

# COLLECTING THE MINIATURE ADVERTISING JUGS

Well, let's try something a little different this issue... The Editor says that we already have a Western flask article this issue, and that is enough (okay, I know that you are thinking just exactly what I am - how could that *ever* be so!) so I'm going to try to blend a little information about collecting mini jugs in with some EBay sales of miniature jugs in the past quarter. Watch for occasional articles about this field of collecting in future issues.

## Background

The standard miniature jug stands between about 2.25 and 3.5 inches in height. They typically advertise a product, proprietor and/or establishment, the advertising either being scratched into or stenciled onto the jug (see **Figure 1**). Larger jugs, standing approximately 4.5 inches in height are often grouped in with the minis, but many of the serious collectors of the miniatures do not favor these larger cousins and the prices they command are correspondingly lower.

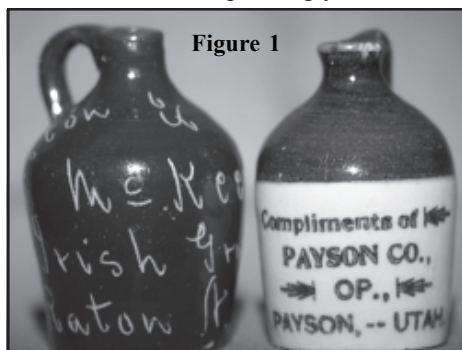


Figure 1

As in so many fields of collecting, this aspect of our hobby has gone through an evolution as collectors began to see the promise of putting together a nice collection or the possibilities of collecting these as a specialty.

## My Collecting

My first inclination that these sample or give-away jugs existed was in a 1968 book by Bill and Betty Wilson entitled *Spirits Bottles of The Old West*. This book was an early compilation of the bottles being found in the West and scattered through its pages was the occasional mini jug. Of particular interest to me at that point of my collecting career was that they

were affordable - typically listed as having a value of \$2-5. The Deadwood, South Dakota, example listed was only \$2 - I'd love to have bought it at that price!

Despite the affordable prices, these rarely showed up at the Western shows and with no real possibility to build a collection, my intrigue waned and I pursued other lines of collecting.

Residency brought me from California to Memphis, Tennessee, in 1982. That move re-introduced me to miniature jug collecting. The availability of these jugs was as different as night-and-day between my new home in the South and my collecting days in the West. In Kentucky and Tennessee alone, there may be as many firms which utilized mini jugs as in all of the Western states combined. The possibilities to build a collection suddenly seemed to exist.

When I started buying the miniatures in the early 1980s, they were still routinely

available in the \$10-50 range. At that point in my life I was still supplementing my income in any way in which I could, so the jugs would sit on my shelf for a few weeks to a few months and then end up going to one or another of my friends in the hobby. Nothing stuck for very long, but the base of knowledge that is so important for the collector was building. And the interest was definitely intensifying!!

Meeting my friend and bottle digging partner, Charlie Barnette, at a local auction in East Tennessee introduced me to the idea of collecting miniatures from a given locale (See **Figure 2**). He had several of the minis from Bristol, Tennessee-Virginia, and as I acquired examples of these, they stayed on my shelves. The acquisition of my first really nice Western miniature, with stenciled *Compliments of / Fred and Bill / Fairbanks, Alaska* [**Figure 3**], galvanized my interest in collecting miniatures from the Western tier of states.

