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A 165-year-old cobalt soda water bottle from 333-year-old Charleston heads South Carolina's Top 25 antique bottle poll conducted by a baker's dozen experts from two states.

Charleston bottles were expected to dominate and did, garnering 12 of the spots, including three of the top five. Bottles from the state's dispensary system (1893-1907) also were popular with voters.

All of the bottles voted into the Top 25 were made of glass except one — a flask made by master potter Thomas Chandler of the state's Old Edgefield District in 1851.

The No. 1 bottle is embossed C. Alfs/Charleston, S.C., and the eight-sided iron-pontiled bottle's shape is an unusual pyramid or tepee. It dates to about 1838 and attracted 213 votes, including a pair of first-place ballots, to beat out a super-rare amber Motte's Victoria Tonic Bitters from Newberry with 146 votes.

No one knows what the "C." in C. Alfs stands for, although one collector hazarded a guess of "Christian." The bottler was located on King Street, but city directories of the era don't give an address. The bottle used as an illustration was sold by Reggie Lynch of Durham, N.C., last year. He kindly provided the image.

A light blue H. Deming & Co., Columbia, S.C., iron-pontiled soda gained 133 points, edging the fourth-place bottle embossed vertically on the front panel only: Chemical Vegetable Bitt's/Prepared and Sold by J. Oberhausser/Charleston, S.C. The aqua pint flask-type bottle with beveled corners, simple rolled lip and deep open pontil chalked up 128 points, even though it's the

only whole example in existence. Rounding out the top five is an eight-sided black glass C. Alfs iron-pontiled soda, first cousin to the cobalt No. 1 bottle, with 113 points.

Joe Holcombe of Clinton, S.C., owner of the Oberhausser, said the bottle was excavated in 1972 by his father, Dr. Fred Holcombe, in a privy adjacent to South Carolina's earliest documented standing structure — the Charleston Powder Magazine, circa 1710. The extremely thin-walled bottle was found embedded in the clay bottom.

"Charleston pharmacist John Oberhausser was an early advocate of using herbs to cure instead of the more radical, legally accepted practices such as bleeding," Holcombe said when nominating his bottle.



"Oberhausser was one of four Charlestonians who believed that herbal medicine belonged as a part of South Carolina medical law. He and his colleagues successfully guided the practice of herbal medicine from quackery status in the early 1700s into a legal form of practice by 1838."

Because of its fragile nature and light embossing, it wasn't possible to get a photo of the bottle.

There was a two-way tie for sixth place between a smooth-based bluish-aqua bottle from a town no longer in existence and a round aqua quart slug plate South Carolina Dispensary bottle, each with 110 points.

The former is embossed Dr. Martin's Cough Remedy/R.L. Gentry/Hamburg, S.C./Agent. It has a rope design around its embossed panels and is (so far) the only one known. It was dug in Charleston. A single damaged example of the round aqua quart dispensary bottle is known to exist.

Hamburg, once an important town located along the Savannah River in Aiken County opposite Augusta, Georgia, was founded in 1821 by Henry Schultz, a native of Hamburg, Germany. By 1823, Hamburg had a population of nearly 1,000 people and 176 structures including a newspaper and printing office, two physicians' offices, a drug store, a silver smith's shop and two blacksmiths' shops, as well as a church, stores and dwellings. But by the late 1870s, little was left of the once-thriving town. Most of the site is now occupied by a golf course and private homes.

The No. 8 bottle is an aqua pontiled Aimar's Sarracenia/Fly Trap Bitters/Charleston, while a teal-green-colored P.M. (For P. Melvin) Cohen/Collier's Remedy from Charleston is No. 9. That bottle, which sports an iron pontil, is owned by Jimmy Bray of Oglethorpe, Ga., and is seven inches high and 2.75 inches in diameter. A bit of glass that occurred when the medicine top was applied spilled below the top where it hardened, but was not removed. It's known as the only colored pontiled South Carolina medicine and was found in Laurens, S.C., beneath a Main Street home.

