

# A Reminiscence of 53 Years of Bottle Collecting in South Carolina

*by Harvey S. Teal*

Part 3 of 4

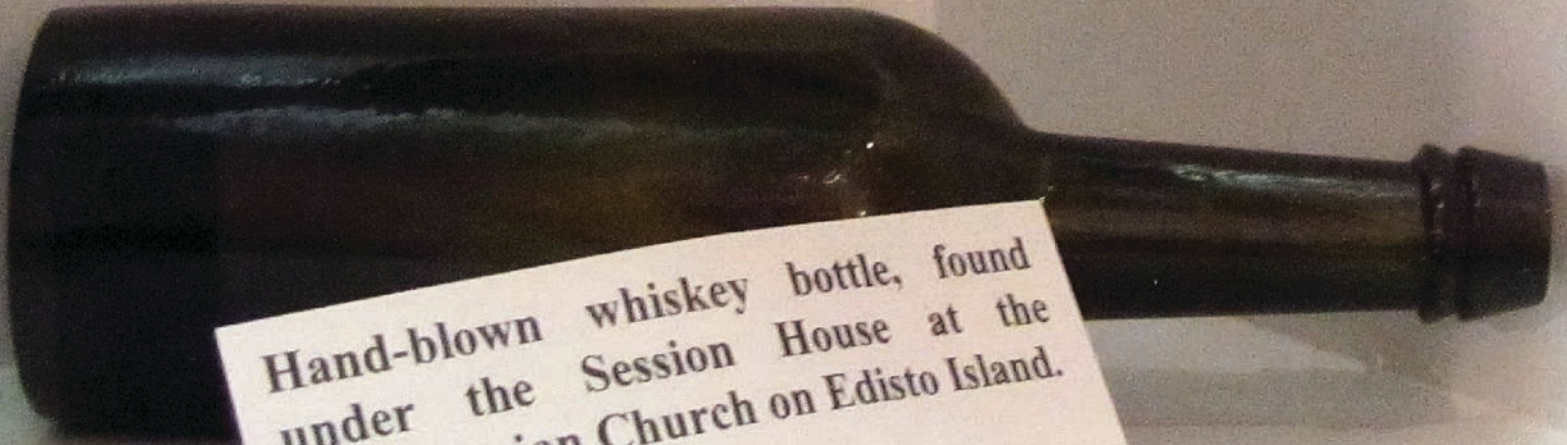


## Antique Bottle Collecting Histories

*One of a series...*



With all this interest here in South Carolina and elsewhere prompted by information on bottles and the experience gained over time in digging bottles, there were enough reasons to congregate and organize a bottle club.



Hand-blown whiskey bottle, found  
under the Session House at the  
Presbyterian Church on Edisto Island.  
Donated by Harvey Teal

On May 13, 1970, we organized the South Carolina Bottle Club in Columbia with a membership of about 50 people from across the state. Ours was the state's first club.

In 1972, the club began to publish a newsletter. After the first couple of issues, yours truly became the editor. A column called "The Grapevine" was soon developed by me to provide news to the membership about new discoveries. For the next 15 years, I continued as newsletter editor.

In 1973, the club membership decided to hold a bottle show. With many now having collected for a decade or more, they had bottles they would like to exhibit. Most also had many duplicates they wished to sell or trade. It was my honor to chair our first bottle show.

The show was a modest venture held in a middle school gym with nine dealers and about two dozen exhibits. It lasted for two days and was well attended. At the time, my age was 44. I certainly did not realize then that the show would be going full blast some 40 years later. Today, it is the largest show in the southeast below Baltimore, Maryland.

Over the years, we have had dealers from Maine, Ohio, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, Missouri, Indiana and a few other states set up at our show. Collectors from those states and others also have come.

There are several reasons for our success. A year or so after our first show, my insurance agent, whose company carried insurance on my bottles and who was a member of a local Sertoma club, approached me with the idea of his club sponsoring our show. The matter was discussed by our club members and agreement was reached for the Sertomans to become the sponsor. They have done so since that time. Through their sponsorship, we are permitted the free use of a local public facility for our show.

