

Let's Talk About Ink

with Ed & Lucy Faulkner

Elijah S. Curtis Ink Co.

The Elijah S. Curtis Ink company is an old company that dates to the 1840s. In searching through references, including the book, FORTY CENTURIES OF INK, nothing was found on this company. A survey by Carter's Ink in 1870 did not list them either. The only mention found was in the book OLD INKS by Lavinia Nelson. She found them listed in the Boston Directory for 1847-48. Two addresses were found for the company, one at 9 Dock Square, Boston and another at 66 Broad Street, Boston (on a broadside and a label).

Even though no written history was

found on the company, we found two great old broadsides (printed advertising circular) that gives some interesting information on a main product - powdered ink. The company (at this time) was located at 9 Dock Square, Boston, and seems to have been a wholesale company selling powdered ink in quantity to retail merchants for mixing and bottling. Quantities sold varied from small boxes making just a little to enough for a barrel. The broadside implied that Curtis would provide labels and the merchant would have to supply his own bottles. This could explain the many different type of labeled Curtis bottles that are seen. We have never seen an embossed Curtis bottle.

Merchants could also have bottled this under their own name after mixing and bottling. These bottles should be pontiled or at least of that time period, as it is not likely Curtis could compete with the many companies organized in the late 1850s-60s in and near Boston that produced a ready made ink and of better quality.

The broadside states in part..."This ink in bottles, including labels, will cost, counting the wholesale prices of the ink,

and the fair market value of bottles, corks etc., for quart bottles, one dollar per dozen, pints 75 cents, half-pints, 50 cents, 6 ounce, 30 cents, 4 ounce, 20 cents, or 20 cents per gallon by the barrel, averaging all expenses included, less than one-fourth of the present price of any other kind of ink...persons wishing to put up ink in the large way will find this the most economical and convenient article they can find...All the wrappers and labels are ready gummed so as to save the inconvenience of pasting. Moisten with a brush or sponge dipped in water and they will adhere to the bottles without further trouble..." The broadside also gives full directions for mixing by the barrel or small quantities. If mixing a barrel, start with a five gallon mixture, stir with a stick for a week and then add twenty gallons of rain water, after which it is good for immediate use.

Another interesting bit in these broadsides was a note about how healthy this ink was to use. It contained no poisonous ingredients and was free from offensive effluvia (harmful vapors or offensive odor), and would not injure the sight of persons having weak or irritable

INDELIBLE INK.

This Composition claims a preference over other discoveries of the kind, in its not requiring the aid of any preparation. Letters and Ciphers can be traced by it, with a common pen, upon all articles of Linen, Silk, or Cotton; and although the writing be pale at first, yet, by complying with the given directions, it presently assumes a deep black, and then remains so firmly attached to the web as not to be effaced either by washing or time. It possesses, also, the advantage over other productions that can be used in a similar manner, that it does not, after it has been written with, turn to iron-mould, nor corrode or injure the texture of the finest cambric, and that it can retain its qualities in any climate.

DIRECTIONS.—Shake the ink well; then with a clean quill pen write what you wish, and expose the writing in the open air to a clear sun six hours. This is the best way; but, if you choose, the writing may be held as near the fire as possible without scorching, and it will become black almost immediately.

Very thin cloth, like fine cambric or muslin, may be starched and dried before marking, but in general it is better to use no preparation.

NOTE.—To preserve the ink, the bottle containing it, when not in use, should be kept closely corked, and free from exposure to light. Also, a quill or gold pen only should be used.

E. S. CURTIS
MANUFACTURER,
66 Broad Street, Boston.

E. S. CURTIS'
BLUE BLACK INK

"The subscribers having for some time used E. S. Curtis's Blue Black Ink, cheerfully recommend it to the public, as being superior to any which they have used."

Wholesale:
London & Edinburgh,
Barrow & Francis,
Cochran & Brewster,
Allen & Co. Boston,
Paine & Feltner,
Russell, Gillette, & Co.
Mason, Chipman, & Lynde,
John Marsh,
W. C. Little, Albany.

Retail:
Pine & Wadsworth, New York,
Thomas H. Johnson, do.
I. W. Goodrich, (Pliny Goodrich),
J. Cole, (Black-finger) (Globe Book),
Warren Blacklock, New York,
Stearns & Briggs, (Hardware) do.
T. S. Allen, do.
A. H. Richardson, (Wood's Store),
J. C. Richardson, do.
Frederick Kent & Co. Philadelphia.

Providence:
Barnes & Marsh,
August W. Bower,
Hall, Brown, & Co. N. H.
True & Co.
Fletcher & Hayward,
Moulton & Farnham,
Henderson & Co.
Foster & Shelden, Troy,
Bosley & Co. And?

