

# DISPLAYS AFTER THE LOSS OF THE FOHBC MUSEUM

By J. Carl Sturm

I am sure that a great number of members of the FOHBC are not aware of the continuing efforts of the Board of Directors to showcase the Federation to the public to help increase membership. This article will let you know what has been and is being done in that area.

The Federation lost control of its National Bottle Museum in Ballston Spa, N.Y., for one reason or another during the mid 1990s, eliminating one way to attract new members.

Enter New Jersey's Elma and Dick Watson. Dick was a member of the board at Wheaton Village in Millville, N.J., and Elma suggested that it would be a good site to advertise the Federation. Dick took her suggestions to Wheaton Village, which was receptive to the idea of FOHBC displays. Its American Museum of Glass was modified to allow room for a large display of Federation members' bottles. Membership information for visitors who were interested joining the FOHBC was left at the visitors' center. This practice continues today.

The first display took place in 1997, featuring 140 significant historical flasks in rare colors in the museum's bottle room. The exhibit was arranged by the group categories first classified by father-daughter glass authorities George and Helen McKearin in their 1941 book, *American Glass*. They divided flasks into 15 groups, including decorative, Masonic, historical and pictorial design categories. There is no other type of American blown-molded glass that is so rich in variety and color as flasks. These bottles were produced roughly between 1815 and 1875.

Members contributing to this display included Roy Brown, Edmund DeHaven, Ralph Finch, Norman Heckler, Tom McCandless, John & Catherine Moore, Ronald Rutherford, Frank Stubbins, J. Carl Sturm and Richard Watson.

In 1998, a special exhibit of rare fruit jars was organized to celebrate the 140th

anniversary of John L. Mason's patent of Nov. 30th, 1858. The Mason patent was for a mold that produced a glass jar with screw threads in the neck which matched an accompanying metal lid. The embossed lettering "Mason's Patent Nov. 30th 1858" was in production for 60 years. Other examples in the display were uncommon 19th century fruit jars showing many different closures patented to seal jars. The wide range of designs demonstrated the importance of preserving food during the 19th century.

This exhibit was dedicated to the memory of George G. McConnell, a noted jar collector. Jerry McCann, an authority on fruit jars, organized the exhibit, wrote the text and loaned many jars from his own collection. Other members contributing were Norman Barnett, Bill Burgess, Donald C. Burkett, Tom Caniff, Dan Corker, Randy Haviland, Alex Kerr, Gerald D. Phifer, Tom Schumm, Bob Tompkins, Al Vignon and Richard Watson.

In 1999, the exhibit was of rare American soda bottles organized by Glen Vogel.

Artificially flavored carbonated soda dates to 1807, when Dr. Phillip Synphysick added fruit juice to his carbonated water and sold the drink

to his patients for \$1.50 for a 30-day supply. The drink was not popular and discontinued. Few attempts were made until 1839, when Eugene Roussel of Philadelphia, Pa., added flavors to soda water sold in his shop. This time, the idea was a success and drinking soda became an American way of life. Dozens of bottling works sprang up in cities and small towns throughout the country. Early bottles were squat with fat bodies and tapered collars in colors of green, aqua, and blue. Later, thick blob top collars were used to support wires holding cork stoppers in place. Corks would often go dry and pop off, causing the soda to go flat. Many different closures were patented to prevent the corks from popping.

Members exhibiting sodas were Norman Barnett, Ernest Bower, Gene Bradberry, Charles Dascenzo, Joe DeLengyel, David Graci, Jim Hall, Robert J. Harms, Eric Schmetterling, Doug Shulter and Richard Watson.

The display of 2000 was of CURE-embossed medicinal bottles. Colonial Americans depended on home remedies, and a few medicines shipped from England, to cure their health problems. By the 19th century, many new medicines were available. These new cures were







either “patent medicines” or “Proprietary Medicines” called nostrums, requiring only the name to be registered. The ingredients, usually alcohol, did not need to be revealed. In 1906, the Pure Food and Drug Act was enacted, forbidding interstate trade of nostrums if they did not meet requirements of the law. Each state was responsible to enact its own legislation. Cures are bottles with the embossed word “CURE” or a derivative of the word. There are more than 3,000 known bottles in this category.

Many rare cures were displayed by John Wolf, Dann Louis, Ed Nikles, J.

Carl Sturm, and Richard Watson.

In 2001, the display topic was hunting and fishing glass, including bottles with decorative themes of hunters and fishermen, figural bottles of guns, fish and shells. A second grouping contained items that were actually used to help with fishing and improve hunting skills. Fishermen used glass minnow traps to catch bait and glass floats to hold up their nets. Glass target balls launched by machines were introduced into the United States about 1866 and were popular until the 1880s when they were replaced by clay pigeons. The most

unusual piece in the exhibit was a glass tube-like fishing lure. The Detroit Glass Minnow Tube Company manufactured it in 1916. Their ads claimed the tube magnified the minnow two to three times its size and kept it alive all day (only if the lure stayed in the water!).

Members contributing to the display were Ralph Finch, Doc Ford, Tom McCandless, Robert Strickhart, John Wilson and Dick Watson.

The year 2002 brought pickles, pepper sauces and preserves. Rare and colorful items formed a display that was a real crowd pleaser. Majority of the



bottles in this display were decorated with gothic church windows. Victorian gothic design, popular in the 1840s, influenced the shape and decoration of glass used to store pickles, pepper sauces and preserves. Probably the most ornate of all utilitarian containers, these bottles give the appearance of pointed arch cathedral windows. Small gherkin pickles, hot pepper sauces, a variety of catsups and spicy mustards were packaged in these decorative bottles. The exhibit included simpler, plain bottles that were used for preserves such as fruit, jams, juices and syrups.

