs. 11, 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 19



Fig. 20



Fig. 22



Amber and green Thos. Taylor.



Top five Nevada medicines.



Top five Nevada sodas.



Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 18

[Figure 13] commands the most respect. Located 27 miles northwest of Lovelock, and named after a series of seven troughs set up to collect spring water at the site, this canyon produced over one million dollars in gold from its discovery in 1905 until the destruction of the camp by flooding in July, 1912.

From this same general area comes a fantastic stoneware ginger beer in crème coloration and stenciled in black *Compliments of A A Codd / Nevada Short Line / (in a buckle: Silver Belt Route and a locomotive on a track) / Xmas 1914 / Lower Rochester Nevada* [Figure 14]. This bottle probably did not get the respect it deserves, falling in at number 21. A portion of the Bob Ferraro collection, it is the only known example. With some mining in the area as early as the 1860s (Upper Rochester), the big boom came following the discovery of a rich vein of silver in 1912. The

establishment of lower Rochester occurred in this time period. Built by A. A. Codd, the Nevada Short Line Railroad connected Lower Rochester with the Southern Pacific rail system.

Number 19 is a an aqua square pharmacy bottle from Carson City embossed *G. C. Thaxter / (mortar and pestle inside rays) / Carson* [Figure 15] and at number 24 is found an attractive clear pharmacy embossed (*monogram*) / *Chas. M. Fassitt / Druggist / Ruby Hill, Nev.* [Figure 16]. Found in several sizes, the Fassitt bottle is rare in undamaged condition. Dating between 1881-1887, the bottle corresponds to the latter years of a mining camp established in 1869. This camp, three miles from Eureka, Nevada, was connected to the larger city in 1875 via the Ruby Hill Railroad. Population peaked at 2,500 in 1878, but by the mid-1880s gold production had begun to tail and

industry. A significant boost to the area, although brief, came with the discovery of gold in the Tonopah and Goldfield areas in 1907.

Two bottles from Elko place in the top ten of the survey. At number ten is a coffin flask embossed *Bartlett & Ostreicher / Gem / Saloon / Elko, Nev* [Figure 18]. Dating 1885 – 1891, this flask is known in the quart, pint and half-pint capacity. Of four known examples, only one is undamaged. The aqua blob top soda *J. T. / Elko* [Figure 19] is the top-rated soda in the survey at number eight.

Two other highly rated sodas come from Las Vegas. Although the area was important as an early watering stop, the city was not established until the completion of the Union Pacific lines from Salt Lake City to Los Angeles in 1905. The town was slow to develop, with only 2,500 residents in 1920. The late date of establishment helps explain why these two sodas are crown tops. The rarity of the sodas explains their appeal and position in the survey.

At number 11 is a clear applied crown top embossed *M. Pollard / Las Vegas / Nevada* [Figure 20] and at number 16 a clear applied crown top embossed *J. J. Tuckfield / Las Vegas / Bottling Works*. Both bottles date somewhere around 1910 and only a couple of specimens of each are accounted for.

At number 13 is a clear shoofly flask

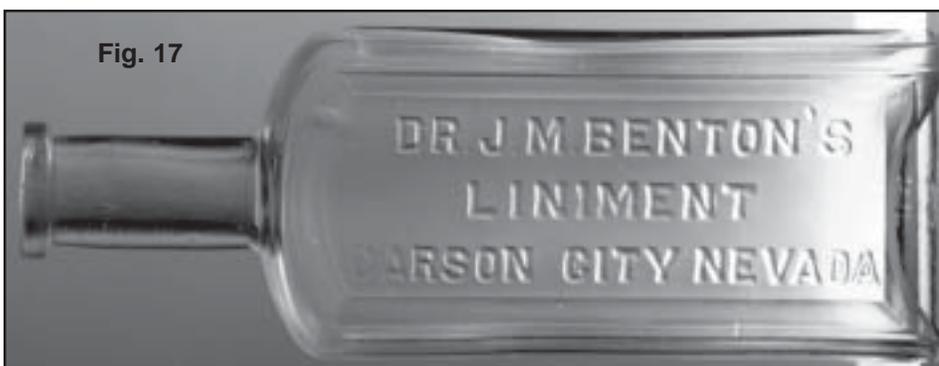


Fig. 17



Fig. 21

embossed *Max Oberfelder / Eureka, Nev.* Oberfelder's liquor business in Eureka corresponds with the peak of the saloon trade in this boom town where silver was discovered in 1864. His business lasted from 1878-1879 and it is 1878 that there were recorded over 100 saloons ⁽³⁾, and in which the city's population of 9,000 was second largest in Nevada. Peak production of ore in the Eureka Mining District also occurred in 1878 at over 118,000 tons with a value of \$5.2 million. The bottle is known to occur in the half-pint, pint and quart sizes [Figure 21].

