

WWW.HUTCHBOOK.COM

Hutchinson Bottle Directory To Be Published On The Internet

By Ron Fowler © 2006

When Joe Nagy initiated work on this project almost 30 years ago, there was really only one practical means for delivering the final product to users: paper. Joe's decade of hard work was primarily conducted via the U.S. Mail; personal computers, the Internet, and EMail weren't available tools. Although I have many years of experience with these powerful tools, in late 2003 when I projected the time and effort necessary to put the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* together, I made several miscalculations:

(1) I estimated it would take five years of effort to publish the first edition; it should turn out to be a 2.5-3 year project instead.

(2) We predicted there were 7,000-10,000 different Hutchinson bottles maximum. Wrong; were now at 14,000+ and the list continues to grow! I won't be surprised if we someday reach 15,000 listings. Given the planned spreadsheet format with illustrations, this many listings equates to 1,000 - 1,100 paper pages and that means the book would need to be at least two or possibly three volumes in length. The associated production costs of publishing to paper would push the break even price far beyond the reach of most collectors, and a *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* that collectors can't afford is of no value.

(3) After 32 years of self-publishing and selling thousands of books, I still love doing research, gathering and organizing data, and putting it all together. What I do not enjoy is the printing, collating, binding, packaging, labeling, mailing, and record keeping. Eliminating most/all of this distribution hassle means the time saved could be dedicated to updating the web site and on other writing projects.

(4) Publishing the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* via paper would provide the collecting community with a "snapshot" of data at a specific point in time. Unfortunately, hard copy books do not lend themselves well to updating and the

Hutchinson Bottle Directory contains data that by its very nature begs to be continually refined, corrected, and enhanced. Although updated paper pages could be produced and distributed periodically, doing so is potentially a logistical nightmare with all of the aforementioned distribution hassles. By comparison, publishing the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* via the Internet offers an incredible opportunity to deliver what is essentially a "living" book! We're all so used to our reference books having specific publication dates that the concept of accessing continually updated data is somewhat foreign. Consider your own reference books that are gathering dust because the data is outdated and then mull over the idea of a "live" *Hutchinson Bottle Directory*; hopefully you too will be excited about the Internet as a superior delivery methodology.

Last summer I initiated the process of gathering and evaluating information about alternative ways to deliver the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory*. Publishing via CD ROM was briefly considered, but deemed not practical; the data is quickly outdated and the process includes most of the headaches involved with distribution. Publishing to a web site, however, offered substantial benefits and only a few drawbacks. My personal expertise at building and maintaining a web site starts and stops with www.SeattleHistoryCompany.com and constructing a site for the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* was definitely beyond my skill level. Consequently, I enlisted the assistance of a professional web designer whose specialty is database design. The home page has already been built, and the bottle database is currently under construction.

The *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* is very much a collaborative effort. As point guy, my role is to orchestrate and coordinate the acquisition and organization of the bottle data that has primarily been supplied by 150+ advanced Hutchinson collector specialists from across the continent. For

several reasons, I have chosen to "build" the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* out in the open, frequently providing updates so everyone involved/interested can follow our progress. I rather enjoy the added responsibility and pressure of knowing many of my fellow collectors are closely tracking progress and sharing in the excitement of realizing that delivery of the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* data is rapidly approaching. Extending this concept a bit further, we have reserved www.HutchBook.com and intend to build the book as you watch. Once the structure is in place, we will move existing data to the web site, continually add in new listings and data, and incorporate the illustrations as they are completed. When the new www.HutchBook.com site is up, we will announce its availability.

While testing the waters on the possibility of publishing to the Internet, I kept track of the most frequently asked questions and/or concerns expressed by advanced collectors. Here are their questions and my responses:

HOW MUCH WILL ACCESS TO WWW.HUTCHBOOK.COM COST?

Access to www.HutchBook.com will be FREE. We plan to partially fund the on-going costs of web hosting with web site advertising. We're also exploring the development of a Hutchinson Bottle Collectors Association with a modest annual dues fee that could be utilized to fund the web site. More details about this initiative will be announced via www.SeattleHistoryCompany.com.

I AM WILLING TO PAY A FEE TO ACCESS WWW.HUTCHBOOK.COM; YOU SHOULD CONSIDER CHARGING FOR ACCESS IN ORDER TO RECOVER YOUR COSTS.