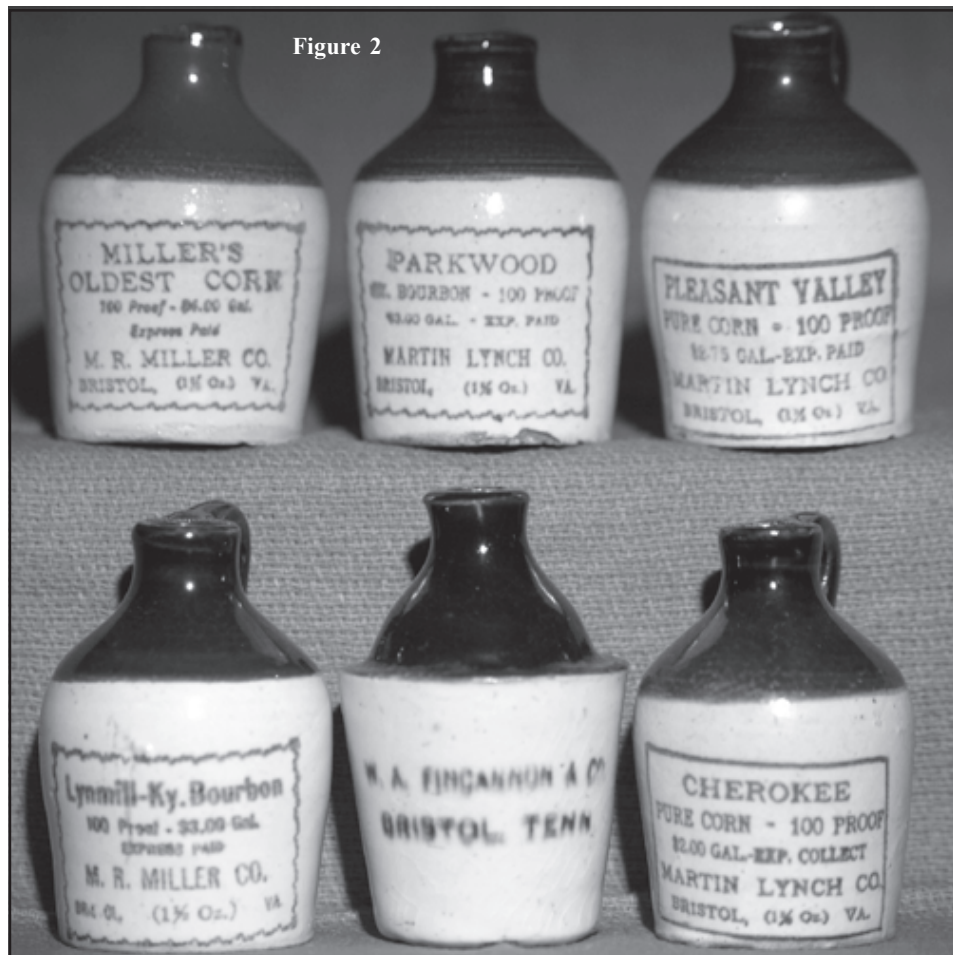


Figure 2



Figure 3

### Getting Started

As in any field of collecting, the initial period of collecting miniatures can be confusing and the risk of making mistakes in what one buys and what one pays are always present. To lessen what can seem to be a daunting amount to learn, there is no substitute for asking experienced collectors for advice.

Viewing the collections of advanced collectors, many of whom are quite accommodating, is extremely helpful. Direct handling of the jugs and close examination of the application of handles and lip detail helps the collector appreciate when jugs have been altered. Although there are very few "fake" jugs on the market, repair of stoneware has been going on for many years. Many of these repairs are excellent and I'd love to tell you that I never miss a repair - but, I do! Watch, in particular, for lip repair, new handles and coloring in of lip flakes. Don't hesitate to ask a dealer if an item has been repaired.

The collector should consider the extent of damage and the amount/quality of repair when purchasing an item, and adjust its value accordingly. Stoneware collectors appreciate mint items equally as much as those who collect bottles, but little nicks here or there or "pops" in the glaze/clay do not as drastically effect the price as similar problems would on a bottle. This tends to hold truer with the scratched jugs than with the stenciled ones.

Occasionally, an item is so rare that the

rarity overrides the problems, but this is definitely the exception to the rule. Generally, significant damage should result in a significant reduction in price paid. Until attaining a reasonable level of experience in this field, the collector should try to avoid pieces with significant damage. As one's knowledge base improves and one starts down a certain avenue of collecting, certain damaged pieces will inevitably end up on the shelf. I have a number of damaged and repaired pieces in my collection that are integral to the collection as a whole. I also have a number of damaged pieces I purchased early in my quest for the jugs that reminds me that buying damaged items, whose lack of rarity I did not appreciate at the time, leads to monetary loss later.

There are no comprehensive books on the subject, but specialty books exist for the fields of Redwing and Fort Dodge collecting.

### How To Collect

The total number of miniature advertising jugs almost certainly exceeds 3000. There may be someone out there who has the resources and interest to try to obtain an example of every one that surfaces, but most choose to collect in a more practical fashion, limiting their collection to one or more categories.

Sources for these jugs are similar to those one plies for bottles. Bottle shows, particularly in the South and Midwest, are always good possibilities. Antique shows, auctions, street fairs, yard sales... all possibilities. EBay is a tremendous source and, for me, has added many jugs to my shelves and a wealth of knowledge as to what is available and how ardently sought certain categories of jugs are. Just as advanced collectors of the miniatures can be an important source of information to the new collector, they can often be one of the most important sources in building a collection.

### Categories

There are any number of categories on which the collector can focus. The more narrow the focus, the more limited the collection will ultimately be, but narrowing the focus has the definite advantage of limiting the amount one spends.

