

Cobalt Blue Spirits Bottles

By Bryan Grapentine
Photos by Larry Grapentine

Before I decided it was time to downsize and consign my best bottles to American Bottle Auction (ABA), I collected bottles in most categories except historical flasks and embalming fluid. Over the years the collection grew to over 2600 clean, interesting bottles. During my 30 years of bottle collecting I have assembled collections of Florida water, ink, milk, Arizona bottles, magic, glue, Hutchinson, blob top, ACL sodas, medicine, food, citrate, Palmer Perfume, root beer extract, Coca-Cola, hair, Wakelee Drug Store, Owl Drug, pot lids, baby nursers, bitters, Nevada, New Mexico, and Colorado bottles plus misc. as well as a 50 State, 11 Territory and Canadian provinces Hutchinson soda bottles. I had just about run out of ideas on what to collect next when the idea of putting together a collection of blue liquor bottles seemed like a good idea and an interesting challenge. It didn't take me long to find out that not many bottles are known in this category and some are extremely rare and seldom offered for sale.

A high percentage of bottle collectors' favorite colors is blue. There are many shades of blue such as cobalt, cornflower, sapphire, teal, Prussian, electric, midnight, etc. with cobalt being the most popular. Medicine, drug store, Hutchinson and blob top sodas, hair, poison and ink bottles are not uncommon in blue. For some unknown reason, few whiskey and other liquor bottles were made in this attractive color. Perhaps the product did not appear well in blue bottles or the additional cost of producing blue glass was a deterrent. The most common color is amber followed by clear.

This article will show photos of bottles varying in degrees of rarity that were in my collection prior to their consignment to ABA. Blue liquor bottles not in my collection are also listed. Purchased at FOHBC shows years apart, the Neal's Ambrosial, my favorite, and the Hopatkong bottles do not come up for sale often. A major resort area from the 1880s through the 1930s, Hopatkong is a small town and lake resort area in Northwestern New Jersey. Could there be a spelling error on the bottle?

The other bottles in the photos were purchased at various shows, auctions, and

eBay. Although all blue spirits bottles are attractive and desirable, it has been my experience that the easiest to find blue spirits bottles are the Casper's and the Theodore Netter sample size bottle. However, except for the Caspers, little historical information can be found on this category of bottles.

Figure 1: FROM THE CASPER CO. INC. WINSTON-SALEM, N.C., NEW YORK, CHICAGO, ST. LOUIS. This is the more scarce four cities variant.

Figure 2: HOPATKONG WHISKEY J.C. HESS & CO. PHILA Unusual shape.

Figure 3: CASPER'S WHISKEY MADE BY HONEST NORTH CAROLINA PEOPLE.

Figure 4: NEAL'S AMBROSIAL WHISKEY PHILADA beautiful quart bottle and the only cobalt whiskey with an applied seal that I know of. Seal size is 2 1/8" X 1 7/8".

Figure 5: Back Bar bottle with RYE in sterling. This heavy bottle may also be found in other flavors.

Figure 6: ROYAL IMPERIAL GIN LONDON A beautiful American square bottle.

Figure 7: WHARTON'S WHISKY 1850 CHESTNUT GROVE This bottle was also made in aqua and amber.

Figure 8: GREETINGS THEODORE NETTER 1232 MARKET ST. PHILADA, PA. These sample bottles also were made in clear glass.

Figure 9: J.N. KLINE & CO. AROMATIC DIGESTIVE CORDIAL A small tear-drop shape pocket flask.

I neglected to get a photo of the blue barrel bottle. This desirable bottle does come up for sale occasionally at bottle shows or catalog auctions. Since no paper labeled specimens have been reported, it is generally believed that the bottles contained whiskey or bitters.

There are other blue spirits bottles that I have never seen, or found offered for sale, and so I would consider them all extremely rare. There may be more that I have not listed below.

W.H. McL. TOLEDO. O. smooth base, cylinder.

KING'S LIQUORS BRISTOL, TENN

cobalt, cylinder.

D.J.M. 1841 MOUNTAIN DEW cobalt, back bar, cylinder.

R.B. & A.B. CROPLEY GEORGETOWN, D.C. light blue, cylinder.

S.S. SMITH JR. & CO. CINCINNATI, O. semi cabin shape figural.

W. WOLF PITTSBURGH cornflower blue, barrel.

Reference:

Antique Eastern Whiskey Bottles by Donald J. Denzin.

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Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

