

THEODORE ROOSEVELT BOTTLED

by Jack Sullivan

[Special to Bottles and Extras]

Carrie Nation, the famed ax-wielding proponent of Prohibition, (Fig. 1) in 1904 invaded Washington, D.C. in an attempt to see President Theodore Roosevelt. After being turned away at the White House, she invaded the U.S. Senate, raised a ruckus, got arrested and was fined \$25.

Mrs. Nation, who sometimes spelled her name "Carry," did not take her rebuff by the President lightly. (She said she had only wanted to warn him about the smoking habits of his daughter, Alice.) She took to the warpath against Teddy, attacking him savagely in her temperance lectures.

Returning to Washington, Carrie gave a speech brandishing a bottle that carried a likeness of the President. "Here is a whiskey flask with Theodore Roosevelt's picture on it, the most appropriate place I have ever seen it in my life," said she. Later she confessed that after her first use of the bottle she expected hisses, but got only nervous giggles.

That tepid reaction emboldened her to use the prop again and again in appearances all around the United States. Carrie's flask piqued my interest intensely about what bottled likeness of Teddy she used. My research indicates that Roosevelt can be associated with a number of whiskey containers of his time.



Fig. 1: Carry Nation with ax and Bible

For example, in the election of 1900 when William McKinley was running for President and Teddy for Vice President, the Republican Party issued a glass canteen with the pictures of the two and the U.S. Capitol (Fig. 2). I have rejected this bottle because by 1904 McKinley had been assassinated, and even Carrie -- who also hated McKinley -- would not have been that vindictive.

A figural bottle of Roosevelt as a Rough Rider exists from that era (Fig. 3). It is not, however, immediately recognizable as the man who galloped down San Juan Hill in Cuba and extended the ride right into the White House. Shown here is the photo that Teddy chose for the dust jacket of his book on the Rough Riders