Among the categories of collecting are Redwing jugs, Fort Dodge Stoneware, Uhl

Pottery, Christmas give-aways, hotel jugs, jugs with unusual slogans, pictorial jugs, jugs advertising a brand of whiskey sold by a specific proprietor, vinegar jugs, jugs with advertising on both sides, jugs advertising a bar or saloon, grocery / mercantile/trading company jugs and jugs from a given locale. For those who enjoy researching items, the mavericks present a challenge. For those who like product jugs, an extensive collection of miniatures may be compiled. The following will illustrate some of these possibilities:

### Redwing

One of the most ardent groups of collectors of the miniature advertising jugs are those who collect only pieces from Redwing Stoneware. These jugs may be based-marked as Redwing or have the wing insignia, but they often are unmarked and the buyer must recognize the style. The "*Compliments of / The Atlantic / Butte Mont.*" jug below [Figure 4] is a classic example of a Redwing jug.

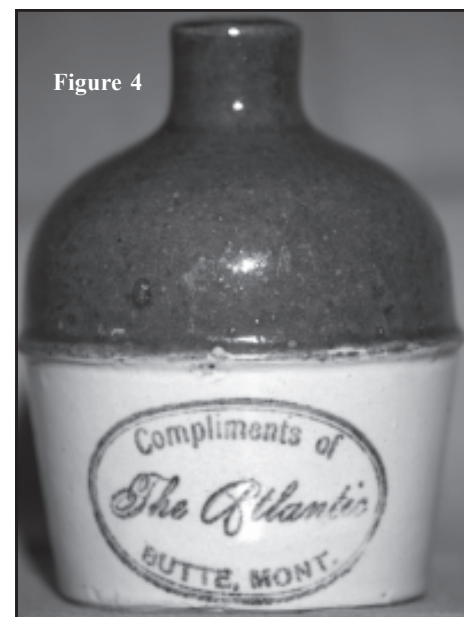


Figure 4

Because of the significant number of collectors and the limited number of different jugs from this pottery, the rarer specimens command very high prices. Even the more common of the Redwing miniatures (*Michigan-Minnesota / Who Will Win,* "*Souvenir of / Excelsior Springs MO*" and "*Aleda / Vinegar / For Pickling and Table / Milwaukee Vinegar Co*" will command in the \$200-plus range.

Ebay offerings over the past three months have included:

"M // 1922 Minn 7 Mich 16 / 1923 Minn 0 Mich 10 / 1924 Minn Mich"



(\$677.55) [Figure 5]

*"Souvenir / Of / Redwing"* (\$247.50)

[Figure 6]

*"Michigan-Minnesota // Who Will Win"?* (\$240.39, \$154.49) [Figures 7, 8]

*"Write / Merrill, Chapman / Greer Co. / Crockery / St. Paul"* (\$425.00) [Figure 9]

### Fort Dodge Stoneware

The Fort Dodge Stoneware Company offerings present the individual specializing in their items with only a very limited number of mini jugs to collect. A 2003 book by G. W. Steffens, *From Iowa Clay: The Stoneware of Fort Dodge*, illustrates less than twenty jugs in the miniature size.

Most are base-marked "Fort Dodge Stoneware Co, Iowa" [Figure 10].

The mini jug pictured in Figure 11, *"August F. Truwe & Co / Young America / Minn"* realized \$716 in an October EBay auction.

### Uhl Pottery

Uhl is another pottery that marked their jugs with their name, contributing to it being a maker who has a distinct following. Located in Huntingburg, Indiana, many of their miniature jugs fall into another category of collecting - those which celebrate Christmas. These are often base-marked [Figure 12.]

Recent EBay offerings included *"Merry / Xmas / 1939"*, *"Merry / Christmas / 1941"*, and *"Merry / Christmas / 1942"* [Figures 13-15]. Price realized for the 1939 example was \$192.50, despite a significant lip chip. High bids were \$232.50 and \$204.50 for the 1941 and 1942 examples, respectively.

### Christmas Miniatures

In bottle collecting, post card collecting and other fields, items are available which were produced as sales items at Christmas or as give-aways. This category is quite specific, but there are certainly a significant number of jugs - Uhl and others - to collect. Conservatively, someone collecting in this category should have 75-100 items available to them [Figure 16].

Only one Christmas mini jug caught my eye on EBay this quarter— a very nice stenciled jug *"J R Bruce / Gallatin, Tenn / A Merry Christmas / & / A Happy New Year"* [Figure 17]. This jug realized \$414.99, making a Christmas collector or Tennessee collector very happy.

