

A Few Ideas for New Collections

By Ed Faulkner

We have all become bottle collectors by different routes. Many dug a bottle or two and became hooked. Others became interested through a friend or came across a neat bottle in an antique shop or at a flea market. A few may have visited a bottle show for the first time and become addicted. From then on, bottles are added as they are dug or found, joining the previous finds in what becomes "the collection." At some point most collectors think about specializing to some degree or at least narrowing down their range of collecting. Sometimes this comes from a lack of display space or perhaps the subtle urging of a spouse. Even the veteran collector may get burned out in his specialty or possibly complete his category as far as he can go. To those looking for a new type of bottle to collect, I have a few suggestions.

First off, make your new collection something that really interests you and is something fun to collect. Since most people start off collecting bottles from the area

where they live, I will avoid such obvious ideas as well as the traditional beers, bitters, inks, whiskies, and sodas. Hopefully you will find something in this article that will stimulate an interest in a whole new category.

Because paper and painted labels widen the field too far for this article, I will stick to ideas that apply to embossed bottles. Most collections would be inexpensive and easy to get started. Here are some of those ideas:

1) **Names** - everyone probably picks up any bottle with their family name on it, but also consider bottles with your hometown, but not necessarily your state, on them. A great many town or city names are repeated in numerous states. A collection of some type of bottle (beer, soda, milk) each with a name starting with a letter

of the alphabet, A-Z would be a challenge. Beers and sodas in particular have a variety of interesting names on them (note the Geo. Zett blob in **Figure 1**). City names A-Z could be fun also and very challenging if you limit yourself to a particular type of bottle. Unexpected names such as California, Pa. are neat as well. I have always thought that no matter what your name, there is a bottle somewhere with that name on it. For example, the small Buffalo pharmacy bottle in **Figure 2** is embossed with the name of Dorta Macierzynski, one of the more uncommon names that I have seen.



Figure 11



Figure 3



Figure 5



Figure 7



Figure 8

2) Bottles that relate to or depict a **particular ethnic group** are interesting. I know that there are numerous collectors of Indian or Jewish related bottles. I have seen bottles that were probably American but were embossed in Russian.

3) **Animals** - there are tons of embossed animals that can be found. I am aware of bears, horses, lots of birds, wolverines, lions, elephants, snakes, deer, elk and moose. There surely are many more that I don't recall at the moment or haven't seen yet. Strangely, I don't remember seeing any cats or dogs embossed on a bottle, but that may just be my old age. **Figure 3** shows a horse head on the front (another is on the bottom) of a Hutch soda that is odd for another reason - it is embossed with the name, "Cleveland Liquor League Bottling Works Co.". What was the Cleveland Liquor League and why did they have a soda bottling works? **Figure 4** shows a real oddity from this category, also a Hutch. The cape-draped figure in the middle has what appears to be a bird nesting in his/her hair. Directly below the figure is the word "WILL." I saw this at the Mansfield show last spring and the owner was gracious enough to let me photograph it for the article. This was a Chicago bottle



Figure 4

and many bottles from there in the late 1800s have really neat embossing.

4) **Subgroups or specialties within a larger category**, such as Weiss beers, ales, cherry sodas, red inks, bed bug poisons, veterinary medicines, or bottles with one particular shape of slug plate are all interesting possibilities.

5) **Specific companies or products** may have some special connection or memory for you or your family. If some particular soda was a big favorite in your childhood then it might be fun to gather examples from that time period.

6) Collecting a **specific color** is an old favorite of many people and doesn't limit the type of bottle at all. You could even collect a specific shade or perhaps bottles with mixtures of two or more colors. This is a good one for shows because there is always something different to find in a particular color. **Figure 4** shows a small Valentine's Meat Juice that has shades of amber from

dark to almost honey. It is common but shades of amber within a bottle have always appealed to me.

