

# The High Wheeler Bicycle as Used on Bottles

By J. Carl Sturm

## High Wheeler

The second-oldest style of bicycle, the successor to the “bone-shaker,” and the predecessor of the modern “safety” bicycle. Before the use of chain drive, bicycles had direct drive. The pedals were connected directly to the hub of the drive wheel. The larger the wheel, the farther the bicycle would move with each turn of the pedals. The larger the wheel the higher the gear. By the year 1893 high-wheelers were out of production.

There are several bottles embossed or painted with the high-wheel bicycles depicted. The first type is an English stoneware, inside screw thread bottle which held stout. Stout was a form of bottle is marked R. EMMERSON, JUNR. NEWCASTLE ON TYNE / TRADE MARK / Picture of man riding a high-wheeler with THE DOCTOR'S STOUT on

the spokes. [Figure 1] The makers mark is DUCHAM PORTOBELLO. The bottle dates from the 1865-1890 period.

The next bottle is a German bottle with a ROOSTER RIDING A HIGH-WHEELER [Figure 2]. It was the trade mark of SOCIEDAD VINCOLA of HAMBURG and is so embossed on the base. This particular bottle is almost blood red in color and is the size and shape of the more common “J.J. W. Peters’ Dog With Bird In Mouth” bottle. It is oval in cross section with a slight push up in the smooth base. I believe that most of those in existence were dug along the site of the Panama Canal. Thus, they would date to the 1886 – 1914 period, corresponding to the dates of the canal construction.

*American Bottles and Flasks and Their Ancestry* by Helen McKearin and Kenneth Wilson lists three flasks which use the high-

wheeler bicycle as part of their embossed decoration. They are listed as numbers GXIII-1, 2, and 3. All three are pint flasks. GXIII-1 has a small picture of a girl riding a high-wheeler. Above her head is a banner which says, “NOT FOR JOE.” The reverse of this flask is blank. I believe there is an amber variant and at least two in pale green with all others being aqua in the GXIII-1 flask.

There was a very popular song written in 1867 by Arthur Lloyd, a Music Hall star in England. The song referred to a bus driver named Joseph Baxter who always spoke in the third person. When he stated that it was “Not for Joe” it was because he was up on any game and could not be tricked by any means. The popularity of this song spread around the world. Many men claimed they had written the song. In fact, Arthur Lloyd had to advertise in papers that it was his song and performers should check with him before using it in their performances. He first stanza was written thusly:



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

Joseph Baxter is my name,  
 My friends all call me Joe -  
 I'm up you know to every game,  
 And everything I know;  
 Ah; I once was green as green could be  
 I suffr'd for it though.  
 Now, if they try it on with me,  
 I tell them "Not For Joe".  
 Chorus. "Not For Joe,"  
 "Not For Joe."  
 If he knows it's "Not For Joseph,"  
 No, No, No, "Not For Joe,"  
 "Not for "Joseph" Oh, dear no.

It is my thinking that the banner on the flask reading "Not For Joe" [Figure 3] was one of the first attempts to show that at least some women of the period were wise to the ways of the world. Like Joseph Baxter they were "up on everything" and not likely to be fooled by anyone's game.

Flask GXIII-2 is very similar to GXIII-1 except the embossed picture of the girl riding the high-wheeler is larger [Figure 4]. The banner "Not For Joe" also appears on this flask. The reverse is blank. I have only seen aqua colors of this variant.

Flask GXIII-3 is different in that there is no banner above the rider's head [Figure 5]. Other than that omission the picture is of the same size as GXIII-2.

The reverse of this flask is embossed



Figure 5

with an Eagle upon a Shield [Figure 6]. In the oval below the Eagle it is embossed A.&D.H.C. This embossing was used by the A.&D.H. Chambers glass company of Pittsburg, Pa. They were in business from 1841 to 1888. I have heard of a quart-size

of this flask in green, but have not substantiated it at this time.

The amber flask pictured [Figure 7] is a half-pint, the only specimen known in this size. It turned up about three years ago and is in the collection of the author.

Although this article does not prove that the song was the reason for the wording on these flasks, I believe that it is a reasonable assumption based on the time frame. The flasks are late and have smooth bases and would be of the same time period as the song.

#### References:

*American Bottles & Flasks and Their Ancestry*, McKearin / Wilson, Crown Publishers, 1978.

*Worldwide Bottles*, Lawrence/Teal, Printed by Impresora Panama, Panama, R.P., 1973.

<http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/NotForJoe.htm>

Although there is no reference to the flasks, the above web site will give much information on the "Not For Joe" song, including audio of a portion of it and a complete rendering of the other verses of the song. You can read about one of the top music men of the stage in the late 1800s, Arthur Lloyd.



Figure 4



Figure 6



Figure 7