Charleston's Eagle sodas, featured in a wide array of colors, all fall into the No. 10 spot, while the rare amber round quart South Carolina Dispensary is No. 11. One of the voters said the bottle is similar in shape to tall, long-necked Western



A vertically embossed, iron-pontiled H. Denning & Co. soda from Columbia is No. 3.

whiskeys.

"It's a large, beautiful piece of glass, with a big embossed palmetto tree and was made in the South by the Augusta (Ga.) Glass Works," he said. "It may be the best overall bottle to represent South Carolina." There is nothing embossed on the bottle to indicate it came from the glass works, but company records still extant note that type was manufactured there.

Another one-of-a-kind bottle seen by only a few collectors is the No. 12 open-pontiled aqua bottle from Darlington C.(ourt) H.(ouse). The 7-1/2-inch tall bottle, embossed Delorme's Baume De Vie/Prepared by Charles C. Law/Darlington C.H., is owned by a non-collector who doesn't want to sell it, much to the dismay of at least two collectors who have been after it for many years. Baume De Vie translates into Balm of Life.

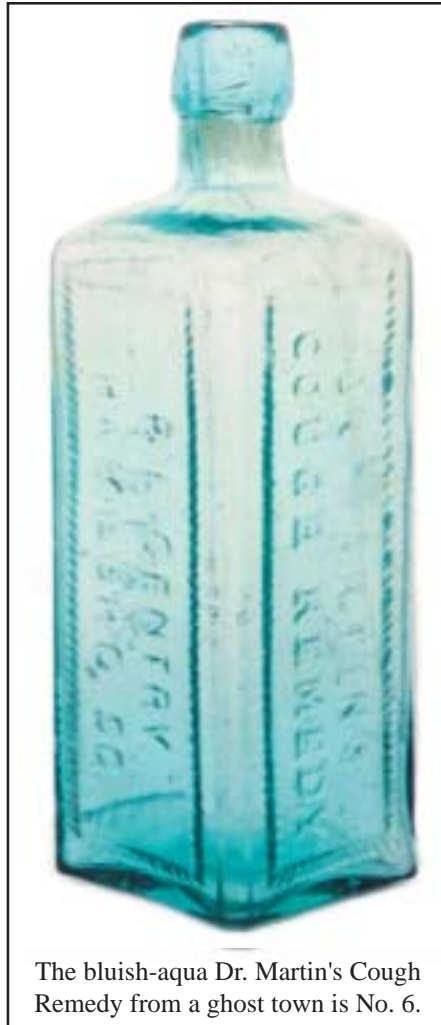
Thirteenth on the list is the amber Sumter Bitters/Dowie Moise & Davis/Wholesale Druggists/Charleston, although this writer has seen a green example that's even more scarce.

There was a three-way tie for 14th, each

bottle collecting 58 votes. Two were South Carolina Dispensary bottles — an aqua half-pint with tombstone embossing and an amber quart with an inside-the-lip screw threading. The latter also exists in a brilliant reddish-amber.

The other was South Carolina's only miniature colored bitters, an amber Bischoff's Stomach Bitters from Charleston. Just five inches in length, it may have been a sample bottle.

Another aqua pontiled Charleston medicine embossed Compound Fluid



The bluish-aqua Dr. Martin's Cough Remedy from a ghost town is No. 6.

Extract of Sarsaparilla & Queen's Delight shares No. 17 with a red Charles Clark iron pontiled soda from the port city.

The alkaline-glazed pottery flask with an applied handle inscribed B. Wren/No. 6/1851 is No. 19 all by itself. The flask was reportedly sold by its former owner to a member of the Wren family and could not be photographed. However, a color photo of it can be found on Page 59 of Crossroads in Clay, The Southern Alkaline-Glazed Stoneware Tradition, published in 1990 by the McKissick Museum at the University of South Carolina. It is out of

print and no longer available from the museum.