Although I have invested thousands of hours (I didn't keep track of my time from the 1970s - 1990s), and considerable out-

of-pocket cash, from the very get go I have considered the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* my contribution back to a hobby I have now enjoyed for 45 years. This is my ninth book and the best I've done is manage to break even on two of my previous eight books. Bottle books are not money makers, they are labors of love!

MANY COLLECTORS DON'T HAVE COMPUTERS OR INTERNET ACCESS; HOW WILL THEY USE THE HUTCHINSON BOTTLE DIRECTORY?

I suddenly have a vision of an Iowa cornfield with a newly built baseball park and a booming voice saying "If you build it, they will come!" Perhaps the availability of the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* via a free web site will inspire a few more folks to finally join the Internet revolution. These days, most people have access to public libraries with personal computers that offer Internet access, and almost everyone has friends and/or relatives who have computers and Internet access. Play ball!

I WANT A PAPER COPY AND AM WILLING TO PAY FOR IT. WILL AT LEAST A FEW PAPER COPIES BE AVAILABLE?

No, we are not going to print and distribute paper copies. The time saved will instead be invested into continually updating www.HutchBook.com. The web site will essentially become each collector's "copy" of the data and they'll have no need to maintain their own hard copy.

WILL I BE ABLE TO PRINT WWW.HUTCHBOOK.COM DATA?

Yes, the site will include "printer friendly" capability and users will be able to print pages using their own time, electricity, paper, and ink.

MANY COLLECTORS ARE EXPECTING TO USE A HARD COPY HUTCHINSON BOTTLE DIRECTORY THEY CAN TAKE TO BOTTLE SHOWS OR WHEN OUT ANTIQUES SHOPPING. DOES PUBLISHING TO WWW.HUTCHBOOK.COM LEAVE THEM OUT IN THE COLD?

A multi-volume, hard copy *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* with data on 14,000+ bottles wouldn't be very portable. Including "printer friendly" capability will allow collectors to easily print selected pages, e.g. specific states, and this should lessen concerns. Looking further into the future, even this won't be necessary; envision instead taking a hand held computer to a bottle show and dialing into www.HutchBook.com to access totally current data! This technology is available today but it is still a bit pricey. It's time, however, is coming.

HOW OFTEN WILL CHANGES BE POSTED TO WWW.HUTCHBOOK.COM?

I recently performed a time test with an EMail message containing new bottle data. From the instant the message arrived up thru the time it took to key the new data into the website program and upload it to the Internet, a total of only eight minutes elapsed! Another example is a phone call I recently received from a Pennsylvania collector who had been out digging that afternoon and within the previous hour found an unknown Pennsylvania quart Hutchinson bottle. He was excited about his new find and called to provide data on it. At that point, only the two of us knew about this newly found bottle, but with an on-line *Hutchinson Bottle Directory*, I could have immediately posted the information to the web site. Just imagine: that bottle spent the past 100+ years in the ground and within two hours of being

unearthed the entire collecting world could know about it! Bottom line: the database will be updated continuously. Somewhere down the line, I'll pass the torch to younger collectors and let them bring new enthusiasm and fresh ideas to this initiative.

WILL WWW.HUTCHBOOK.COM INCLUDE "SEARCH" CAPABILITY?

By its very nature, the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* is designed to facilitate searching in that the listings are organized by country, state/province, city, and bottler. Beyond that, the web site database offers search capabilities that would only be available by tediously pouring thru 14,000+ entries in a hard copy book. In addition to making all of the *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* data available to the collecting community, I am equally excited about being able to electronically search and use the data in ways we never dreamed possible!

IS WEB SITE SECURITY A CONCERN?

Security is a concern and the data will be secured so the web designer and I are the only ones who can manipulate the data. Otherwise, the data posted at www.HutchBook.com will be available for viewing worldwide, 24 x 7.

Gathering and evaluating information in order to make this important decision has been a very challenging process. In addition to exploring uncharted technical waters, many collectors across the U.S. and Canada were surveyed in order to provide direct input from the ultimate users of *Hutchinson Bottle Directory* data. Although this change in direction won't please everyone, I strongly believe this is the right decision and now is the time to implement it. For any questions/concerns that aren't addressed, please contact me via E-mail to HutchBook@yahoo.com.

