

PAPER TRAIL

a feature showcasing the contributions
of "Bottles and Extras" readers

Edited by Steve Ketcham



Spruance, Stanley & Co.'s African Stomach Bitters

Spruance, Stanley & Co. advertised themselves as "Importers & Wholesale Liquor Merchants." According to the research presented by Jeff Wichmann in "*Antique Western Bitters Bottles*," the company did business from 1872 until 1906. Wichmann goes on to say that the bitters was produced from 1875 until 1887, and that at least four versions of the bottle were produced. Three of those versions are shown here.



Three versions of Spruance, Stanley & Co.'s African Stomach Bitters.

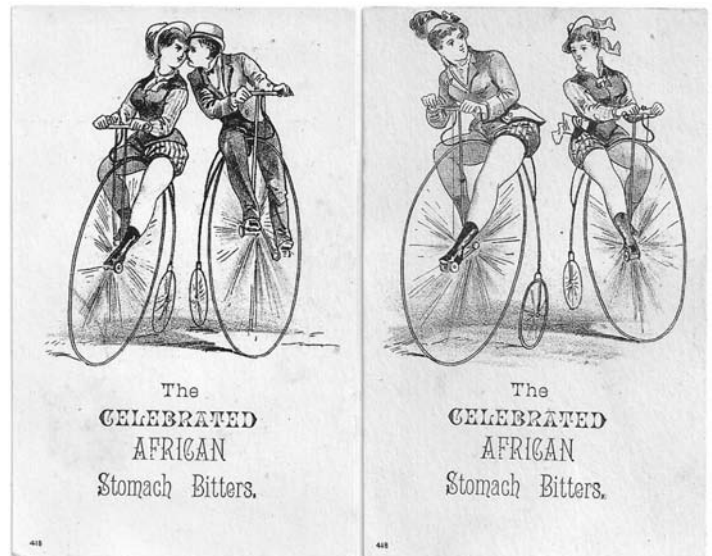


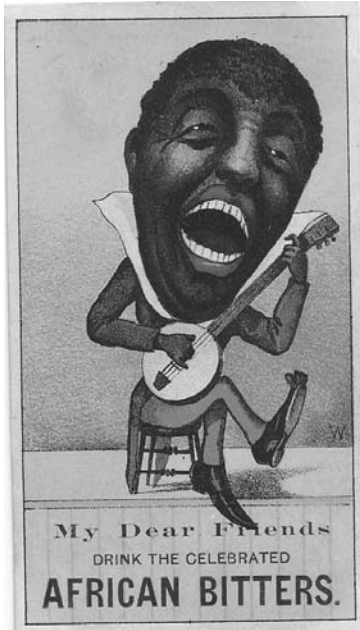
Spruance, Stanley & Co.'s billhead.

It would be challenging to find a trade card of the late nineteenth century with a positive image of any American minority, whether Asian, African, Irish, or Jew. Among the ephemera Spruance and Stanley used were several trade

cards featuring less-than-flattering images of African-American. Perhaps this was done to associate the product with those who peopled the continent for which the bitters was named.

The images of the two bicyclists were likely an attempt to associate African Bitters with all things trendy and current.





"Paper Trail" is a regular feature which showcases the wide world of bottle-related ephemera, from trade cards and post cards to letterheads and blotters. Readers are encouraged to submit items for publication. Simply scan or photograph your item (JPG please), add a short paragraph or two about the item, and include a photo of the bottle to which it relates.

E-mail your contribution to:
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