

Capstan's Applied Color Tumbler

By Barry L. Bernas

Lead In

The Capstan Glass Company was known for clear tumblers which had either a smooth or fluted surface. In the latter category, the examples with exterior or interior flutes or models with this feature on both side walls served as the decorative pattern.¹ As labeling technology advanced and this South Connellsville, Pennsylvania glass food container maker incorporated it into their production process; another option for decorating their tumblers became available. In the mid-1930s, Company salesmen began to market packers' glasses with applied color markings in a plethora of banded patterns and separate designs. This article will show you the styles that were advertised and those that I've been lucky enough to find.

The Foundation

As the Great Depression raged on, officials from the Capstan Glass Company introduced a new line of tumblers in January 1934. The ad for this container read as follows.

"A PRACTICAL ANSWER TO THE *Thin VOGUE*—Now you can have a light weight effect in tumblers and still have strength and accuracy. The new Capstan 595 is a packaging masterpiece...as graceful as the bow of a ship and as sturdy, with an always-perfect finish for the cap. And every tumbler is electric-annealed, which means extra strength and sturdiness. Its 12-3/8 ounce capacity and its long, straight inside-fluted sides make it ideal for re-use as a high-ball or iced-tea glass. An added extra attraction is its low price...lower than ordinary thin-blown tumblers that have none of the strength or accuracy of Capstan 595..."

A representative example of the container which was included in this promotion can be seen in **Figure 1**.²

Thirteen months later, the Figure 1 container appeared for the third time in a Capstan sponsored sales pitch. Along with it was the first instance of an applied color banded, internally fluted model being marketed. See **Figure 2**.

The text of this ad indicated the seven specimens shown could be employed by packers to hold jelly. Here is how this

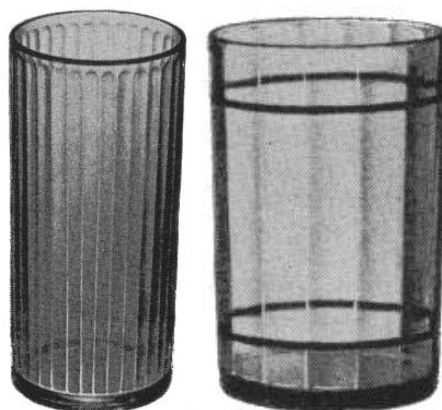


Figure 1

Figure 2

promotion was phrased.

"CAPSTAN'S BIG PARADE OF *Jelly Tumblers*—The few tumblers pictured above give only the faintest indication of the completeness of Capstan's selection offered the packers of jelly and allied products. We show only these few more popular types. All are distinctly suited and practical for jellies, for, being tumblers, they are easy to fill and seal, besides allowing the housewife to turn the jelly out in moulded form as she likes to do. Note the smooth banded tumbler in the upper tier (Figure 2); almost any smooth sided tumbler can be supplied similarly banded

in distinctive color combinations. For tumblers of every description it will pay you to come to Capstan, the world's leading manufacturer of commercial tumblers."³

As you can see, the internally fluted tumbler styles carried in Figures 1 and 2 are slightly different in design. The former food container or number 595 is taller and has thinner panels (32) around the inner surface of the vessel. Conversely, the latter one, without a mold number identifier, is shorter in height with wider flutes (12) along its interior side wall. Despite the minor variations, these pieces with a smooth vice Anchor finish served as the foundation container for an almost limitless variety of applied color bands and designs that were made starting circa-1935.

Banded Tumblers

Figure 3 was extracted from a September 1935 advertisement sponsored by the Capstan Glass Company. The accompanying text shows how the sales staff marketed these color banded containers.

"A *Rainbow* 'ROUND THESE TUMBLERS—Fluted and gaily decked out in multi-colored bands of vivid hues, these banded tumblers of Capstan's fairly outdo the rainbow in the range and variety of their coloring. What's more to the point, they make most attractive packages...packages difficult for shoppers and potential buyers to resist. Their reuse utility, their ability