7) For the ladies there are a variety of **bottled products that were aimed to make women more attractive or to cure feminine illnesses**. If you look there are lots more than just the Lydia Pinkham products, although Lydia Pinkhams could be a collection by themselves. **Figure 6** is a Risley's Philotoken, which was a "nervous antidote" and prevented miscarriages, among other things. There are a small number of bottles which have women's names embossed on them, and these would make a neat collection. I know of a couple of whisky flasks and also other types as well. For example, the Hutch in **Figure 7** is embossed, "Mrs. C. Yannes / Nuremberg, Pa."

8) **Product bottles for a specific use**. Medicines are a wide category and easy to get tired of because there are so many, but collecting treatments for one disease narrows things down enough to be manageable. Hair products are a neat area to collect because of the variety of sizes, shapes and great colors. You could start with the common open pontiled Bachelor's Hair Dye (#1 and #2) and could include the beautiful multicolored barber bottles. **Figure 8** shows what has to be one of the prettiest bottles in this category, the Ayers Hair Vigor with its distinctive peacock blue.

9) **Fifty state collections of a specific type of bottle** are popular. Hutch collections of all states can be completed and are not too expensive until you get to Alaska. The small individual pharmacy bottles or beers might be easier and less expensive.

10) A number of people collect the **products of a particular glassworks**. This can produce an interesting group of glassware of all types and colors, not just



< **Figure 1**

Figure 2 >



Figure 6

bottles. Early glassworks routinely produced exceptional bottles.

11) A collection of **different types of closures** can make an interesting display, and if you venture into fruit jar closures, the examples are endless.

12) Bottles with an **embossed date** would make a varied grouping even if you stayed away from those with a patent date on the bottom.

13) Limited space? Collect **bottles under 2" in height** or some such height restriction. There are lots of these, especially in sample sizes. There are numerous examples less than 1" tall if you want a really small collection. **Figure 9** shows a variety of tiny bottles ranging from just less than 2.5" for the cobalt blue bottle to 1" for the smallest amber on the right.

14) I'm writing this on the 4th of July so the thought of **patriotic-themed bottles** jumps to mind. There are many bottles embossed with eagles, flags, famous patriots, and even the Statue of Liberty. Given the numerous towns and cities with the name "Liberty," that would make an interesting collection. The Statue of Liberty on the Liberty Bottling Works soda in **Figure 10** is an example of a patriotic name as well as embossing.



Figure 10

15) **Error bottles** that either have misspellings, inverted letters or are just poorly formed. Rotated or inverted slug plates are cool as well. This has always been one of my favorites. You might include in this area bottles whose mold has been reused by at least partially filling in old embossing and cutting new over some or all of the previous wording. The pair of inks in **Figure 11** have several errors between them. The basic embossing is supposed to be, "J. S. Dunham / St. Louis Mo." The left hand bottle has an "H" instead of an "M" at the end of "Dunham." The right hand bottle has the "o" of "Mo" moved up to the end of "Dunham" from the second line where the "M" sits alone. This bottle also has several unintended letters visible where the mold was recut from a previous use.

16) If you want a really cheap collection of nice bottles, pick out ones which have **cracks or other damage**. If you are selective you can make an impressive display without putting out a whole lot of money. However, unless you find a similar minded collector,

getting your money back when you sell your collection someday may be a problem.

17) If you still haven't seen anything above which would appeal to you as a new collection, consider my last idea, **oddball bottles**. There are always strangely shaped or unusually embossed bottles showing up at digs, flea markets or bottle shows. These often don't fit well in a specific collection but are just fun to own and talk about. The 2.5" tall sample bottle in **Figure 12** is a nice little oddball. It is embossed, "Dr. Hands / Hours 2 To 3 P.M. / 7 To 8 P.M." It doesn't say where the good doctor may be found or what was his area of expertise, but you do know when to expect him to be there!

This article was originally aimed at the new collector, but I realized while writing it that most bottle people have a number of secondary collections and hopefully something here may inspire another fun area for the seasoned collectors as well. Either way, I hope that you find some area to collect that is both interesting and brings a grin to your face when you find an new addition.



Figure 12

Figure 9