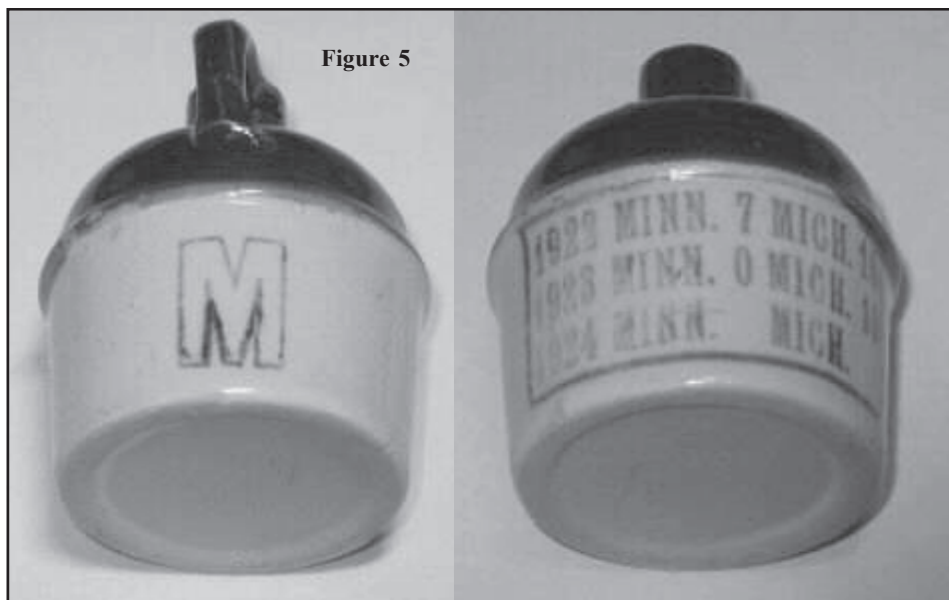


Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

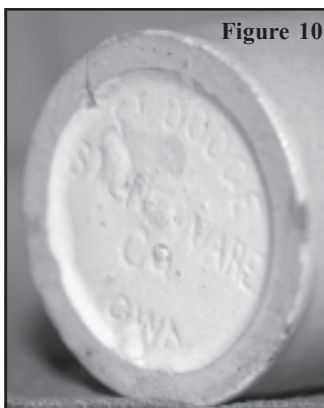


Figure 10



Figure 11

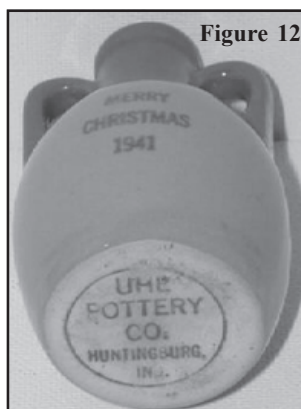


Figure 12



Figure 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 15

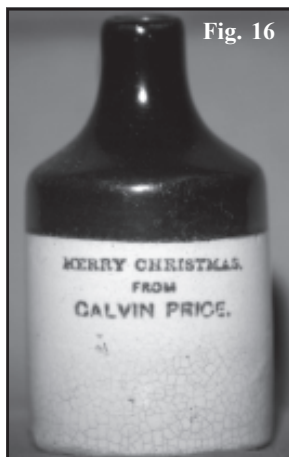


Fig. 16



Fig. 17

### Hotel Miniatures

Only a very few mini jugs exist in this category. They may have been made as souvenirs or as items placed upon the pillow or at the bedside containing spirits for a nightcap. Small glass decanters are known from a number of prominent hotels.



Figure 18

a generally affordable category for most collectors.

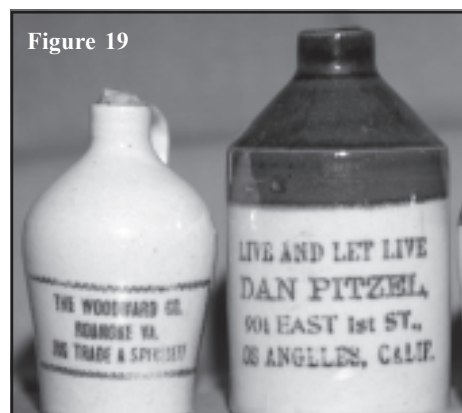


Figure 19

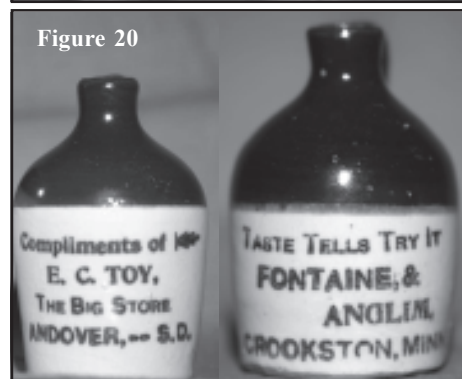


Figure 20

### Pictorial Miniature Jugs

The number of these which are available can probably be counted on your fingers and your toes - and, maybe just on your fingers. But, what a lovely collection they make and they certainly do stand out amongst all of the others which advertise in text, only.

Expect to pay a premium for jugs in this category - \$300 and up (and mostly up!) One



Fig. 21

exception to this is the jug stenciled "Old (Jug) Rye".