The chief local charity for that Sertoma Club is the local Boys and Girls clubs. It also became the bottle club charity. Two individuals are members of both organizations. By doing this, our club has enjoyed wide acceptance in local government and service club arenas.

Since our members are also using their hobby to serve their community, they participate in, enjoy, take pride in and are motivated to have a first rate bottle show each year. Through our joint efforts, over a quarter of a million dollars have been contributed to local charities.

Our club members are quite competitive when attempting to dig or acquire bottles, but we have not allowed this to cause division and non-cooperation. I believe involving a charity has helped keep dissension to a minimum.

Two other factors have contributed to our success. Our



show is one of the few in the region to have continued over the years. Members received a newsletter once a month for about 16 years. These two facts focused attention on our club and show.

The show has evolved into an event where bottles are bought and sold or traded. It also is the annual event where members meet, renew old acquaintances and share bottle stories and information. Exhibiting bottles is minimal now since over a 40-year period local collectors have just about shown all the bottles in their collections.

Other bottle clubs and shows soon developed in South Carolina. Richard Lizear, Tom Collier and J.L. Jones, who would write a book on the state's soft drink bottles, in 1970 formed the Greer Bottle Club near Greenville. A show was held in 1973. The club continued to operate for a few years before folding.

In 1970, under the leadership of Colie Leaphart, the Lexington Bottle Club was organized. The club had a newsletter and a show, but folded in 1976. As could be expected, Charleston had a club and show during the 1970s. Collectors there seemed to have had too much competition among themselves for digging sites and bottles and not enough spirit of cooperation to operate a club, show and newsletter for a long period of time.

Paul Jeter and several others organized a club and show in Union, S.C., in the early 1970s. The club met and held a show intermittently for several years. In later years, Mike Sanders led the Union group. I believe its last show was in 2006.

In 2005, a group of former members of the disbanded club (Georgia-Carolina Empty Bottle Club) in Augusta and several South Carolina collectors living near the states' border organized the Horse Creek Bottle Club. This club has a newsletter and meets regularly. In 2008, its first show was held and is now an annual event. Several members of the South Carolina Bottle Club, including myself, are members of this club.

Recently, a group of ladies visited our club and sought our advice in establishing a bottle show in Moncks Corner near Charleston as a means of raising money to support a local charity. After a couple of years, the show has evolved from a bottle show to a crafts show.

Tom Collier, formerly of the Greer club, organized a bottle show in Anderson, S.C., which lasted from 1995-99.

Bottle clubs and shows in Augusta and Savannah, Ga., and Lumberton, N.C., have been patronized by South Carolina collectors.