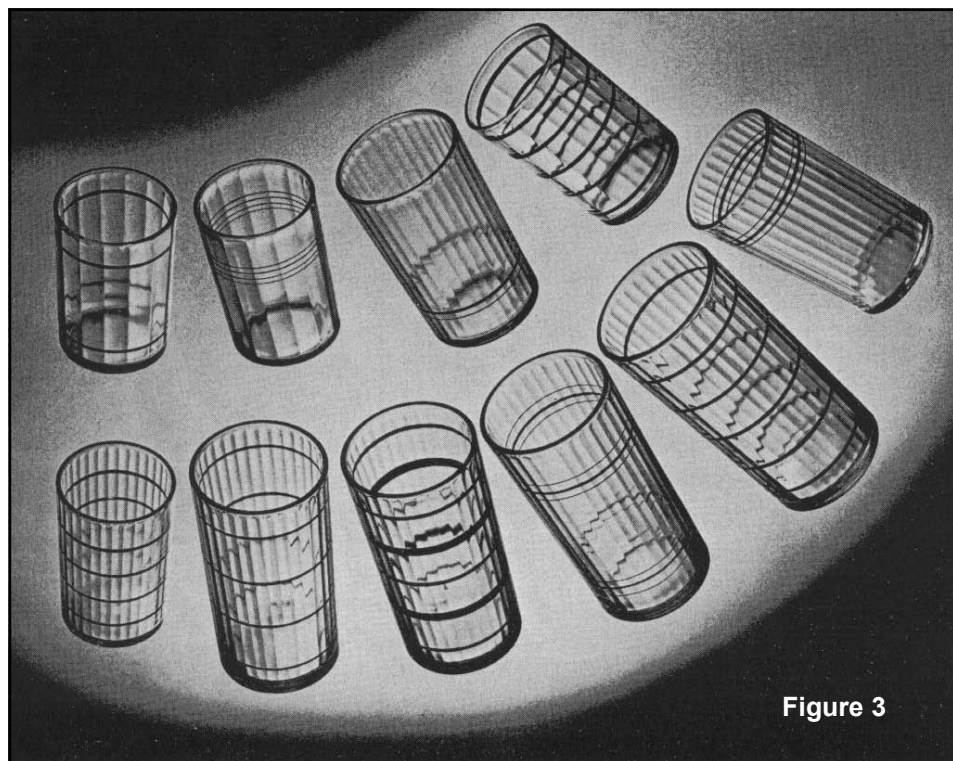


Figure 3

to beautify many a product, the lustrous sparkling quality of the glass itself...all recommend them to sales-minded packagers. Samples and suggestions on possible color schemes gladly supplied.”⁴

You'll notice the two underlying styles of internally fluted tumblers were prominently displayed with multiple options for bands and their placement. Also, if the promotion was constructed from actual models, the two containers came in several sizes as well. When different color possibilities for the bands are added into the equation, the options for personalizing these containers for the consuming packer were seemingly endless.

Decorated Tumblers

To remain competitive, Capstan Glass managers moved beyond the basic colored band to more elaborate decorations on their tumbler line. By October 1936, the food containers in **Figure 4** or ones with designs chosen specifically by the customer were being offered for sale.

The full text of this sales pitch hones in on the rationale behind this new enticement. “*Decorated..FOR ACTION ON THE SELLING FRONT – GREAT SALES POSSIBILITIES* exist in decorated tumblers...for dealer promotion, in achieving unusual design effects, in adding color and glamour to a packaged product, in interesting the buying public through the re-use value offered. Capstan decorates tumblers to the queen's taste. Most modern equipment and production facilities enable us to do a quality job of decorating efficiently

and economically...and to give you the best of service into the bargain. The three tumblers illustrated above (**Figure 4**) are but typical of the almost unlimited range of attractive designs that can be worked out. May we submit samples and discuss your requirements with you?”⁵

The three advertisements I've presented are the only ones I've encountered for banded or decorated applied color tumblers from Capstan Glass. Let's now take a look at some of the examples that have been found.

Known Banded Tumblers

Only two color and band schemes have been reported to me. **Figure 5** has a picture of each one.

On the left is a labeled version. This model is 5 5/8th inches tall. Its smooth mouth takes a 70 millimeter size metal sealer. At the opposite end is a circular base with an outer diameter of 2 9/16th inches. It has five 1/8th of an inch wide bands on its outer surface in a dark blue – white - dark blue – white - dark blue presentation. The Capstan Glass trademark is squarely centered on the underneath segment of its base. Below this insignia is the mold number 595. Above the nautical emblem is the mold series identifier. So far, I've seen up to number 13 which is indicative of a long run for this motif.

