

Quart Hosp. Dept. Molds

By Richard Siri

I got started in this mold chase with the Hostetter's Bitters bottles. Then I started looking at my Hosp. Dept. bottles and realized that there were a few mold variations. I wondered, "How many are there?"

I believe, that if the bottles were cataloged the same way as stamps and coins are, the hobby would gain more collectors and you could set collecting goals. Much like you would in putting a penny collections together. Historical flasks were done that way and look at the following they have. But first, someone has to be able to find out what is out there. This is an attempt to aid in that process for quart Hosp. Dept. bottle. Also, if sellers and auction houses use these mold numbers and you, the collector, have this article, you would then know if you already have the bottle being sold. I've read auction descriptions that do the color justice and then simply state "It's a different mold than another in this sale".

I've managed to buy several duplicates because I couldn't figure out the mold from their catalog picture.

The similarities in some of the molds make it even more difficult to decipher. While I can admit my drawings are not exact, due to some molds being weaker than others, etc., I have found the easiest way to differentiate between molds is to compare the placement of the letter is the first line (U.S.A.) to the corresponding letter directly below the corresponding letter directly below it (Hosp. Dept.)

This listing may not have all the molds represented but it is all that I could find. If you have different molds than those shown here please let me know and we will add it to our listing and do an update. In addition to my collection, Ann Carol of Reno, Nevada and Henry Guillen of Twenty Nine Palms, California provided access to their collections for this article.

Just like the Hosp. Dept. molds, there are also many different Drakes Plantation Bitters molds, more than are documented in any book. Drakes Collectors out there should begin documentation of that brand as well.

U . S . A
H O S P . D E P T

Mold 1 – Blob Top
Asterisk like design off centered on base

U . S . A
H O S P . D E P T

Mold 2 – Blob Top
Heavier asterisk design more in center

U . S . A
H O S P D E P ' T

Mold 3 – Blob Top
Smooth base. Slight dish. Comma after P in
Dept. No period after Hosp.

U . S . A .
H O S P . D E P T

Mold 4 – Blob Top
SDS on dished base

U . S . A .
H O S P . D E P T

Mold 5 – SDS on base, Blob Top
Top of letter in base fairly flat.

U . S . A
H O S P . D E P T

Mold 6 – Various colors (plus aqua), Blob Top
Asterisk design on base

U.S.A
HOSP. DEPT

Mold 7 – Blob Top
Heavy single line on base with
large dot in the middle

U.S.A
HOSP. DEPT

Mold 8 – Blob and Flange Tops
2 dashes with dot in middle
Colors include cobalt

U.S.A
HOSP DEP'T

Mold 9 – Blob and Flange Tops
Smooth base has triangle shaped bump on
upper part of left seam, comma after P
Colors include cobalt

U.S.A
HOSP. DEPT

Mold 10 – Blob and Flange Tops
Large lump dot with an X across base

U.S.A.
HOSP. DEPT HOSP DEPT

Mold 11 – Blob Top
Very faint SDS in middle of dished base

Mold 14 – Blob Top
This mold the lettering is lower on the bottle
by almost 1/2"

U.S.A
HOSP. DEP'T

Mold 13 – Blob Top
Small dot in middle of base

U.S.A
HOSP. DEPT

Mold 12 – Flange Top
SDS on base

U.S.A
HOSP. DEPT

Mold 15 – Blob Top
Smooth base

U S A
HOSP DEP T.

Mold 16 – Flange Top
Heavy flange top smooth base

FORT BRIDGER was a major post in the eighties. It had eleven barracks of various sizes, six double-set officers' quarters. The stockaded Trading Post served at various times as a station for Pony Express, Overland Stage Line, and Wells Fargo. (Redrawn from SHS data.)

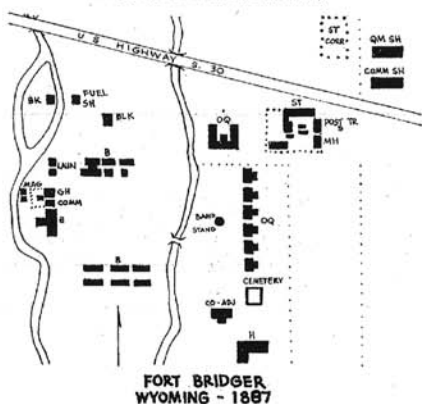


Figure 4

The most abundant source of these bottles for collectors has been the abandoned Army forts located west of the Mississippi River. A large dump was normally situated near the post hospital, and it was into these areas that the currently prized vessels were often discarded. Good collections of U.S.A. Hosp. Dept. bottles have been resurrected from the grounds of at least two forts in southern Wyoming: Fort Bridger (active 1858-90) and Fort Sanders (1866-82). Simplified plats of these posts (Figs. 3,4) reveal locations of the hospitals (marked "H") as of a specific date. However, repairs and rebuilding were so frequent that layout of a particular fort often changed from year to year. Assuming that hospitals, like other post structures, too were subject to relocation and rebuilding over the lifetime of a fort, it is conceivable that as many hospital dumps were also founded.

Sources

Medicines for the Union Army, George Winston Smith, American Institute of the History of Pharmacy, Madison, Wisc., 1962.
Old Forts of the Northwest, Herbert M. Hart, New York, 1963.
Old Bottle Magazine, "Pricing Guide", Pat Rogers, Sept., 1970.