## City Dumps Continued

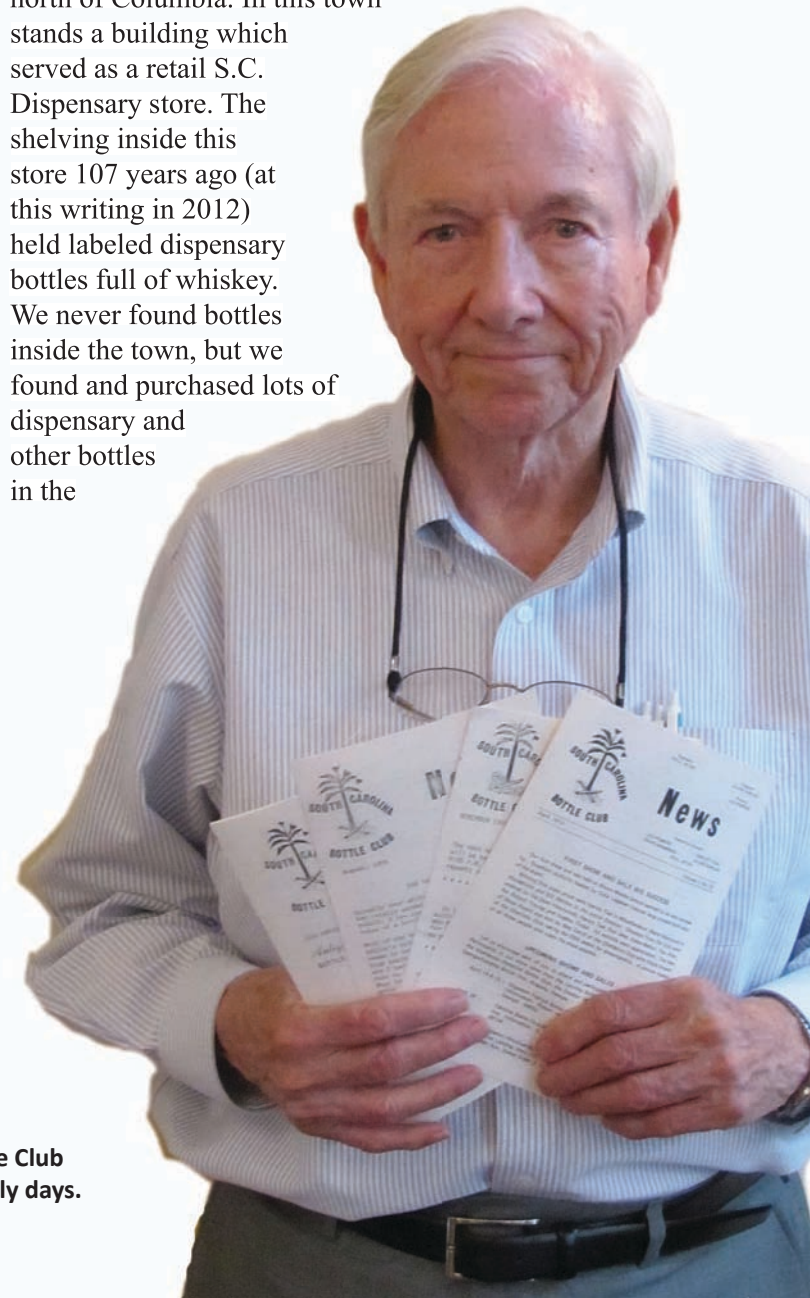
We stated these dumps led to the creation of bottle clubs and shows and previously reviewed information

about digging dumps in Columbia and Charleston. We will now complete a review of digging other dumps across South Carolina.

Paul Jeter and I realized early on that finding privies and dumps in towns could be greatly facilitated with the use of maps. We ordered a set of Microfilm rolls from the Library of Congress containing copies of Sanborn Fire Insurance Co., maps from cities and towns in our state. The maps dated from 1884 to 1940. When planning to search for bottles in a town, we first studied maps of that town. The Charleston diggers had clued me in on this approach.

Beaufort is one of South Carolina's seaport towns and settlement that date to pre-Revolutionary times. Thousands of bottles have been dug there over the years, but most are not Beaufort bottles. They are bottles from other South Carolina towns or elsewhere. A number of collectors have dug there, but none as extensively as Mark Roseneau and Steve Patterson. Both have extensive collections of South Carolina Dispensary bottles.

The small town of Chapin is located about 25 miles north of Columbia. In this town stands a building which served as a retail S.C. Dispensary store. The shelving inside this store 107 years ago (at this writing in 2012) held labeled dispensary bottles full of whiskey. We never found bottles inside the town, but we found and purchased lots of dispensary and other bottles in the



**Harvey Teal holds a bunch of S.C. Bottle Club newsletters he edited during club's early days.**

surrounding areas.

Chester has a dump that was dug in the 1960s that produced many local bottles such as drugs, sodas, spring water, etc. I never personally dug there, but did acquire a number of Chester bottles from local diggers. A collection of Chester bottles is on display at the Chester County Museum.

In the town of Clinton lived Dr. Fred Holcomb and family who dug locally in Columbia, Charleston and elsewhere for a number of years and amassed one of the largest collections of South Carolina bottles and pottery in the state. Holcomb, his wife and son Joe are all deceased,

Unfortunately, the Holcombs never published much about their collection and it continues to lay largely unshared with the collecting community except for an exhibition of a portion of their pottery collection in the South Carolina State Museum.

In Bishopville, members of the Tindall family dug there and collected bottles from a number of places including Savannah, Ga. I purchased their collection about 10 years ago.

Camden, a town dating from the 1760s, had a large city dump, but it yielded very few bottles. My brothers, two of my nephews and I found many bottles in smaller dumps and sites in the area over the years.