A wonderful clear back-bar bottle from Goldfield places number 17. In classic white-enameling it reads *Compliments Of The Season / Exploration / Mercantile Co / Goldfield, Nev.* [Figure 22]. This bottle likely dates sometime between the establishment of Goldfield in early 1904 and the closure of the last of the Goldfield Consolidation mines in 1919. The growth of this community paralleled the enormous quantity of gold being found. 8,000 residents occupied the town by September, 1905, a year in which over \$7 million in ore was obtained. Population peaked at 30,000 in 1906, making it Nevada's largest city. ⁽⁴⁾ By 1910, the mines had their record year of \$11.2 million and gradual decline began from there.

Rounding out the top 25 bottles, in a tie for 22nd, is a seltzer bottle from Rhyolite,

Nevada. Founded with the discovery of gold in 1904, Rhyolite boomed and quickly busted, being at its peak for only a couple of years. It is a town well-known to Western collectors for its 1906 "bottle house," constructed of thousands of empty bottles.

I am indebted to Loren Love for his efforts in coordinating this survey. My heartfelt appreciation also goes out to those who participated in the individual surveys by type of bottle and/or the top 25 survey. These individuals include James Campiglia, Max Davis, Bob Ferraro, Henry Guillen, Marty Hall, Doug Hansen, Fred Holabird, Ralph Hollibaugh, Fred Kille, Loren Love, Don and Bonnie McLane, Jean Pouliot, John Shuler, David Storey, Doug Southerland, Helene and Walt Walker, and Don and Opal Wellman.

Please watch for the upcoming revision of the Nevada book by Fred Holabird. It is comprehensive in scope and broad in its coverage of how the Nevada bottles, stoneware and other artifacts fit into Nevada's history.

Top 25 Nevada Bottles/Artifacts

1. (278) Green Thomas Taylor, Virginia whiskey cylinder
2. (258) Amber R L Higgins, Virginia City master ink
3. (211) Brearley & Uniake, Reno pumpkinseed flask
4. (194) G. P. Morrill, Virginia City apothecary
5. (179) The Crystal, Thyes & Reese, Reno whiskey cylinder
6. (161) Aqua R L Higgins, Virginia City master ink
7. (156) Owl Pharmacy Co, Seven Troughs pharmacy
8. (146) J. T. / Elko blob soda
9. (134) Green-aqua R L Higgins, Virginia City cone ink
10. (133) The Gem Saloon, Elko coffin flask
11. (105) M. Pollard, Las Vegas crown top soda
12. (104) The Crystal, Thyes & Reese, Reno flat flask
13. (93) Max Oberfelder, Eureka shoofly flask
14. (92) Dr. J M Benton's Liniment, Carson City patent medicine
15. (76) Green W S Wright, (from Virginia City) blob soda
16. (75) J J Tuckfield, Las Vegas crown top soda
17. (72) Exploration Mercantile, Goldfield enameled back-bar
18. (70) Stephens & Jose, Virginia City

gravitating stoppered soda

19. (61) Aqua square G C Thaxter, Carson pharmacy
20. (53) From Wine House, Reno pumpkinseed flask
21. (49) Nevada Short Line, Lower Rochester crockery ginger beer
- 22T. (47) J B B LeFevre, Virginia City patent medicine
- 22T. (47) Rhyolite Seltzer seltzer
24. (45) Chas. M Fassitt, Ruby Hill pharmacy
- 25T. (44) Thos. Taylor, Virginia shoofly flask
- 25T. (44) A M Cole pot lid pot lid

Additional Items Receiving Votes

27. (43) Amber square G C Thaxter, Carson pharmacy
- 28T. (39) Amber A M Cole, Virginia City pharmacy
- 28T. (39) Trib -A-Liniment, Carson City patent medicine
- 28T. (39) Washington Bar, Coleman & Granger, flat flask, Tonopah
- 31T. (38) H Busch, Minnemucca Hutchinson soda
- 31 T. (38) Eagle Bottling, Goldfield crown top soda
- 31T. (38) W. Henry Day, Gold Hill label under glass back-bar
34. (35) Frank Abadie, Eureka pumpkinseed flask
35. (33) Johnson & Ramdohr, Winnemucca crown top soda
36. (32) Tonopah Club, Tonopah back-bar bottle
- 37T. (31) Steptoe Drug Company, Ely, 16 ounce pharmacy
- 37T. (31) Henry F. Schuldt, Tuscarora pharmacy
39. (29) International Hotel, Austin back-bar bottle
- 40T. (27) John Shier, Delamar pharmacy
- 40T. (27) A Livingston & Co, Carson City coffin flask
42. (26) Shoemaker & Ruth, Reno pharmacy
- 43T. (19) Amber Kane's Café, Reno flat flask
- 43T. (19) S F Hoole, Reno pharmacy
- 45T. (17) Aqua 8-inch A M Cole pharmacy
- 45T. (17) H G Heidtmann, Becker's, Reno coffin flask
- 45T. (17) Mountain Lakes Dairy, Mountain Lakes milk
- 48T. (16) Lime Green "Maw", Eureka blob soda
- 48T. (16) A B Stewart, Virginia City seltzer
- 48T. (16) B F Howard, Reno milk