### Whiskey Brand/ Proprietor Jugs

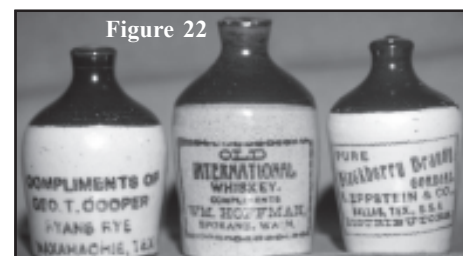


Figure 22

A personal favorite, I really enjoy the opportunity to add miniatures to my collection on which a local proprietor in a given town advertises a specific whiskey. And, it is even more interesting when you can find jugs from the same proprietor where he tempts the "sampler" with more than one brand [Figure 23].

I would estimate that 100 or more different jugs fit into this category. They tend to be a little more expensive than the standard "Compliments of - Proprietor - City - State" miniature, but remain affordable for most collectors. Patience is required, as most are fairly rare.



Figure 23



Figure 24

### Unusual Slogans

One of the things that really catches the eye of the non-collecting friends who visit and otherwise thinks of your cherished collection as 'just a bunch of little jugs' is miniatures with unusual slogans. "Jug Trade A Specialty," "Live and Let Live," "The Big Store" and "Taste Tells - Try It" are examples of these slogans stenciled or scratched onto mini jugs [Figures 19 and 20].

The prices of most of the jugs falling into this category are determined by the city and state from which they originate. Slight premiums may have to be paid, but this is

### Vinegar Mini Jugs

A significant portion of the miniature jugs produced carried vinegar, rather than whiskey. I would estimate that at least a couple of hundred of the jugs specifically advertise vinegar. Brands advertised include O L Gregory, Wallace and Gregory, Alveda, Hirsch



Fig. 25



Bros, Jones and Carr, Jones Bros, Hughes and Lyons [Figures 26 – 27].

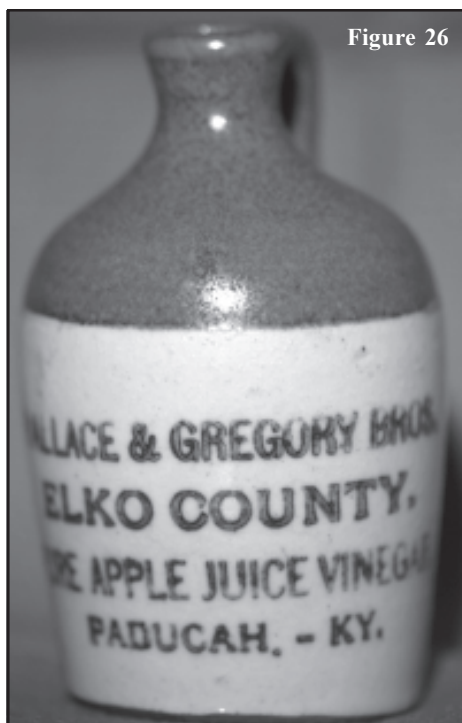


Figure 26



Figure 27

This category allows one to build a very nice collection, affordably. Examples are available in both the scratched and stenciled style and the ones which just advertise the product and don't include a local merchant tend to cost less than \$75. Adding in a merchant's name without the name of the city and state of the merchant (also known as a 'maverick' jug) bumps them into the \$100-125 range, while the addition of the city and state puts the jug in the price typically commanded for a given city and state (a wide range from inexpensive to very expensive).

