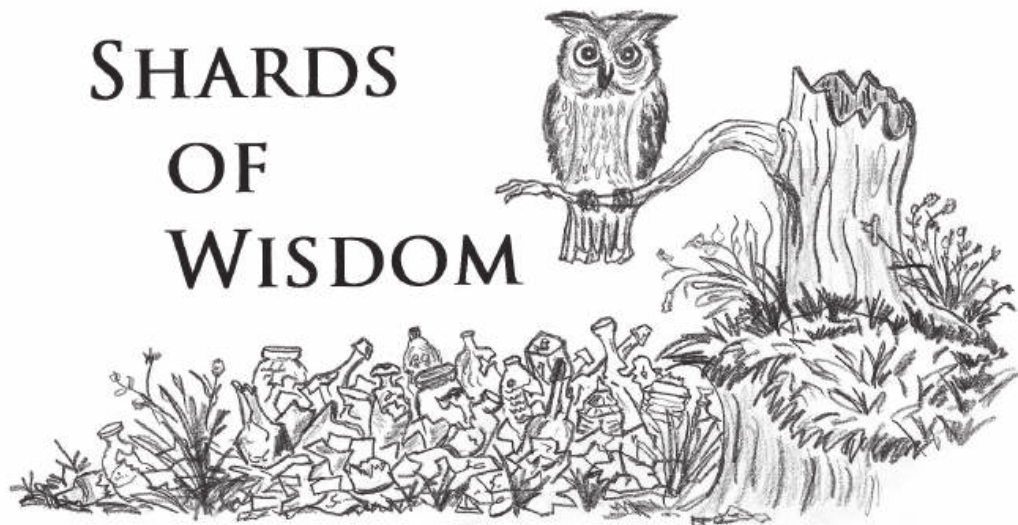


SHARDS OF WISDOM



Them Thar' Western R's

You folks out East might a heard or ya might not a heard about a little fellar we out here call our beloved Western R. Rumor has it that you can identify a Western-made bottle by these little curved R's, especially to the San Francisco & Pacific Glass Works, (SFPW). This glass house came into being in 1876 when the West's only two glass works, the Pacific Glass Works, (PGW), and the San Francisco Glass Works, (SFGW), merged into one.

It is after this merger that our Western R comes along and you can see the first R in that Western line up isn't like the others. It's embossed on a San Francisco Glass Works Soda bottle from the late 1860s. That means there was already a mold maker in California who wasn't making no curved R. So where then did this curved R come from? There sure are a lot of curved R's on Eastern-made bottles once you start looking. Quite a few matter of fact.

Now some are certainly just the script used at the time and

someone employed out there already in a different occupation which required the knowledge of how to work metal. He also could have migrated out west from the East. As the glass houses in Connecticut closed down he would have worked his way down to the mid-Atlantic, possibly working there or not finding work, moving on somewhere else, somewhere new?

Now again there are a lot different curved R's out here, in the Western made glass as well as the East, so I'm not drawing any conclusions, but I leave to you speculate, if you wish. Did an unemployed mold maker with a big opportunity out West leave his signature behind, in a pesky little curved R?

Some Straps that will leave you strapped!

There have always been a few nice embossed strap side flasks out there. Treasured for their local history, everyone wants that flask from the liquor dealer down the street, or the honest red-nosed hometown judge who sold whiskey when he wasn't locking up drunks!

While some collectors have a lot to choose from locally, there are certainly areas where a marked merchant flask might be one of the few local bottles available. Add to that the scarcity of these flasks, which were produced in small numbers and used by folks who couldn't keep a tight grip on the bottle by the time it was getting close to empty and you end up with some pretty desirable and expensive bottles.



Bottle extraordinaire Matthew Levanti will assist the Editor with Shards of Wisdom, so send in your news or bottle updates to: Matthew T. Levanti, 5930 Juarez Rd. Placerville, Ca, 95667 m.tigue-levanti@hotmail.com



I remember an amber strap side flask from New London, Conn., (where I was born and raised), which came out of Charlie Gardner's collection and was sold a few years back by Heckler's, going for a little over \$400.00. I thought to myself at the time that was quite a bit for just an old strap side, but boy, do I wish I was the one who spent it now!

Prices in my opinion seem to be going up and these bottles that were just not old or historically significant enough are coming into their own. While these flasks have of course always been important and a wonderful connection with local history, I do not believe the monetary value has ever been so high. Just in January these three amber flasks all sold for over \$1,000 on e-Bay, and I bet the lucky winning bidders were happy to have them at. It might be time to go through those boxes in the garage and pull out those embossed Straps, you never know what treasure you might have.



South Carolina Dispensary
M. Keating – Wholesale Liquors – Council Bluffs (Iowa)
Geo. L. Miller – Wholesale - Liquor Dealer - Junction City, Kansas

America's first bottle collection!

This is some old news but I just dug it up and found it pretty interesting. As it was 10 years ago, now it might be a refreshing recap or if you hadn't heard then its good old news now!

During the archeological excavations at Jamestown, Va., in the summer of 2004, a brick-lined wine cellar still holding 10 intact bottles and as many as 20 more broken bottles from the late 17th century was discovered. It's believed the now long gone building that occupied the site dated to the fort period and likely belonged to a wealthy family based on the cellar and other artifacts found such as leaded window glass.

One of the globular onion-shaped bottles had an applied seal with the initials "F.N.", which archeologists believe might have been the property of the then governor of Jamestown, Francis Nicholson. Nicholson moved the capital of Virginia to Williamsburg around this time which led to the eventual decline and abandoning of Jamestown. It has been speculated that the bottles were given as a gift to whomever lived in the structure with the wine cellar as it was not Nicholson's residence. This find is the oldest wine cellar known in America and I have a suspicion evidence of the first bottle collector, too!