This Ink has the following advantages over all other ink before offered to the public, viz: It is entirely soluble and free from sediment, and so rich in coloring matter, that it may, without requiring its aid, be kept sufficiently diluted with rain water, to prevent its caking or burning up the pen and ink stand—an important quality in good writing ink; and having no acid or corrosive properties, it will not soften or injure any kind of steel pen or quill. It will not blot or spread on the paper, makes a clear delicate mark, flows freely from the pen, and will not change color by age, retains its quality in any climate, and is the best writing ink. It contains no copper, arsenic, lead, or poisonous ingredients. It cannot affect, as other ink does, the health of persons having the habit of putting pens in their mouths, and on this account no other ink should be used in schools.

This Ink has been in use by the principal Banks, Scientific and Literary Institutions in the United States, from whom the Proprietor has numerous testimonials, letters, certificates and testimonials, of its superior quality; and besides his own experience, he has had the assistance of eminent Chemists in perfecting this article. It is now offered to the public in the full confidence that it cannot be excelled; and being made wholly from American materials, as well as being superior to any other, will be found to make ink for less per gallon than it can be made from any foreign drugs. Persons wishing to put up ink in the large way will find this the most economical and convenient article they can obtain.

DIRECTIONS.

This Ink is easily made and is a highly concentrated form, is entirely soluble, and should be dissolved in the following manner: viz: To one gallon of ink, Pour in a wooden vessel, still five gallons of Water, stir it well with a stick every day for a week, then add twenty gallons of rain water, when it becomes fit for immediate use. As it increases in strength and depth of color very fast, water must from time to time be added, to preserve the proper liquidity; in this way, a gallon will make about thirty-six gallons of very superior ink. To deepen the color from blue-black to jet-black, mix about an ounce of powdered Aleppo Galls to each gallon of ink.

This Ink may be made up in bottles to great advantage, viz: Take one paper for a quart bottle, and the same proportion for any sized bottle that may be used, and fill them in the proportion and after the manner described in the directions that are read the papers, taking care to shake them well several times, and they will be found to make first-rate ink. The Directions and receipts foregoing are intended for Labels to paste on all sizes of Bottles. The Ink is bottled, including labels, with cork, counting the wholesale prices of the Ink, and the fair market value of bottles, corks, &c. for quart bottles, one dollar per dozen; pints, 75 cents; half-pints, 50 cents; 6 ounce, 30 cents; 4 ounce, 20 cents; or 20 cents per gallon, by the barrel, averaging all expenses included, less than one-fourth of the present price of any other kind of ink.

N. B. All the Wrappers, Directions and Labels are ready gummed, so as to save the inconvenience of pasting. Moisten them with a Brush or Sponge dipped in water, and they will adhere to the bottles without further trouble.

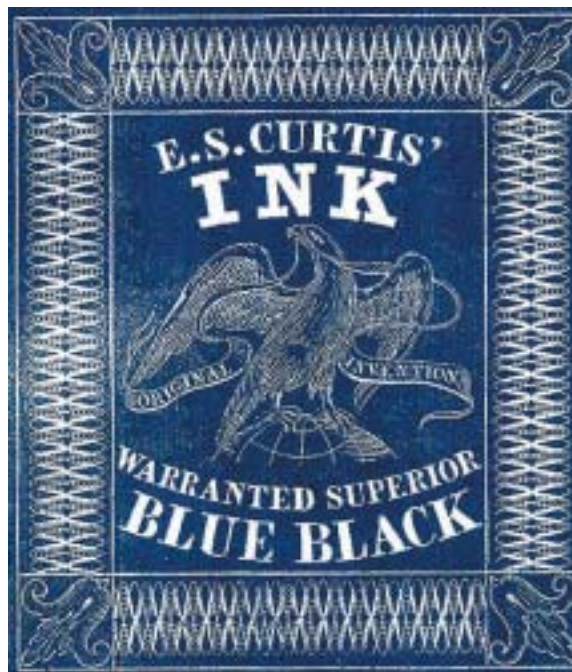
Particularly adapted to use with Metallic Pens. Sold by Elijah S. Curtis, 9, Dock Square, Boston.

eyes. It also would not effect the health of persons having the habit of putting pens in their mouths, and on this account no other ink but this should be used in schools.

A few years ago, several different unused and uncut Curtis labels turned up in quantity. These labels were sold at paper shows, bottle shows, auctions, and now occasionally on the internet. While a lot of people framed these, some have been glued on any bottle that looked like an ink. For this reason, many people are a little hesitant to buy Curtis bottles. We have seen some we believe to be 19th century with original labels and some that definitely were recently applied labels (old labels, newer bottles). The broadsides and labels from Curtis make interesting reading, however, and are worth collecting as well as the bottles.

Ed & Lucy Faulkner

Ink Bottle Collectors (& glass works bottles)



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