## A New Idea for Ink Bottles - Paper

By Ed & Lucy Faulkner

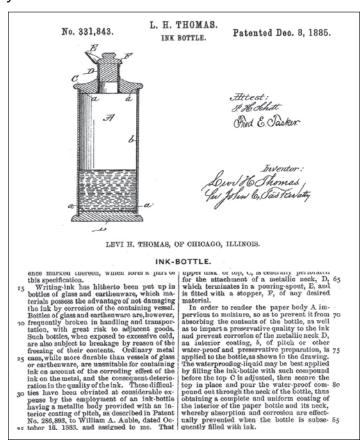
The first thing that comes to mind when thinking of ink bottles is the small and master size glass bottles. But did you know that in the 1880s and earlier, a new innovative idea for containers was a paper bottle? Levi H. Thomas of Chicago (Thomas Inks) manufactured a paper bottle that was used by his company as well as other ink companies. These bottles would not be subject to breakage like the glass bottles. But the idea for paper bottles did not start with him.

In 1877, E. Waters (druggist, ink manufacturer, and later box manufacturer) patented a method of making paper cans for petroleum and other liquids. His patent said it was an improvement in the method of making paper cans. Since his was an "improvement," it appears others may have tried this idea earlier. But this is the earliest patent we have found. The Thomas bottle is based on one by William Auble in 1883.

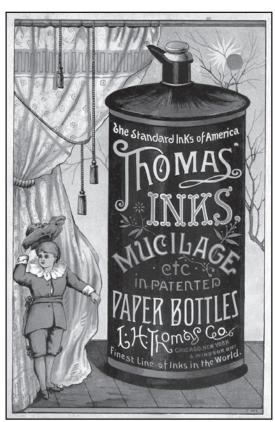


One version of Thomas ink showing the patent date.

On October 16, 1883, William A. Auble patented a metal and wood bottle. The bottle had an interior coating of pitch which prevented the ink from corroding the metal. This patent was later assigned to Thomas. However, this metal bottle proved too expensive to manufacture, and he looked for a way to reduce the cost of the bottle, thus the change to a paper bottle. The interior of the bottle would be coated with pitch or other waterproof coatings that would preserve the bottle when filled with ink. This was done by filling the bottle with this coating before adding the top. After the top was adjusted, the liquid was poured out, thus making a uniform waterproof bottle. The stopper could be made of wood and coated with pitch or paraffin, or just an ordinary cork could be used. The actual bottle (according to the patent information) would have a paper or cardboard body with a rigid bottom and top, a metallic neck and spout and interior waterproof coating. However, all we have seen are without the neck and spout; the stopper is put directly into the bottle.



## 1885 patent by Thomas



The ad pictured shows the container as depicted in the patent information, not as actually manufactured.

There were advantages to this ink bottle or can when constructed as described. The cost would be less than glass, weight when shipped would be less, thus lower shipping costs, not subject to breakage, and not as likely to freeze in cold weather. After making these changes, Levi H. Thomas of Chicago, Illinois patented his version of this bottle on December 8, 1885. Both dates are printed on the label of bottles he used for his ink. It is assumed that Thomas manufactured these containers and made them available to other companies as we know of several others who used this type container.

These bottles are scarce because most likely they were thrown away when the ink was gone and would not survive in dumps for long. The ones seen most often are the Thomas labeled bottles. More companies may have used them, but the ones shown here are the only ones the authors have seen. Also pictured is an advertising cardboard ad by Thomas. This ad is the only one we have seen for this type of bottle. No reference has been found for the length of time used, or popularity of these bottles. It seems this style would be awkward to use. With no pour spout, it would be hard to fill an inkwell, hard to know the amount of ink left in the bottle, and difficult to see how far the pen was dipped into the ink. It is our guess that these bottles were not used for a long period of time.

The Thomas bottles had at least two different labels. Others shown are Palmer's, mentioning they are the maker of Dessaure's black ink, Carter's, Sanford's



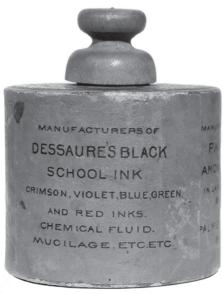
Another version of Thomas ink showing the patent date.

and Williams.' Williams was just a local Richmond, Virginia company.

The Carter, Sanford and Thomas School Ink pictures are courtesy of John Hinkel.

Ed and Lucy Faulkner, 4718 Kyloe Lane, Moseley, Va. 23120





Palmer's lists their company as maker of Dessaure's ink.



Williams, local Virginia company.







Sanford's Ink Co.

Carter's front and back.