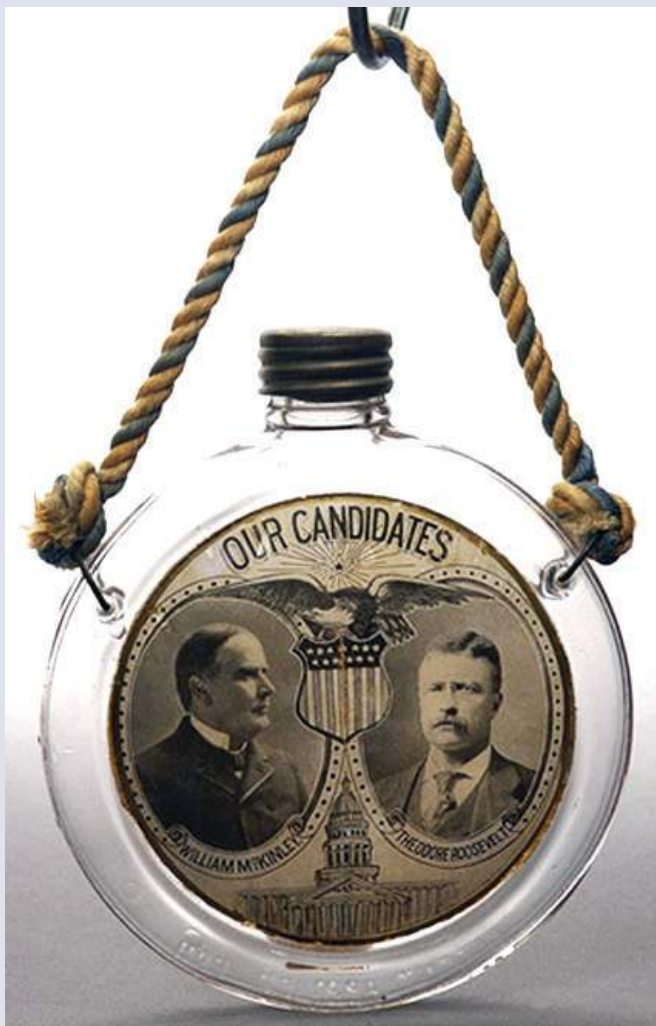


Fig. 2: McKinley-Roosevelt Canteen



Fig. 3: Rough Rider figural

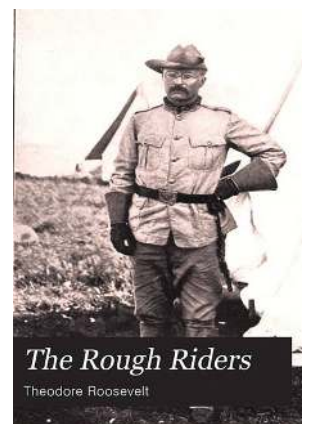


Fig. 4: TR photo as Rough Rider



Fig. 5: Great Hunter figural



Fig. 6 TR with elephant



Fig. 7: "The Big Stick" flask



Fig. 8: "Teddy's Pet" bottle, view 1

(Fig. 4). Note that the head covering is very different and that the tunic on the bottle has two rows of buttons; Roosevelt's uniform has only one.

Another figural that purports to be that of TR depicts him as a big game hunter (Fig. 5). This one is more true to life. Comparing it with a photo of Roosevelt after shooting an elephant, it recreates his brimmed hat and his rifle (Fig. 6). His eyeglasses seem to have been lost in translation to glass.

Both the Rough Rider and Great Hunter figural bottles appear to have contained strong spirits. Upon inspection, however, they would not meet the requirements of Carrie Nation's bottle. Neither immediately looks like the President and both would have required some explanation to her audiences.

Another TR-identified flask that doesn't fit is a ceramic bottle shaped like a club that bears the name "Big Stick" (Fig. 7). It is an allusion to the President's famous statement on international diplomacy: "Walk softly but carry a big stick."

A container shaped like a nursing bottle, one that probably held whiskey, is embossed "Teddy's Pet." It is shown here in several views (Fig. 8,9). There are conflicting views on its intent. One opinion is that it refers to the Panama Canal which TR vigorously was pushing through to completion.

A more logical explanation is that the bottle was given away by his opponents during his Presidential campaign in 1904. References to alimony and matrimony are embossed on the bottle. They appear directed at Roosevelt's brother, Elliott, who had just gone through a messy and well reported divorce. With this interpretation, Teddy's "Pet" was his black sheep sibling.

Clearly none of these bottles meet the criteria for the whiskey flask Carrie Nation waved around at her audiences. My choice is one of two that bear the same label-under-glass likeness of Roosevelt. Both were issued in 1904 as campaign giveaways when he ran for a full term as President. Both have his picture prominent on the front and were of a size to have held whiskey



Fig. 9 Teddy's Pet" bottle., view 2



Fig. 10: TR Campaign flask 1



Fig. 11:
TR Campaign flask 2



Fig. 12: Carry Nation
vinegar bottle

(Fig. 10,11). Either bottle easily could have served Carrie as a prop.

A final note: Carrie herself eventually became the subject of a bottle (Fig. 12). It shows the ax-wielder with her trademark large handbag and an umbrella. The clear glass figural carries an Owens-Illinois mark that indicates manufacture sometime post-1929, years after Ms. Nation's

death in 1911. The bottle originally contained -- what else? -- vinegar. Teddy Roosevelt would have loved the joke.

Notes: This article and the images were drawn from a number of Internet and historical sources. The incident about the Roosevelt flask was described in her autobiography, "The Life and Need of Carry Nation."



BOTTLE AND EXTRAS HAS ADDED

16 MORE PAGES OF COLOR

Ever say to yourself, *"I think my collection or bottle story is special and I sure would like to share it with other collectors?"*



Well, here's your chance. The Federation of Historical Bottle Collectors is looking for people just like yourself. "But I'm not a writer," you say. Writing is easy, just like writing a letter to a good friend or family member. Don't worry about spelling, grammar, punctuation. Federation editors will take care of those. Just be sure to get your facts right.

Writers are needed now to share current news in our Shards of Wisdom, Recent Finds and other categories in future issues of Bottles and Extras magazine.. Interested? Questions? Contact me at mdvanzant@yahoo.com

Thank you.

Martin D Van Zant, Editor