A chocolate-amber Chaffee's Tonic Bitters from Charleston is No. 20, while the elephant-embossed D.H. Goble flask from Columbia is No. 21. A clear South Carolina Dispensary flask with a whiskey lip is No. 22, while a brilliant yellow strap-sided S.C. Dispensary flask is No. 23. Each dispensary flask is embossed with a palmetto tree.

P. Melvin Cohen appears once more in No. 24, a Cohen's Medical Depot/P.M. Cohen, M.D./Charleston medicine embossed with mortar and pestle.

No. 25 is an 8-1/2-inch tall, smooth-based amber medicine embossed W.E. Lynch/Druggist/Edgefield C.H. S.C., on one panel and Dr. W.D. Jennings/Hepatic Or Liver Medicine on the other.

According to a plaque on a building on the square in Edgefield, William Edward Lynch founded the business in 1877. When he died in 1896, his widow continued the business until their son, Dr. William Charles Lynch, was able to take over the business early in the 20th century. He retired at the age of 87 and died in 1974.



The whittled, teal green, iron-pontiled Collier's Remedy is No. 9.



Charleston eagle sodas, all lumped into No. 10, come in a wide variety of colors.

The drug store continued operation until 1969. It isn't known at this point just who Dr. Jennings was.

Only three or four examples of the bottles exist and so far is the only known embossed medicine from this well-known pottery town.

An incredible array of containers made the "also receiving votes" list, which can be found at the bottom of the Top 25 results, as well as a list of the voters.

Final Poll South Carolina's Top 25 Antique Bottles

Here are South Carolina's Top 25 antique bottles following voting of a panel of experts in Georgia and South Carolina. First-place votes (listed in parentheses) are worth 25 points, second-place votes 24 points, etc.:

1. Cobalt 8-sided, pyramid-shaped C. Alfs soda, iron pontil, Charleston. (2) 213.
2. Amber Motte's Victoria Tonic Bitters, Newberry. 146.
3. Blue H. Deming & Co., vertically embossed soda, iron pontil, Columbia. 133.
4. Aqua J. Oberhausser's Chemical Vegetable Bitters, open pontil, Charleston. (2) 128.
5. Black glass 8-sided C. Alfs soda, iron pontil, Charleston. (1) 113.
6. Aqua Dr. Martin's Cough Remedy, R.L. Gentry Agent, Hamburg. 110.
6. Aqua round quart South Carolina Dispensary (in slugplate) (1). 110.
8. Aqua Aimar's Sarracenia or Fly Trap Bitters, open pontil, Charleston. 109.
9. Teal P.M. Cohen Collier's Remedy, iron pontil, Charleston. 107.
10. Eagle soda (many color variants), iron pontil, Charleston. 89.
11. Amber quart round South Carolina Dispensary. 67.

12. Aqua Darlington C.(court) H.(ouse), open pontil. 63.

13. Amber Sumter Bitters, Dowie Moise & Davis, Wholesale Druggists, Charleston, 60.

14. Half-pint South Carolina Dispensary (tombstone embossing). 58.

14. Amber quart South Carolina Dispensary (inside screw thread). 58.

14. Amber Bischoff's Stomach Bitters miniature (5 inches tall), Charleston. 58.

17. Aqua Compound Fluid Extract of Sarsaparilla & Queen's Delight, open pontil, Charleston. 53.

17. Red Charles Clark soda water, iron pontil, Charleston. 53.

19. Alkaline-glazed pottery flask (Thomas Chandler), Edgefield. (2) 50.

20. Chocolate amber Chaffee's Tonic Bitters, Charleston. 49.

21. Aqua D.H. Goble (embossed elephant) flask, Columbia, 47.

22. Clear South Carolina Dispensary Union flask, whiskey lip. 43.

23. Bright yellow strap-sided South Carolina Dispensary flask. 42.

24. Aqua P.M. Cohen Medical Depot, P.M. Cohen, M.D., open pontil, Charleston. 40.

25. Amber W.E. Lynch/Druggist/Edgefield C.H. S.C., smooth base (1). 39.

Also receiving votes were:

M.I. Krawcheck/Bottler/Newberry; stoneware canning jar attributed to Dave the Slave, Edgefield; Osteen Bottling Works, Denmark; Winnsboro Bottling Co.; H. Barry, Columbia pottery bottle; Clio Bottling Works; Star Bottling Works, Graniteville; McColl Bottling Works; Mathias Spring Bottling Plant, New Brookland; Acme Bottling Works, Bennettsville; Artesian Bottling Works, Warrentonville; John Ashurst (Asher) Medicine, Southern Drug House, Charleston; W.R. Martin, Belton; Harris Lithia Soda Hutchinson, Harris Springs; Arndt Brothers Whiskey, Wines & Seegars, Spartanburg; Habernicht soda, Columbia; Walterboro Bottling Works; Buffalo Lick Ginger Ale (bottled by Charlotte Pepsi-Cola Bottling Co.), Carlisle; Palmetto Chemical, Aiken; Stoneware bottle impressed Ulysses Roumilat, No. 16 Broad St., Charleston; Piedmont Bottling Works, Kings Creek; cobalt Smith's Soda & Mineral Water, Charleston; H.F. Scaife

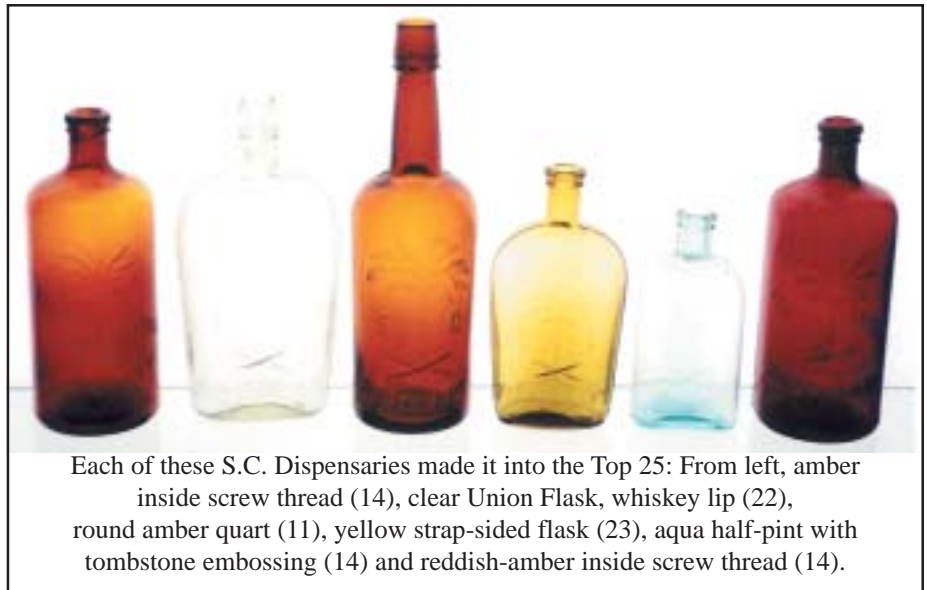


Five-inch-long Bischoff's Stomach Bitters tied for 14th place in the balloting.

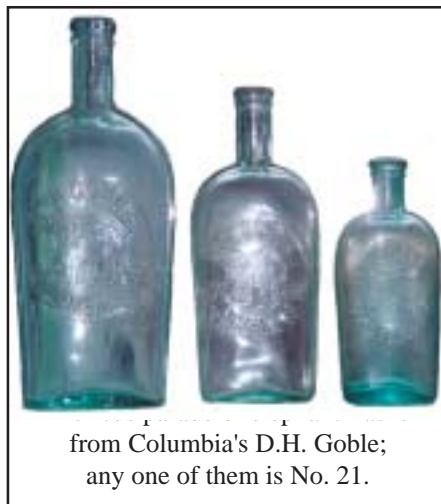
Hutchinson, Union. Staake's Original Vital-Tone (Tonic) Bitters, Aiken; Stone-ware bottle attributed to Abner Landrum Pottery, Columbia; M.D. Harmon, Lexington; Coca-Nova (Contains original Coca-Cola formula), Greenville.

