

# New Revelations on an Old Bottle

By Harvey S. Teal

When I returned home from work one evening in the mid 1960s, my spouse informed me someone had dropped by with a bottle for sale. Knowing a good bit about my collection, she recognized it as a bottle I did not have and told the gentleman to return at 6:30 p.m.

Promptly on the dot, he rung my door bell and for the first time, I saw a cornflower blue, graphite-pontiled soda embossed perpendicularly, H. Deming & Co., Columbia, S.C.

Due to his not being able to sell the bottle in local antique shops and also knowing little or nothing about bottles, the asking price was a very modest sum which I quickly handed over.

This occurred very early in bottle collecting in Columbia and the relative value of bottles was yet to be established. However, since I knew this bottle was antebellum, that Sherman's army had burned the city in February 1865 and this was the first one I had seen, it likely was rare.

As time passed, I came to learn just how rare. Today, there are four examples of the bottle extant and four sherds. Unfortunately, the example I first acquired no longer exists. I sold it several years ago and it changed hands once and that collector suffered the loss of the bottle when it was crushed in a move. Let me hasten to add that I have since acquired another example of the bottle.

Being a historian and a researcher, after acquiring the bottle I immediately began to investigate H. Deming & Co., in city directories, old newspapers, church records, manuscript collections, history books on Columbia, banking and business account books, census of 1840, '50 and '60. Not one shred of information on H. Deming & Co., surfaced.

My longtime dear friend and fellow collector, Paul Jeter, joined in the search. In *Columbia's Past In Glass* published by Jeter and me in 1976, we described our unsuccessful efforts to



**Harvey S. Teal holding one of his two H. Deming & Co. soda water bottles.**

(Courtesy of Harvey S. Teal)

discover information about H. Deming & Co./ For some 45 years, we often commiserated over not being able to unearth a single fact about this firm. However, we persevered.

On January 26, 2011, my door bell rang about 7:30 a.m. There stood Paul with a sheet of paper in his hand, which contained information about Deming coming to Columbia in 1852 to work in an armory. As "he" had done in the mid 1960s, H. Deming & Co., once again rang my door bell!

When Paul and I had begun our Deming search, computers and the Internet were yet to appear. After the advent of the Internet, starting about 2000 we had fruitlessly "Googled" H. Deming & Co., many times, but had not done so recently.

On January 26, Paul awoke about 3:30 a.m., logged onto his computer and Googled H. Deming & Co. once more. Upped popped the information just described. He waited until I was out of bed to drive across town and share his discovery.

Due to its deteriorating condition a

rare book, *Genealogy of John Deming of Wethersfield, Conn.*, edited by Judson Keith Deming and published in 1904, had been placed online in 2007. It contained the information Paul discovered. That information plus information from subsequent research follows.

Horace Deming was born June 9, 1810. His widowed mother apprenticed him in 1818 for eight years to a blacksmith in Woodbury, Conn. He learned how to work metal and became a blacksmith himself. In 1845, he moved with his second wife and children to Springfield, Mass., and went to work in a gun-welding armory.

When he came to Columbia with his family in 1852 to "work in an armory," it had to be The Palmetto Armory since that was the only one in town. In 1850, William Glaze, James Boatwright and Benjamin Flagg founded William Glaze & Co., and began operating The Palmetto Armory.

Earlier, William M. Glaze (1815-1883) formed a partnership with John Veal in 1838 in a general merchandise, jewelry and silversmith business for about three years. Glaze appears to have operated independently until forming a partnership with Thomas W. Radcliffe (1848-51) similar to the earlier partnership with Veal.

Boatwright was a prominent local banker and businessman who was also well known for his "Boatwright Cotton Gin." Flagg had extensive experience in armament production in Millbury, Mass.

At this time, South Carolina sought to manufacture arms for the state militia due to the likelihood the state would secede from the Union, which it did 10 years later. The army was in a 154-foot-long, three-story building and the only armory in the nation south of the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry.

The Palmetto Armory landed a contract with the state in 1851 to produce several thousand swords,

bayonets, pistols and rifles. The armory needed many machinists and metal workers and began hiring. Horace Deming became one of its workers in 1852.

A local writer in 1853 described these out-of-state workers in this manner:

*Like all similar establishments, it has been the means of introducing into the state many machinists and iron-workers, besides burnishers, stockers and other artisans, who turn out work in their line inferior to none made elsewhere. They have come with their families and settled with the intention of becoming industrious and productive citizens of the commonwealth.*

While working for the armory, Deming helped produce swords, muskets, rifles, etc., which today sell for four-figure prices. His later soda water business produced bottles which also sell for similar prices. Some of the early silversmith work of Glaze and associates also sell in this range.

The Palmetto Armory contract with the state expired in December 1853 due to no further appropriations for arms manufacture. By March 9, 1854, William Glaze & Co., was using the Palmetto Iron Works name when advertising to purchase scrap iron. His business was no longer an armory and it began producing boilers, steam engines, cotton gins and sugar cane mills. Glaze now needed workers with less arms production skills.

Horace Deming likely left Glaze's employ about this time. The Deming genealogist-editor stated Horace also "was likely engaged in the business on his own account" while in Columbia. We know what the business was: H. Deming & Co., soda water business.

We have learned nothing about the "& Co." aspect of his business. Did he involve some of his fellow workers at the armory in the business, or did he tap into the northeastern soda water trade or that locally and associate someone who became a part of his business. We



**An 1865 photo of the ruins of the Palmetto Armory in Columbia, S.C., where Horace Deming worked.**

(Photo by Richard Wearn, courtesy of the South Caroliniana Library)



**Cornflower blue soda is South Carolina's only antebellum soda bottle.**

(Courtesy of Harvey S. Teal)

just don't know. In any event, there is no evidence the business continued after he left Columbia.

In the 1850s, most soda water came into the state from northern companies. A few companies in Charleston were bottling and selling soda water locally. A number of resorts with hotels did develop in antebellum upstate South Carolina where mineral springs were located. However, water was not bottled and shipped out by them until much later.

We now know South Carolina soda water businesses with their own embossed bottles outside of Charleston are very rare. In fact, H. Deming & Co., bottles are the only known examples of antebellum soda water bottles in the state. During the Civil War, two soda water firms with embossed bottles operated on Hilton Head Island.

The genealogy account stated Deming's poor health led him to buy land in Iowa in 1855 and move there from Columbia with his family. Unfortunately, he died near Alton, Ill., on the way in October 1855. Deming's family returned to Connecticut and some of their children were living in 1904. This means his Columbia soda water business lasted about 18 months.

The Deming sodas have the typical shape of most soda water bottles of the 1850s and have graphite pontils. However, their color is not typical. It is a shade of blue that is different from 99 percent of other blue sodas. One advanced collector says he has seen only one other soda water bottle with that color.

There are no records as to which glasshouse produced the bottles or how many. Due to the short time the company was in business, it likely had only one order for a few thousand bottles before the business closed. Only four bottles are known to exist. I own two and the others are in private collections.

A few other facts about Horace Deming are in the genealogy such as birth/death dates of children and wives. He had a daughter who died at a young age while in Columbia, but no church or public cemetery record of her could be located.

This story has an important message for researchers – Don't Give Up. The information you seek may be on the next page of a book, in an old newspaper, on a tombstone in a cemetery, or on a dealer's table at a bottle show, or just waiting for you to Google.

P.S.: On February 22, 2011, H. Deming & Co., rang my door bell for the third time! Paul Jeter had acquired a bottle from a local collector during the past two years. The collector had dug it 15 years ago. Paul sold me his Deming on the 22nd.

