

# York Expo - A Big Success

*By Steve Ketcham*

The Federation of Historical Bottle Collectors York Expo held August 7-10, 2008, was the ninth such event sponsored by the organization. A devoted few have attended all nine, planning years ahead to fit the event into their busy schedules. Just how important is the Expo to some bottle collectors that they attend the event every four years? Ask Minnesota's Boyd Beccue. "I have attended every Expo. In fact, that is the only condition in my pre nup: I must be allowed to attend every Expo!" Or check with Illinois collector John Panek. He will tell you, "I have attended all the Expos. I have only missed two national (Federation) shows since 1976."

How do Federation Expos and national shows command such loyalty? Perhaps it is the quality and quantity of antique glass found on the tables at such events, particularly the Expos. One Wisconsin collector, also a regular at Federation events, said that York was "reminiscent of old expos, where the quality was very good. It's apparent that many sellers had 'saved' their better items for this show."

A look back at the York Expo will reveal a long list of reasons why collectors from across the country made the trip to Pennsylvania in August. Consider the Friday morning activities. There were specialty meetings for collectors of Hutchinson sodas, jelly jars, painted label sodas, and poisons. Educational seminars were offered on topics such as root beers and ginger beers, Saratoga bottles, the California Perfume Company, black glass, inks, the Kola Wars, internal stoppered mineral water bottles, and the Lancaster

promoted his new American Glass Gallery auction service at the Expo, commented," I enjoyed the seminars very much. David Beadle did a wonderful

job on his seminar, the Lancaster, NY Glass Works."

Another asset to the Expos is the Friday evening banquet and awards program. The York event boasted the largest number of Expo banquet attendees ever. Following the banquet, four new members were inducted into the Federation Hall of Fame. The new members are Tom Caniff, Jim Hagenbuch, Carl Sturm, and Betty Zumwalt. Also honored were Katie Foglesong and Steve Ketcham, who were placed on the Federation Honor Roll.

From the time set up began Friday afternoon, it was evident that the collectors who came to York were not cowed by the summer's negative economic news. Nor did high gas prices keep them away. Sales were strong for most dealers. Panek reported, "My sales were excellent and varied including milks, hutchinsons, marbles, a beer tray, postcards, medicines, stoneware, trade cards, bottle related ephemera, and sodas." This writer's sales were also good, with strong sales in label-under-glass perfumes, flasks, bitters, barber bottles, and patent medicines.

Of course, not everyone sells at an Expo. Some collectors come only to buy. Beccue stated, "I didn't sell and never have sold at an Expo. An Expo has so much to see on the sales tables and in the displays that I couldn't let myself be tied to a table. I need to visit every table and exhibit at least 2 or 3 times over the 3 days just to insure that I am seeing everything. I spent every dime of my bottle budget (and maybe a bit more), so I hope the dealers were happy with my buying! I am very grateful that so many collectors from around the country and as far away as Britain, Germany, and Australia are willing to go to all the work necessary to set up and sell at an Expo. I was even able to practice my waning language skills on a very patient dealer from Germany. It was a good thing he spoke perfect English!"



**Black Glass seminar presented by Carl Sturm**

Glass Works. One frustration, echoed by several collectors, was the difficulty of attending more than a couple of the seminars. Panek commented, "I attended two seminars and wish there was a way to clone myself to attend more of the others being presented that morning." John Pastor, who



**Cathedral Pickle display by Terry Gillis**

Reviews of the displays were equally positive. "Jane and I both thought the Cathedral Pickle display was very

beautiful and educational and both voted it number 1," said Beccue. "I



**Great American Preserve Jars display by Phil Alvarez**

am not a jar collector, but a couple of the jar displays were great, especially the one with all the different closures (talk about educational). I especially liked the Hostetter's Bitters display."

John Pastor of Michigan observed, "The displays were terrific. It is a special treat to have folks display and share their wonderful collections with others. I personally think that the displays and seminars often times have a way of inspiring people to get interested in and collect other areas that they may not of had an interest or exposure to before. It is hard to single out a particular display as they were all well put together and interest-

ing. The display of pickle bottles was exceptional, but there were many others. The California Perfume Co. display was tremendous as were the displays of Mason jars, inks, and the early items dug in Philadelphia."

While everyone enjoyed the great exhibits, Panek did say, "I'd like to express my long standing belief that there should be no competitive awards presented at National Shows or Expos. It's just not fair to the displayers who work just as hard to pack, transport and set up their displays to not receive the same public acknowledgement as the 'winners' receive. It should be all about education and showcasing our hobby, and not competition."

Connecticut's Norm Heckler was once again the auctioneer for Saturday night's Expo auction. Some 75 lots were sold, with six offerings bringing bids of \$2000 or better. An early, olive green "Wryghte's Bitters London" was top lot with a final bid of \$3900. An aqua, unlisted, pontiled "Capen & Thurston Improved Mineral Water Troy N. Y." went to a new home for \$2600. A mint, open pontiled, emerald green "Sweets Blk Oil Rochester N Y" commanded a sweet \$2000, and an open pontiled, yellow green "True Daffy's Elixer" delivered a strong \$3600.



**Sweet's Blk Oil**

What did collectors like best about the York Expo? One Wisconsin collector pointed out, "A not-previously-revealed 'draw' to this location is the warm, nostalgic feeling many long-time collectors and dealers have for this facility relative to the original summer York fair-

grounds show being there. Reports of ghosts with flashlights have been heard!"

Panek reflected, "The best memories include the truly outstanding displays, especially Terry Gillis's pickles, foods and cathedrals display; Wayne & June Lowry's fruit jar display; and Joe Merkel and Jim Sears' fruit jar display. The camaraderie with dealers and collectors that I only see once or twice a year was also heartwarming."

Beccue observed, "Overall impression was: a great Expo, which is to say a very great show! I rank it with the best we have had, including my prior favorites, St. Louis and Las Vegas. Even the concessions and rest area were first rate, which is not always the case at a large show. It was also nice to have a hall big enough to accommodate the huge number of tables and still have comfortable wide aisles. Wayne and June did a wonderful job with the show, and we all owe them a lot for giving the time necessary to head up such an enterprise. I had hoped to see an Expo held in the East for many years, and York was a splendid choice. Proximity to Gettysburg and the Civil War Museum in Harrisburg were big plusses for any history buff."

Beccue's sentiments about Wayne and June Lowry's hard work and dedication were echoed by many. Panek summed it up by saying, "Wayne and June Lowry really did a tremendous job on behalf of the FOHBC in running this event."

In the end, no bottle show is ever just about bottles. Perhaps John Pastor said it best when he exclaimed, "The Expo was also wonderful in terms of seeing many old friends and making new ones from across the country and even around the World (Australia, the UK, Germany) and other corners of the globe! We're already looking forward to the next one!"

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**California Perfume Company by Rusty Mills**