Camden is the home of Austin M. Sheheen Jr., an advanced collector of South Carolina Dispensary bottles. He is better known for being the most advanced collector of South Carolina bank notes in the world. Additional information on him will be provided later.

## Cheraw Dump Sizeable

Cheraw had a sizeable late dump with local sodas and drug bottles. I dug there and acquired several Cheraw bottles elsewhere. A brother acquired many more from home sites in the area.

Darlington had several dumps that were dug by collectors for years. Two collectors in particular – David Cohen Sr. and Jr. – dug there extensively over the years. In the mid 1960s, I went to Darlington to see David Sr.'s collection. About six years ago, I handled the purchase of this collection for the

Cohen estate and acquired several bottles I first saw on my visit a half-century earlier.

Edgefield was the home of Gov. Benjamin R. Tillman, the individual who developed the South Carolina Dispensary, and was discussed earlier. Although I have never dug there, others dug in the town and surrounding area. I have purchased a number of items that they dug, including a stacker-type South Carolina Dispensary jug,

Florence had a large dump in which a number of collectors dug for a time. Two of my brothers and I dug many a dispensary, drink, drug and other bottles there.

Georgetown is one of three fairly large sea or river ports in our state. Bob Frazier and Bob Glenn collected and dug hundreds and hundreds of bottles and amassed large collections over the years. Glenn sold his dispensary collection several years ago to Mark Roseneau, but continued to do some collecting.

I have had the pleasure of digging with Bob and his son, Bob Jr., in Georgetown and Columbia several times over the years. He had planned to attend our club's 2012 show, but passed away a month before the show.

My son-in-law served as the plant manager of the Gregg Division of the Graniteville textile plants for a number of years. Through him, my brothers and I had free run in a number of sites in the town of Graniteville, including a canal dug before the Civil War. We were able to find local drug and drink bottles.

I never dug in Greenville, but acquired many good bottles from Mary Mayes on Manly Street. This included dispensary, colored sodas, bitters, etc. A number of other collectors also did business with her.

In late 1780 and early 1781, the town of Jacksonboro became the capital of South Carolina when the General Assembly met there. The British occupied Charleston and the Revolutionary War still raged in South Carolina at that time. On several trips there, black glass and a few other items were recovered by Danny Riddle and myself. We had been preceded by others, however.

In the late 1960s, Don Secor and I searched for bottles in an area along the Keowee River in upstate



**Georgia Sarsaparilla, like this one, was purchased by Teal in a group of S.C. Dispensary bottles.**



South Carolina where a hydroelectric project was being completed. Don, a professor of geology at the University of South Carolina at that time, will be discussed later.

Both sides of the river had been clear cut for several miles where a large impoundment of water would be situated. We began where the Colony of South Carolina had built Fort Prince George in 1756, a fort to protect the Indian trade. The day we were there, the water was within a couple of hundred yards of the fort site where archaeologist friends of mine were digging.

The clear cut area had home sites and we envisioned finding lots of bottles, perhaps one or two from Revolutionary War days. We came home empty handed, but had a wonderful experience seeing that valley for the last time before Lake Keowee waters covered it.

Kingstree had several sites and small dumps which yielded bottles and I dug a few there with Bob Glenn and one of my brothers. In Lancaster, S.C., my brothers and I

found over two dozen South Carolina Dispensary Bottles in an unusual place – beneath the insulation in the attic of a three-story antebellum home. Several of the bottles still retained their labels. In another spot in town, I dug about a dozen 1890s beer bottles from Columbia.

In the town of

Lexington, no large dump was located, but smaller ones and old home sites yielded many bottles and pottery. A Mrs. Lindler of the community amassed a large collection which was sold by a Columbia auctioneer a few years ago. I purchased several labeled S.C. Dispensary bottles at that sale.

In Marion lived Tony and Marie Shank. The two of them amassed the largest collection of South Carolina pottery in existence at that time, over 100 decorated pieces including several vessels turned and inscribed by Dave the slave. They sold their collection several years ago. I had helped them to acquire several pieces.

On three or four occasions, my brother and I ventured to Marion and dug some local bottles, the best of which were Marion Hutchinsons.

