

# Collecting Colored Blobtop Beers

*By David Tingen*

My interest in colored blobtops started in the mid 1960s, although I had a fascination with colored glass years before. My first dug bottles were real jewels and, to a 10-year-old, a real find. Even the lowly Bromo was a thing of beauty when placed in my bedroom window.

Being from the South was somewhat of a challenge to a collector of the beer-style colored blobs and much easier for the soda collector. The great variety of colored sodas found in the coastal cities of the Carolinas and Georgia gave me hope that I might find those same brilliant colors for my collection. Even though North Carolina has some nice amber bottles, the biggest variety of colors is found mainly in the Northeast and Midwest with nice shades of green in the West.

My first real exposure to color was at the early Baltimore and Keene shows. Luckily, there were just a handful of collectors with the same interest as mine. Availability and variety was good and the prices reasonable. Oh, how I long for those days. In recent years the supply has become more limited and the prices are up from what they were early on. This is a good indicator of the ever-increasing popularity of our hobby. It is also a good indicator that they are a worthwhile investment. The show that piqued my interest was the national show in St. Louis. There were fantastic colors from all over the Midwest with a number to choose from. I remember buying a number of mint Andrae (Port Huron) cobalt quarts for \$75 each. Some folks thought I was a little crazy for paying such a price. I like the return on my investment; but better yet, I enjoy having these early acquisitions in my collection.

Since there are hundreds of bottles in the blobtop beer category, a collection can be built on the basis of geography, color shade, bottle style or embossing type. For instance, in the Boston area alone, one could amass a collection of shades of green and have over 100 items in the collection with over 25 of them being emerald. The same would be true for the Chicago area with the dark green (black glass) shades. St. Louis would probably have one of the widest varieties of unusual shades of green. In addition to the color being specific to city there is also a regional identity. The majority of the cobalt bottles seem to come from areas near the shipping trade. Such areas would be: Detroit, Chicago, La Porte and Port Huron. Another popular region for cobalt blue is Eastern Pennsylvania with examples known from Wilkes-Barre and Allentown. Upstate New York seems to have the highest concentration of beautiful amber, straw and olive tones. Small towns such as Attica, Norwich and Oswego were all contributors. Philadelphia had relatively few colored examples compared to other large cities, but there were some brilliant examples from that area. By far, the most difficult big city for nice color is New York. The West Coast has the truest red-amber examples mostly from the San Francisco area. The Pacific coast cedar green is found from Los Angeles to Seattle.

If one has a desire to be more specific with a collection, there are colored examples with picture embossing. Such an example is the Quandt, Troy, New York or possibly Anheuser- Busch from

multiple locations. Elias from New York has a variety of colors. The most prolific bottler of all time had to be J. Gahm from Boston. The mug-embossed bottles came in at least 20 different shades of ambers and greens with multiple bottle types and embossing styles. Another option is name specific with a variety of colors available. Schroeder's and Columbia from St. Louis can by themselves make a beautiful collection. Fred Freer from Chicago offers several shades including cobalt blue, kelly green and red amber. There are also bottlers from great cities like Detroit that have the same variety.

My love of collecting continues today and I still attend shows whenever I can. Thanks to the Federation, I am allowed to share my interests with fellow collectors. You never know what might show up, so keep looking. Although I have over 500 colored examples, I know there have to be even more out there.

Note: for the purpose of this article a blobtop is described as being of a non-crowntop form and having a true blob, tooled blob, loop seal or other tooled top with a beer rather than soda shape.

David Tingen

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Ralph Van Brocklin admiring David Tingen's bottles.



Amber bottles from upstate New York.



St. Louis green bottles.



Splits in assorted colors.



Southern amber bottles.



**Above:** Miscellaneous colored bottles.

**Left:** Chicago black glass.

**Right:** Fred Freer, Chicago, Illinois, colored quarts.







**Top right:** Midwest quarts. **Top left:** Boston, Mass., bottles. **Middle:** Shelf of Gahm bottles in many colors. **Bottom right:** Lebkugner, New York, aqua bottle. **Above:** More Gahm bottles.





**Top left:** Bottles from Eastern Pa. **Top right:** Green and blue bottles from Boston, Mass. **Middle photos:** Cabinets of bottles in David Tingen's collection. **Bottom left:** More bottles, close-up. **Above center:** Another cabinet full of colorful bottles. **Right:** Western quarts in green.