Beside it to the right, we see another 595 model with five bands around its exterior. Its measurements are the same as its counterpart. The difference between it and its mate to the left lies in the exterior pattern. These highlighters are colored red-black-red-black-red. On this motif, the red lines are 1/8 inch in width and the black ones are twice that size or 1/4 inch wide.

Known Decorated Tumblers

The first two specimens both carry the mold number 595 on their underneath sides. Their physical design characteristics are also the same as the applied color banded containers with the same mold number.

On the left in **Figure 6** is a tumbler with black colored birds depicted in flight. To its right, the same size of internally fluted container has red hearts applied in different spots around the vessel's smooth outer surface.

The next two examples that I know of carry the mold number 518. These are pictured in **Figure 7**.

Each of the fluted 518 models has twenty-eight slanted panels adjoined around its inner side wall. These individual features have a rounded upward top and a curved downward bottom along with a convex shape throughout.

Besides the slanted vice straight panels and the number of each on the interior of these models, there are other features which distinguish these new specimens from the two basic fluted styles discussed earlier.

For one, the **Figure 7** editions are a smaller size container. They are 4 1/4 inches tall and hold a little less than 8-ounces. For another, the finish has a typical tumbler flat sealing surface followed by knurling vice being simply smooth throughout. A third dissimilarity is the diameter of the push-down metal cap required to close it. In this case, a sixty-three vice seventy millimeter cover is needed. The next difference centers on the base. On either sample in **Figure 7**, this part of the tumbler is 2 1/16 inches across. Of note, I've only come across mold series numbers up to 4 so this type of applied color container may have had a more limited production run. And finally, the design on the exterior has a nursery rhyme theme. On the left in blue is the “Hey Diddle, Diddle” rhyme. To the right, the tumbler has a “Red Riding Hood” rendition.

The final applied colored decoration on a food tumbler can be seen in **Figure 8**.

This example has the outer appearance of a “C” or standard line of container. It is 5 7/8 inches tall and comes with a typical Anchor style of finish to include the knurling trait. An industry approved and marketed push down style of metal closure would be used over its 70 millimeter wide lip.

Regardless of the side, the body on this sample is smooth and slants inward from the tip of the shoulder to the nadir of its 2 1/4 inches in diameter base. Around the exterior, there are eight unidentified flowers





Figure 5

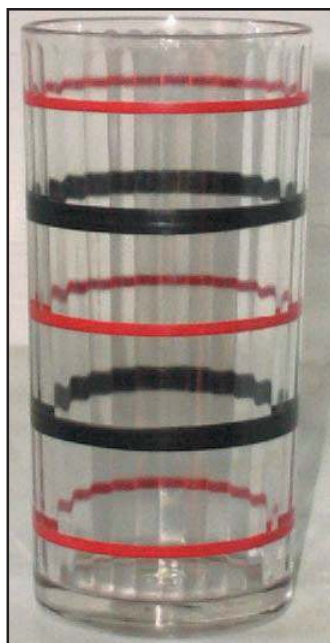


Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

unidentified flowers (perhaps a pansy) applied in the solitary color red.

The underneath side has the Capstan Glass logo pressed into the center with the mold number 111 under it. On this specimen, the mold series above the trademark number is 1. See **Figure 9**.

Lead Out

The fluted tumblers from the Capstan Glass Company with either applied color bands or decorations thereon were likely made for about three years or between January 1935 and February 1938. This advertisement based fact makes this style of container quite difficult to find today. Nevertheless, there are examples still out there in hobbyland awaiting that special someone to give them a good home. If you are between collecting passions or just want something different to admire, why not start looking for this distinctive Capstan Glass food container. There is some work involved to find one but the pay off is worth the effort. Remember,

if you do come across one, keep me in mind. I'd like to record your find and report it to others.

BLB

Endnotes:

¹ *A Look at the Capstan Glass Fluted Tumbler Series*, Barry L. Bernas, *Bottles and Extras*, March-April, 2008, pgs. 37-39, 43. This article reports all of the known styles of fluted tumblers from the Capstan Glass Company. The internally paneled models within this report were purposefully excluded so that they could be discussed separately.

² *The Glass Packer*, January 1934, pg. 55. One year later, the same tumbler appeared again in a Capstan Glass advertisement. *The Glass Packer*, January 1935, pg. 53.

³ *The Glass Packer*, April 1935, pg. 253.

⁴ *The Glass Packer*, September 1935, pg. 581.

⁵ *The Glass Packer*, October 1936, pg. 623.