50T. (15) Cobalt Reno Brewing Co seltzer
 50T. (15) Frank Abadie, Eureka coffin flask
 50T. (15) ½-pint Reno Brewing Co, Reno blob beer
 53. (14) Sam's Johnson Bar, Reno coffin flask
 54T. (13) A B Stewart, Virginia City pharmacy
 54T. (13) Twiaba, (from Eureka) patent medicine
 56. (10) Toiyabe Cholera and Diarrhea Remedy, patent medicine (from Austin)
 57T. (8) Kimberly Dairy, Kimberly milk
 57T. (8) Peavine Dairy, Reno milk
 57T. (8) Pioneer Soda Works, Reno Hutchinson soda
 60T. (7) Lowell & Pringle, Crock, Virginia N.T. stoneware crock
 60T. (7) Ruth Dairy, Ruth milk
 60T. (7) Marcotte Liquor Company, Ely stoneware jug
 60T. (7) A. M. Cole, Virginia City dose glass
 64T. (6) G P Morrill, (from Virginia City) blob soda
 64T. (6) Pioneer Brown & Co (from Hamilton) blob soda
 64T. (6) Elko Bottling Works, Elko Hutchinson soda
 64T. (6) C B Brown, Winnemucca stoneware mini jug
 68T. (5) James Dewar, Elko Hutchinson soda
 68T. (5) Eagle Drug, T C Hansen, Winnemucca dose glass
 70. (4) Hotel Golden miniature decanter
 71T. (2) Nevada Tokens tokens
 71T. (2) James Gioga, Goldfield stoneware jug
 71T. (2) Dr. Hall's Wild Horned Toad Bowel patent medicine
 Constrictor Remedy
 71T. (2) Hunter Creek Dairy, Reno milk
 75 (1) Nevada Hunting Licenses licenses

Top 5 Whiskeys

1. (111) Thos Taylor fifth or sixth, green, Virginia City
 2. (79) The Gem Saloon coffin flask, Elko
 3. (77) Brearley & Uniacke pumpkinseed flask, Reno
 4. (63) The Crystal fifth, Reno
 5T. (40) The Crystal, flat flask, Reno
 5T. (40) W. Henry Day label under glass back-bar, Gold Hill
 5T. (40) Thos Taylor shoofly flask, Virginia City

Top 5 Sodas

1. (116) Stephens & Jose, Virginia City

gravitating stoppered
 2. (114) J. T., Elko blob top
 3. (84) W S Wright blob top, green, (Virginia City)
 4. (57) G P Morrill blob top, Virginia City
 5. (56) H. Busch, Minnemucca, Hutchinson soda

Top 5 Crown Top Sodas

1. (79) M. Pollard, Las Vegas
 2. (67) J J Tuckfiels, Las Vegas
 3. (51) Johnson & Ramdohr, Winnemucca
 4. (38) Eagle Bottling, Goldfield
 5T. (28) Yerrington Ice and Soda Water Factory
 5T. (28) Sparks Bottling Company
 5T. (28) Frank Bros Co., Reno



Two of the Top 5 Crown Top Sodas:
 Johnson & Ramdohr, Winemucca (#3)
 and M. Pollard, Las Vegas (#1)

Top 5 Seltzers

1. (62) Rhyolite
 2. (53) Reno Brewing Co, cobalt
 3. (43) David J. Timmony, Goldfield
 4. (38) A. B. Stewart, Virginia City
 5. (36) White Pine Soda Co., Ely

Top 5 Medicines

1. (77) Geo' P. Morrill, aqua cylinder, Virginia City
 2. (69) Dr. J M Benton's Liniment, aqua rectangle, Carson City
 3T. (37) Trib-A-Liniment, aqua rectangle, Carson City
 3T. (37) Toiyabe Cholera and Diarrha Remedy, aqua rectangle, (from Austin)

5. (36) B F Shaw Citrate, aqua, Virginia City

Top 5 Pharmacies

1. (90) 32 ounce The Owl Pharmacy, clear, Seven Troughs
 2. (72) Chas. M. Fassitt, clear, Ruby Hill
 3. (63) A B Stewart, clear, Virginia City
 4. (46) John Shier, clear, Delamar
 5. (40) G C Thaxter, aqua, Carson

Top 5 Miscellaneous

1. (47) Amber R L Higgins master ink
 2. (43) Aqua R L Higgins master ink
 3. (36) Green-aqua R L Higgins cone ink
 4. (28) Lowell & Pringle crock, Virginia N.T.
 5T. (21) Nevada Short Line Ginger beer, Lower Rochester
 5T. (21) James Gioga stoneware jug, Goldfield (pictured below)



Top 5 Milks

1. (28) Mountain Lakes Dairy, Mountain Lakes
 2. (27) Kimberly Dairy, Kimberly
 3. (26) B F Howard, Reno Dairy, tin-top, Reno
 4. (20) Peavine Dairy, Reno
 5T. (16) Hunter Creek Dairy, Reno
 5T. (16) Durham Dairy, Reno