Newberry had small dumps and sites in the nearby rural areas that yielded many bottles and I have a number I dug and purchased from there. Local collectors such as Bobby Dawkins and Wendell Frick also dug in Newberry and the surrounding towns of Prosperity and Little Mountain.

## Stirring Up Hornets

Paul Jeter and I dug in Peak and the surrounding area on several occasions and found bottles. One time, while digging around a hedgerow on the outskirts of town, we dug beneath a small tree. When we accidentally bumped it, we learned of a very large hornet's nest hung just a few feet above our heads when the hornets swarmed out and around us. We suffered only a couple of stings before we made a strategic withdrawal.

In the old town of Pendleton dump, I found several bottles, including a broken S.C. Dispensary jug. Other diggers had preceded me, however. Near Pendleton, a group held a reception on the ground floor of an antebellum home under restoration. The upper two stories and the attic were yet to be restored, but we were invited to tour them. I climbed into the attic to look at architectural features it possessed and spotted a Haviland drug bottle from Charleston laying in the dust and debris. The homeowner permitted me to keep it.

When I related the story to my wife later that evening, she was not pleased. Disapprovingly she remarked: "It would have served you right if you had fallen through the ceiling into the punch bowl!" You have to collect bottles where you find them.

Pomaria is located about 30 miles north of Columbia. In the late 1960s, my wife and I went to see the son of Dr. Berly, a pre-Civil War doctor. Dr. Berly's antebellum home with his doctor's office in the front yard still stood on a side street with most of its contents inside. The son allowed



Teal holds a flyer advertising S.C. Bottle Club's second show and sale March 30-31, 1974.

us to purchase several dozen pontiled labeled drug and medicine bottles, two dispensaries and three or four pieces of pottery, one of which was decorated.

Later, I learned a man who had moved to Tennessee near the Virginia line had preceded me to the Berly home and had purchased several dozen dispensary bottles and the doctor's Civil War letters. I contacted the man, drove up there and was able to purchase most of the bottles and the letters. In the deal was an Augusta, Georgia pontiled sarsaparilla bottle (Dr. J. Dennis's Georgia Sarsaparilla).

My brothers and I acquired many bottles from other locations in the Pomaria area. On one trip, we found three South Carolina bitters. On another trip, we were looking in a patch of woods behind an abandoned house in a pasture when a shower of rain overtook us. We sought shelter under a shed by a barn.

Soon, a number of goats chose this same shed for refuge from the rain. Nothing stinks quite as bad as a wet goat. We soon abandoned the shed to the goats and departed in the rain.

About 25 miles from Columbia is the town of Ridgeway. Paul Jeter and I dug there and found several bottles, including a broken S.C. Dispensary jug. On one occasion while digging there alone, I encountered a large rattlesnake. I saw him/her first and, contrary to what conservationists may recommend, I dispatched him/her with my probe. If I were to dig in that area again, I reasoned I might not see him/her first the next time.

Sumter had several dumps which yielded many local and other bottles for a number of years. I acquired several from local diggers and my son, a general contractor, while on a job actually dug a rare amber quart dispensary with his front-end-loader. The bottle occupies an honored position in my collection.

Paul Jeter's ancestral home was in Union. On several occasions, we dug bottles in a dump there and dug a number of broken Union County Dispensary bottles. We jointly acquired bottles and other items from that town.

Danny Riddle and I dug a number of times in Walterboro where he lives and found good bottles. He had dug an early dump there before we became friends.

Winnsboro had a late dump with a few collectible bottles. However, I was able to locate and purchase a number of good bottles in the town and in the immediate area.

## Digging S.C. Civil War Sites

Addressing this topic at this point will complete most of my reminisces about South Carolina bottle digging.

South Carolina had many bottle clubs come and go over the years, with the S.C. club still in existence. Here are some club newsletters including a trio from Atlanta's Southeastern Bottle Club.

In November 1861, the Union Army and Navy captured Hilton Head Island and the surrounding area. The citizens of nearby Beaufort fled and Union forces occupied the town shortly thereafter. These areas would remain in Union hands until the end of the war in 1865.