Figure 2

The laboratory set up at Astoria, Long Island, New York consisted of three buildings formerly occupied by a manufacturing chemist, John Myer, Jr. In Philadelphia, a brick warehouse at Sixth and Oxford Streets, formerly used by John Wyeth and Brother, was leased for five years. The imaginative Hammond identified the proposed laboratory as "a storehouse for drugs and medical supplies" and thereby saddled the Quartermaster Dept. with the rent for the building. Through other manipulations and juggling of official records and documents, he also made the laboratories "legitimate" expenditures for the Medical and Hospital Department funds. It should be mentioned that Surgeon General Hammond's good intentions but lack of conformance to bureaucratic and military procedure ultimately led to his court martial.

Operations at the U.S. Army Laboratory at Philadelphia began late in April, 1863 when it was assigned an allotment of Tarragona port wine for assay, bottling, and packing in wooden boxes. Military medicine of the time prescribed huge quantities of whiskey and wine for use in regular therapeutics; and one shipment received at the laboratory in August, 1863 consisted of 250 barrels of whiskey and 1000 gallons of sherry. Almost simultaneous with the first bottling operations was the manufacture of pharmaceutical preparations. Simple cerate, solution of ferrous ter-sulfate, ammonia liquor, blue mass, silver nitrate, and various powders were among the early items.

Intriguing relics of peak productivity at the U.S. Army Laboratories are the embossed bottles and jars that were chosen for packaging certain drugs. During the Civil War, these containers could be found amongst the stock of Union Army medicine wagons attached to each brigade, and on the shelves of Army hospitals--including those in many of the frontier military posts manned by the Army of the West.

The bottles were made from private moulds in Pittsburgh, "bottle headquarters" of America, at a price much lower than that charged by glassworks in Philadelphia (\$9. per gross for quart bottles in 1863). Two lathes for grinding glass bottle stoppers were purchased for the laboratory at Philadelphia. Most of the moulds

U.S.A. Hosp. Dept.

by FRANK STERNAD

When the Union Army's Standard Supply Table was revised in 1862 to meet the increased needs of the sick and wounded, it provided for more drugs than was furnished to any other army in the world. Supplying the great variety and enormous volume of medical supplies required significant changes in the Medical Department, which from almost every standpoint was inadequate to meet the unprecedented situation created by the outbreak of hostilities at Fort Sumter.

The stockpile of medical supplies at the main supply depot in New York was small, the War Dept. lacked adequate funds to buy more supplies at current market prices, and most of the manufacturers of pharmaceutical preparations were unprepared to meet the government's requisitions without delays. To compensate for these deficiencies, Surgeon General William A. Hammond directed in early 1863 that chemical laboratories be established at New York and Philadelphia for the preparation of extracts and tinctures, and for the repackaging of bulk drugs and supplies.

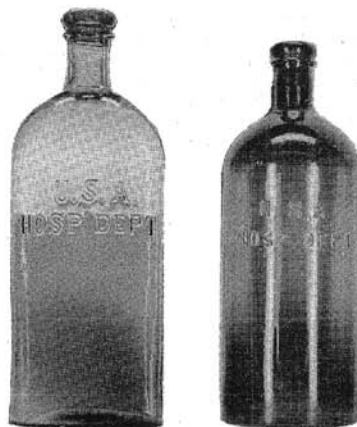


Figure 1

were cut to read, "U.S.A. HOSP. DEPT." (Fig. 1), but variations exist in known specimens, e.g. "U.S. ARMY HOSPITAL DEPARTMENT," and "U.S.A. MED'L DEPT." The initials, "S D S" are found on the base of a quart size bottle blown in citron colored glass (Fig. 2). The exact meaning of these letters remains a mystery; most probably their significance was known only to the glassworks that produced the mould.

The most commonly employed embossed bottle was the cylindrical quart, standing some 9½" in height, and ranging in color from aqua to apple green, olive green, citron, various shades of amber and cobalt blue. Medicines supplied in these narrow-necked or "tincture" bottles included alcohol, ammonia water, chloroform, castor oil, olive oil, turpentine, potassium permanganate solution, Labarraque's Solution (solution of chlorinated soda), and Sweet Spirit of Nitre (ethyl nitrite). Smaller cylinders, 6½" down to 3" tall, in blue aqua, clear, emerald green, and black (deep red) have been found; as have cylindrical wide mouth jars, 4½" to 7½", in clear and aqua. Most unusual are small oval bottles, 2½" and 4", in cornflower blue. Any of these embossed bottles, possibly with the exception of the quarts in common colors, can be rated "very rare."

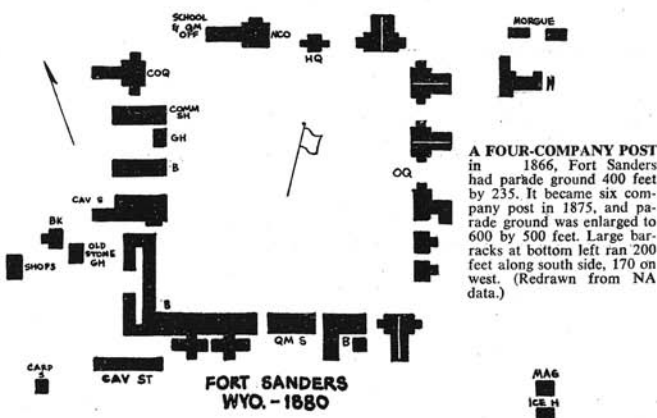


Figure 3