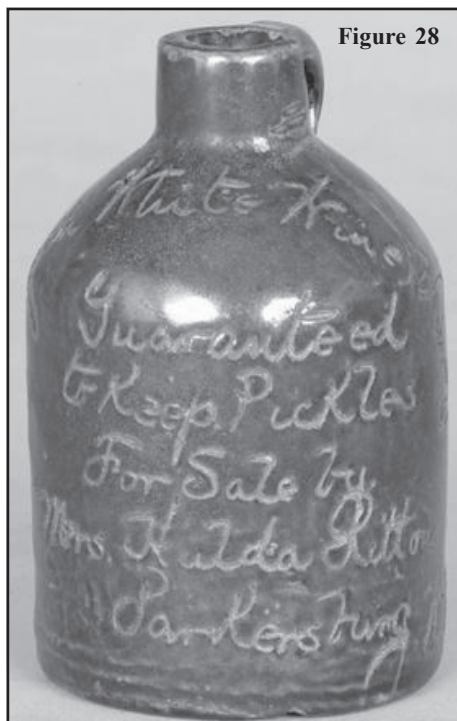


Figure 28

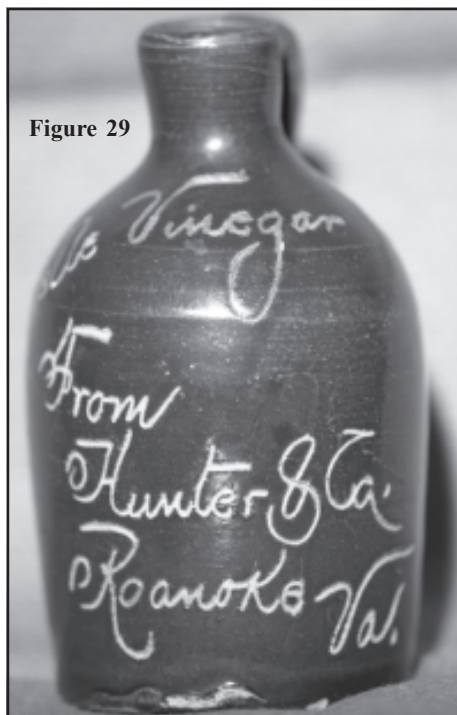


Figure 29

A representative grouping of the vinegar mini jugs on eBay this quarter included: a scratched *"Pure Country Vinegar / for Pickling / From / Geo J Butler / 21st & Portland Ave"* (a maverick which realized \$81.64), a scratched *"Compliments of / Hirsch Bros Co / Manfrs of / Cider & Vinegars / Louisville, KY"* (sporting a very pretty metallic glaze, this miniature went higher than typically, commanding \$96.01), a stenciled *"Compliments / The O L Gregory / Vinegar Co / Of St. Louis"* (with rim roughness, it received no bid at \$59.99), a scratched West Virginia

miniature *"Triple Strength White Wine Vinegar / Guaranteed / To Keep Pickles / For Sale By / Mrs Hulda Ritton / Parkersburg, WVa"* (\$250.00) [Figure 28] and a scratched Virginia mini [Figure 29] *"Blue Grass Belle Vinegar / From Hunter & Co / Roanoke, VA"* (a jug which made it to my home at \$280.00!)

### Double-Sided Advertising

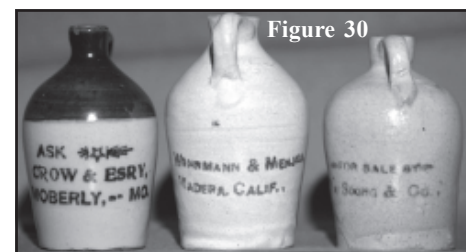


Figure 30

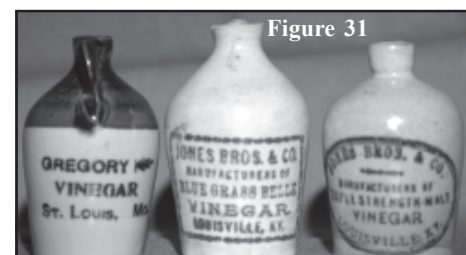


Figure 31

As illustrated by Figures 30 and 31, the vinegar jugs also come in variants which advertise on both sides. Typically, these are a little more pricey, as the product is advertised on one side and the opposite side has the merchant and location listed. A Minnesota example with OL Gregory advertising on one side and *"Compliments of / R A Anderson / Atwater, Minn"* was a steal to a lucky EBay bidder at \$82.69.

The double-sided jugs advertising whiskey brands are usually of the same design as the vinegars, with the product on one side and the proprietor or merchant listed on the reverse. In general, the whiskey samples tend to bring higher prices than the vinegar jugs from the same location/region. A fairly common Missouri miniature advertising *"Progress Rye / Jno. Bardenheimer / Wine & Liquor Co / St Louis MO"* is the only double-sided



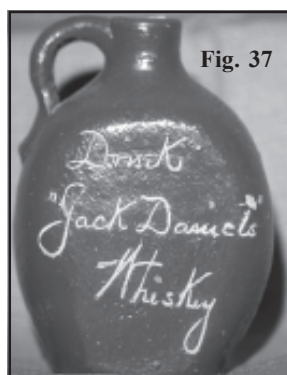
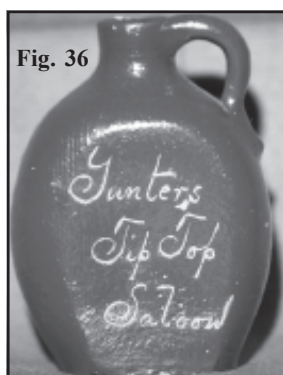
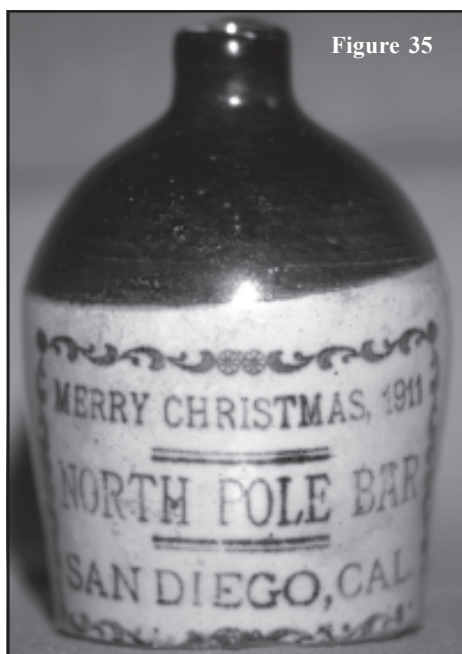
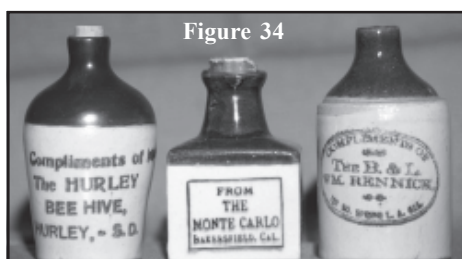
Fig. 32

