

Extras - Pacifiers

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This is a little offbeat for *Bottles and Extras*, but it was spawned yesterday by an E-mail from *Newsweek Magazine* to my wife, Teresa, who is the historian for the American Collectors of Infant Feeders (ACIF). The question came from Ben Whitford. He was researching the subject for an article that he was writing for the magazine and the questions were abundant. How far back do pacifiers exist? Where were pacifiers first invented? What was used prior to the modern pacifier? Whoa there! This started me thinking.

What are pacifiers designed to do? They actually have a double purpose — They help keep a noisy or hungry baby quiet by giving him something to suck on, taking his mind off of his immediate discomforts, and they also act as a teether (see my article in the last issue of *Bottles and Extras*) while he/she is cutting teeth, a very painful period of life.

But when was the concept of pacifiers first conceived? Well, babies and their problems have been around forever, since Adam and Eve and even before, depending upon your view of religion and evolution. We do know that baby bottles for the feeding of infants have been around for thousands of year. Some pottery ones have been recovered from the tombs and graves of the Etruscans, dating to about 2000 B.C. By deduction and knowing that the feeding utensils have been around this long it is only natural to deduce that some form of pacifier has also been in existence for this long.

Here I am only guessing when I say that the earliest pacifiers were most likely made of pottery like the feeding vessels of the era. But that type of pacifier would be too hard on the gums of the infant. They had to be softened somehow. Most likely the chewing parts were wrapped with leather, cloth or even a pickled cow's teat. There was no such thing as rubber, not until the 1840s. In fact, some of these earliest pacifiers may have been nothing more than a soft piece of cane for the infant to chew on.

Now we are going to have to jump a few thousand years to the semi-modern eras. In the mid-1700s the French and English began to produce glazed pottery and even pewter feeding bottles. These all had a stub on the end of them with a hole down the center for the milk to drain through. This stub was then covered with rags or the pickled cow's teat to slow the flow down and to make it more natural like the mother's breast feeding. My guess is that during this period that the pacifiers followed very closely in design. This effect is very natural in the field of development of many types of items.

In the 1840s, vulcanized rubber was invented by Goodyear and very soon thereafter the first rubber baby bottle nipples began to appear. At this same time the pacifiers with the rubber nipples on them also began to appear and were enthusiastically accepted. The earliest one that we have in our collection dates to the 1870s and has a silver body, ivory disc to prevent being swallowed by the infant and a rubber nipple very similar to those used on baby bottles for the infant to suckle on. Our next oldest one is dated to the 1920s by the shape of the nipple and also has the ivory or bone disc separating the nipple from the celluloid handle portion.

With the advent of plastics the plethora of designs of pacifiers, teethers and baby bottles becomes infinite and as far as my wife and I are concerned, the collecting of any of these items made after the advent of this wonderful throw-away product comes to a screeching halt.

Plastic, in our book, is not collectable — period.



This Binky one-piece pacifier is made of a plasticized rubber and probably dates to the 1940s. Note how the whole pacifier has begun to twist and deteriorate due to heat and oxygenation.



Hallmarked silver handled pacifier from the 1870-80 era with ivory/bone disc to prevent swallowing. The tiny ring is so that the mother could also wear this one as a piece of jewelry. The large ring was for a ribbon to be tied to the baby to prevent loss.



Right: This pacifier dates to the 1910-20 era as evidenced by the shape of the suckling nipple and by the use of the celluloid top part that has the cord tied to it. The anti-swallowing disc here is made from bone.

Left: This pacifier also dates from the 1930-40 era & is made of a hard plastic, rubber nipple, and plastic rather than the bone anti-swallowing disc. The modern idea of plastic creativity is beginning to become obvious here with the teddy bear motif.