Also, 5-gallon Chick Springs demijohn; Jefferson Bottling Works; Esterbrook Mineral Water, Charleston; Dr. Duke's New Elixir, Orangeburg; half-gallon blobtop Crystal Carbon Springs, Spartanburg; Southern Bottling Works, Sumter; green Old Carolina Bitters, Charleston; S.C. Interstate & West Indian Exposition S.C. Dispensary Commemorative bottle; McBride's Nerve Bone Liniment, open pontil, Charleston; J.T. McNeil & Co., Lynchburg; black glass Steinke & Kornahrens soda, iron pontil, Charleston; quart Stomp Springs, Renno; teal green Reaves soda, Charleston; O.C. Sturki Mineral Drink, New Brookland; 8-sided cobalt or green Fields soda, Charleston; A.P. Smith open-pontiled soda, Charleston; Nichols' Diarrhoea & Dysentery Mixture, Greenville; Hames Bottlers & Wholesale Grocers, Union; green H. Knecktle, Hilton Head; quart amber Glenn Springs; Columbia Bottling Works Hutchinson.

Also, Wanzetta Indian New Discovery, Greenville; E.M. Seabrook (black glass seal), Charleston; blue and green Dennis sodas, Hilton Head; Dr. James' Iron Blood & Liver Tonic, Columbia; Edgefield stone-



Each of these S.C. Dispensaries made it into the Top 25: From left, amber inside screw thread (14), clear Union Flask, whiskey lip (22), round amber quart (11), yellow strap-sided flask (23), aqua half-pint with tombstone embossing (14) and reddish-amber inside screw thread (14).



from Columbia's D.H. Goble; any one of them is No. 21.

ware bottle attributed to Dave the Slave; Aiken Bottling Works slugplate crown top; amber J.Q. Little flask, Greenville; Henish Queen's Delight, Columbia; Crescent Bottling Works, Lexington; honey amber quart J.W. Simmons, Hd. Quarters for Pure Old Corn Whiskey, Greenville; honey amber Simmons' Hepatic Cure, Columbia; emerald H.C. Seedorf soda, iron pontil, Charleston; amber Monterey Medicine sample bottle in shape of a stomach, Florence; honey amber Simmons' Hepatic Compound & Liver Cure, Charleston; St. Matthews flask; Eagle Bottling Works, Batesburg; amber Westmoreland's Calisaya Tonic; A. Milne beer, Columbia; Aiken Vigor-Vim; Sun Flower Beverages, Clinton (applied color label); Hauser Bottling Works, Leesville; Lipscomb's Silica Water, Gaffney; Harbor Apothecary, Aiken; black glass O. Chisolm soda/mineral water, Charleston; Reedy Creek Springs, Bingham; Conway Bottling Works; Mosley's Pine Elixir; Gonorrhoea Cure, Greenville; numerous South Carolina Dispensary variants; numerous, unnamed local flasks.

Panel members were Bill Baab, Augusta; Singleton Bailey, Loris, S.C.; Chip Brewer, Charleston; Steve Brown, Spartanburg, S.C.; Joe Holcombe, Clinton, S.C.; Paul Jeter, Columbia, S.C.; Mike Newman, Augusta; Bob Riddick, Lexington, S.C.; Mike Sanders, Union, S.C.; Harvey Teal, Columbia; Marty Vollmer, Columbia; Eric Warren, Lexington; Robert Williams, Atlanta, Ga.



Aaron (left) and Hank Currence of Windsor in Aiken County, South Carolina have been digging and selling old bottles for several years. They dug so many, they ran out of storage room, so they decided to erect a building and use bottles instead of bricks. Mixing the mortar themselves, they'd put a layer down and then a layer of bottles, then another mortar base and then another layer of bottles. It took them four months to finish the 50-foot-long, 30-foot-wide structure. It's a joy for them to inside the building during sunrises and sunsets, peak times for the sunlight to shine through the walls.