Fig. 33

whiskey mini jug that I noted on EBay. It realized \$123.50, illustrating how EBay has educated the collectors regarding relative scarcity of certain jugs. Prior to EBay, this jug was selling in the \$250 range.

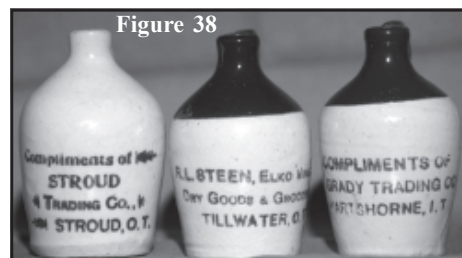
### Miniature Jugs Advertising Saloons/Bars

Since my primary collection focuses on clear pumpkinseed and coffin flasks from Western states, it will come as no surprise to you that I love those few miniature jugs which advertise a bar or saloon [Figures 34-37]. And, this feeling is shared by many of those who collect stoneware. All told, I would suspect that there are only about 100 different mini jugs which include the name of a bar or saloon. They tend to be offered infrequently and they tend to command a

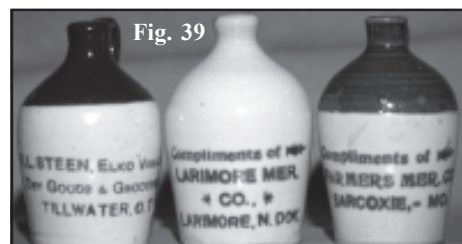


premium price. This is particularly the case if the word 'Saloon' is stenciled on or scratched into the jug.

### Grocers, Mercantile and Trading Companies



Another avenue available to collectors is to put together groupings with specific businesses advertised on them - grocers, mercantile companies, and trading companies all fit this category. Collecting in this manner brings items from a wide geographical region to ones shelves. The prices tend to be dictated by the popularity of the city, state or region from which the jugs come.

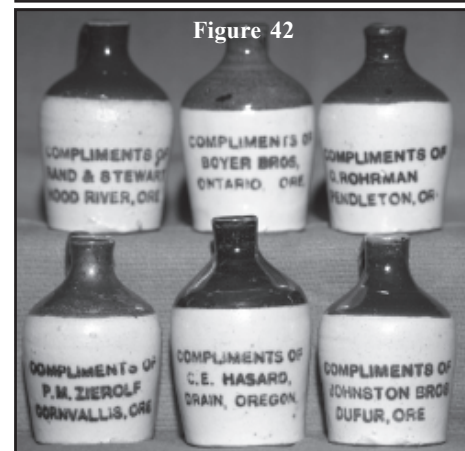


Representative EBay offerings included a scratched Indian territory mini jug "T Y Morgan / Fancy Grocer / Ardmore I T" which realized \$304.89 despite a replaced handle and top, a stenciled miniature from Nebraska "Compliments of / Citizens / Meat Market / Lexington, NEB" (\$335.00) and a jug stenciled "The Park Grocery Charles City Iowa" (\$331.66).

One of my personal favorite phrases in this category is seen on a Raton, New Mexico scratched miniature - "Irish Grocer". One cannot help but wonder what made this distinction useful.

### Collecting By Locale

Probably the most frequent distinction of what the stoneware collector will collect is dictated by where the jug is from. Some will focus on a specific region [Figure 41], while others narrow their search to a specific state [Figure 42] or even a particular town [Figure 2]. The size of the collection narrows markedly as the focus is on a smaller and smaller area.



Regional collecting is particularly prominent in regions where few merchants had jugs produced. Thus, the collectors from the West will often try to build collections from anywhere west of the Rockies. Where a considerable quantity of jugs exist, collecting by state becomes more typical. Tennessee and Kentucky, for example, each have comparably large numbers of jugs and there are a number of collectors who focus on those particular states.

Collecting from a specific city tends to be limited to those who collect from very large cities (such as St. Louis) or to those who add the mini jugs to collections of other items (e.g. bottles) from that city.