The purposes for capturing this island were to establish a naval base for the Union's blockading fleet and establish an army base to support efforts to invade the interior and to cut the Charleston & Savannah Railroad. By late 1863-64, Hilton Head became a town of about 40,000 military forces and civilian personnel. Most amenities found in Charleston could be found on the island. A city of that size produced a mountain of trash, junk and garbage.

For years, diggers like Bobby Hinely and Ed Gray dug there. The location is over 250 miles from my home and I dug only a couple of times there with my brothers. Local authorities became disagreeable about digging there, I believe there are some collectors other than I who can speak with much more authority on just how disagreeable they were.

Most of the bottles found were from the northeast, but a couple of soda water entrepreneurs produced colored soda water bottles embossed Hilton Head, S.C. I never found one although I did own one at one time. While digging there on one trip, I found four pontiled inks, one of which was green.

At the very tip of Beaufort County across the Savannah





River from Georgia sits Daufuskie Island, a place made famous by author Pat Conroy and his book, *The Water is Wide*, and a later movie. Union troops occupied the island early in the Civil War.

Two other collectors and I made two trips there in the 1980s, looking for bottles and Civil War relics. I found a Revolutionary-era cannon ball, some Connecticut Union buttons and a dose cup from Solomon's Drug Store in Savannah, the store that sold Solomon's Strengthening & Invigorating Bitters in cobalt blue bottles. Previously dug trash pits in camp sites provided ample evidence that we had been preceded by a number of others.

Across from Hilton Head was a site called Land's End. A former teacher of mine and his family owned the last three lots as you head out to sea. Over the years, he and his family had picked up many bottles. A Spanish-American War site, Fort Fremont, was located a quarter of a mile away.

He invited me down to look for bottles and to metal detect in the area. I did so on two occasions, but had little luck. He and I did trade a few bottles over the years.

In 1862, Union forces moved onto the sea islands of South Carolina from the Georgia line to near Charleston and remained there throughout the remainder of the war. The thousands of troops who congregated at different points along this line discarded many bottles. The challenge was to find them.

On Edisto Island, at a number of places such as Civil War skirmish and camp sites and antebellum home

sites, I recovered many bottles and Civil War artifacts. I gave the Edisto Island Museum its first artifact when the museum was created several years ago – a tall, round, quart amber pontiled amber whiskey bottle I had found at a Union site on the island.

While hosting my family's vacations on Edisto for over 30 years, I became familiar with the island and local property owners, became a charter member of the local historical society and helped set up the Civil War Room in the museum.

From our vacation quarters on the beach, I ventured by boat to Otter Island, a mile or so away, in search of Civil War relics. Not many bottles turned up around the old fort there and elsewhere on the island, but many other artifacts such as cannon balls, buttons, minie balls, etc., were recovered. I contributed most of this material to the museum.

## Surprising Discovery

One of my most interesting discoveries on Otter Island was not the artifacts, but a previously unknown Civil War graveyard. This was surprising because the barrier island has never been inhabited except temporarily by soldiers, fishermen and a few explorers like us.

A friend of mine and I were on the island metal detecting when we received one of the loudest signals through our headphones we had ever heard. When we dug down, we found it was an iron casket. Neither he nor I had never been interested in disturbing the dead or grave robbing. We covered it up.

A fire had recently burned off all the underbrush on this portion of the island. As we stood there looking at the somewhat bare surface, we began to recognize sunken spots in two rows. These were the other graves and totaled 10 in number.

By using our probes, we determined all the remaining graves contained wooden coffins and not iron ones. These likely were the graves of Union soldiers who had died of sickness while stationed at the Union fort located some 300 yards away, or elsewhere on the island.

That day as I stood gazing over this ancient graveyard in its setting of Spanish moss-covered oaks and a few longleaf pine "sentinels," I hearkened back to a time in my youth when I read Robert Louis Stevenson's "Treasure Island." All those characters of long ago – Jim Hawkins, Long John Silver, Blind Pew and the black spot, Squire Trelawney, Capt. Smollett, Billy Bones, all flooded my memory. The pirate refrain, "Fifteen men on a dead man's chest, Yo Ho, Yo Ho, and a bottle of rum!" rang in my ears.

Before leaving the island that summer, I informed the local historical society about our discovery. We left the dead in peace that day and they remain so as far as I know to this day.