Displayers included Tom and Deena Caniff, Ralph Finch, Terry Gillis, Norman Heckler, Adam Koch, John Pastor, Eric



Schmetterling, Bob Tompkins and Dick and Elma Watson.

Theme of the display of 2003 was whiskeys, which were some of the first bottles blown in America. The earliest examples were heavy dark green bottles. By the 1800s, small decorative flasks were popular containers for whiskey. About 1840, the first bottles specifically designed to hold and market whiskey were introduced by Binner, a New York grocery store. Probably the most recognized whiskey bottle is the E.G. Booz Old Cabin Whiskey. They were first blown at the Whitney Glass Works of Glassboro, N.J., about 1860. This cabin-shaped bottle became so popular that it has been reproduced numerous times. The production of whiskey bottles was discontinued with enforcement of Prohibition in 1920 and resumed when the amendment was repealed in 1933.

Displayers included Thomas C. Haunton, Ralph Van Brocklin, Tom McCandless, Dick Watson and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

An additional display from 2001 to 2003 was of fruit jar patent models displayed separately from the main bottle display. Patent models are extremely rare and this exhibit drew a lot of interest. Exhibitors were Norman Barnett, Tom Caniff, Jim DeGrado, Jerry McCann, Gerald D. Phifer, Bob Rhinberger, Greg Spurgeon, Dick Watson, Larry Onyskow and the Minnestrista Cultural center of Muncie, Ind.

The year 2004 brought a display of pocket flasks, pattern-molded flasks and bottles. Some of the earliest bottles in America were made in pattern molds that imparted an impression into the gather of glass, which was then fashioned into the desired bottle. The pattern mold was used only for decoration, not the overall shape of the container. The first pattern-molded bottles were likely made at the first successful glass factory in America, the Wistarburgh Glassworks in Alloway, N.J., which operated from 1739 until 1782. Unfortunately, no Wistarburgh pattern-molded bottles are known. Pattern-molded bottles were made at Steigel in Manheim, Pa., and the

Amelung Glass Factory in Maryland in the late 1700s. A wide range of pattern-molded bottles were made in New England and the midwest and are noted for their vibrant colors and swirled ribs.

Displayers for this exhibit were John Pastor and Dick Watson.

The 2005 display was of barber bottles, hair tonics and colognes. During the late 19th century, barbers mixed their own tonics and facial splashes, often using witch hazel and bay rum and putting the liquid in decorative bottles. Bottles usually contained shampoo, hair tonic and facial toners. Customers had their own individualized bottles which usually came in pairs. In 1906, the Pure Food Drug Act restricted the use of substances with alcohol in unlabeled bottles, eliminating the use of barber bottles. All manner of hair tonics, hair restorers and hair dyes were developed and marketed during the 19th century.

Bottles for this exhibit were loaned by James A. Hagenbuch, Tom McCandless and Dick Watson.

Displays of nursing bottles highlighted the 2006-2007 displays. Infant feeders are some of the earliest containers, dating to 1500 B.C. The first nursers were made of pottery, but by the early 17th century, nursers were made of wood, pewter, tin, silver and glass. The first patented glass nursing bottle was issued to Charles M. Windship of Massachusetts in 1841. In 1864, a new bottle design was brought to America from England. A glass tube was stuck through a cork stopper and into a bottle. The glass tube connected to a long rubber tube with a nipple-shaped mouthpiece. The bottle was popular for several years, but was unsanitary because the glass tube was hard to clean. Nipples were first made from rags. Eventually they were made from wood, ivory, silver and pewter. The first rubber nipple was developed in 1845, but did not become





thread for the canning jar. All fruit jars are not Mason jars, just those with the glass threads. Many believe John Mason died a pauper because he is buried in a grave with no tombstone in Evergreen

Cemetery in Brooklyn. Since he lived in a tenement and died in the House of Relief, it was assumed that he was a pauper. However, in 1902 tenements were not necessarily slums and the House of Relief was not a hospital for the poor.

Other errors include John Mason working for the famous fruit jar manufacturers Ball Brothers. Wrong. He was never associated with Ball Brothers.

Jars marked Mason's Patent November 30, 1656 were made in 1858 by John Mason. False. It wasn't until Mason's patent expired in 1879 that other companies used this embossing to impress the housewives that their jars were just like Mason's. The practice continued until at least 1900. John L. Mason's middle name was Landis. Maybe. No factual evidence has been found to substantiate it.

This outstanding display contains jars from the Dan Corker and Dick Watson collections.

Material for this article was

taken from "The Journal," a defunct publication of Wheaton Village, now known as Wheaton Arts and Cultural Center. It is located at 1501 Glasstown Road, Millville, N.J., and Federation displays continue in the center's American Museum of Glass containing 6,500 examples.

Aside from the Wheaton displays, during 2001 - 2002, I exhibited a collection of 49 historical flasks with 45 having embossed glass house names at the Milan Historical Museum in Milan, Ohio, birthplace of Thomas Edison. The display contained a placard citing it as a FOHBC-approved exhibit and membership materials were available for museum visitors.

Federation members who have a chance to display their collections at local museums could help in furthering the hobby by including mention of the FOHBC in publicity stories. Brochures touting the benefits of belonging to the Federation are available from its business manager, June Lowry, 401 Johnston Court, Raymore, MO 64083.

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