Some of the top mini jugs offered on EBay this past quarter fall in the "Compliments of - Proprietor - City - State" category, including:





Figure 43

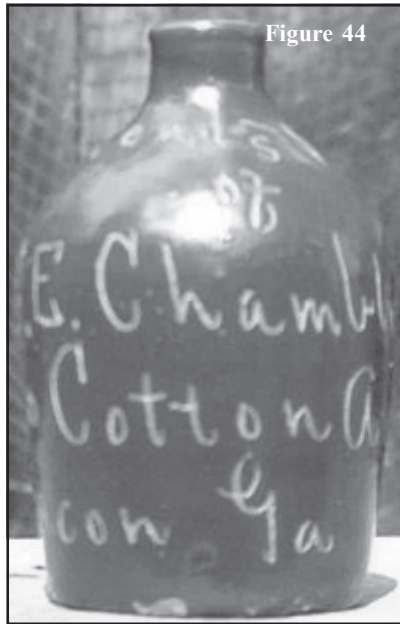


Figure 44



Figure 45

- *Compliments of / Bean Bros / Mullen Idaho* (Base chip; \$1525.00) [Figure 43]
- *Compliments / J E Chambliss / Macon GA* (scratched; \$430.00) [Figure 44]
- *Compliments of / H Brown & Son / Prairie City IA* (\$300.50) [Figure 45]
- *Compliments / John C Brady / Fine Wines & Liquors / Wytheville VA* (\$367.98) [Figure 46]
- *Compliments of / Straus / & Miller / Pine Bluff, ARK* (\$566.00) [Figure 47]
- *Compliments of / Nixon Bros / Pine Bluff, ARK* (\$383.00) [Figure 48]
- *Compliments of / N Straub & Son / Helena ARK* (\$320.00) [Figure 49]

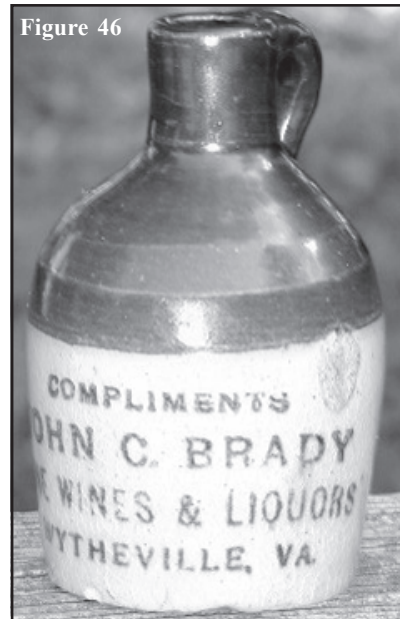


Figure 46



Figure 47

### Conclusion

Whether a field of collecting unto itself or a collecting endeavor taken in conjunction with bottle collecting, the collecting of advertising stoneware can be a fascinating endeavor. Some love the larger jugs, but for my money I'd recommend the miniatures without hesitation!

Look for an article on collecting the product mini jugs in a future column.

RVB

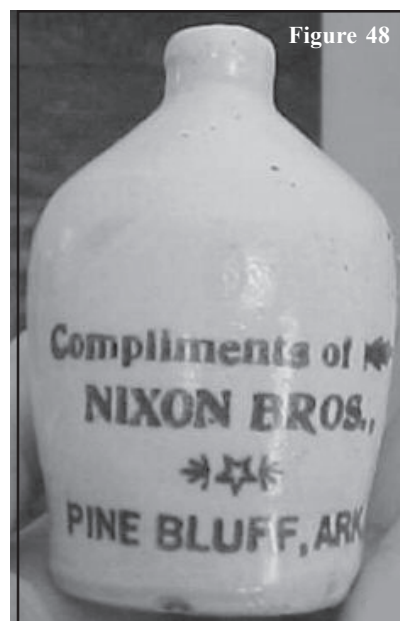


Figure 48

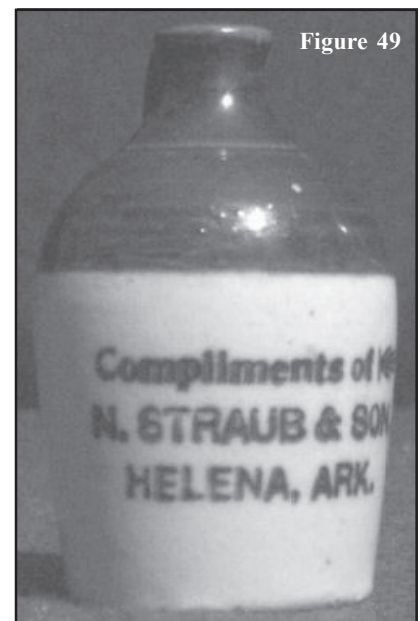


Figure 49