

Photographs of Significance

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A few issues I wrote an article on the documenting of different baby bottles with original photographs taken during the actual time of use. Granted most of the photos were of interest and some were quite amusing. As you might be able to tell, I do love photography and have been doing it for over 45 years now, both professionally and as an amateur. Occasionally a photo comes along that is of great historical significance. Actually two have appeared on eBay in Nov.-Dec. of 2006. My wife, Teresa, and I bid on one and luckily won it for a mere pittance, \$22.50, a fraction of its value to us.

It is a Civil War photo of a very young child using a sucking bottle made of pewter. The sucking bottles, also referred to a "Murder Bottles," killed a large number of our babies whose mothers could not either

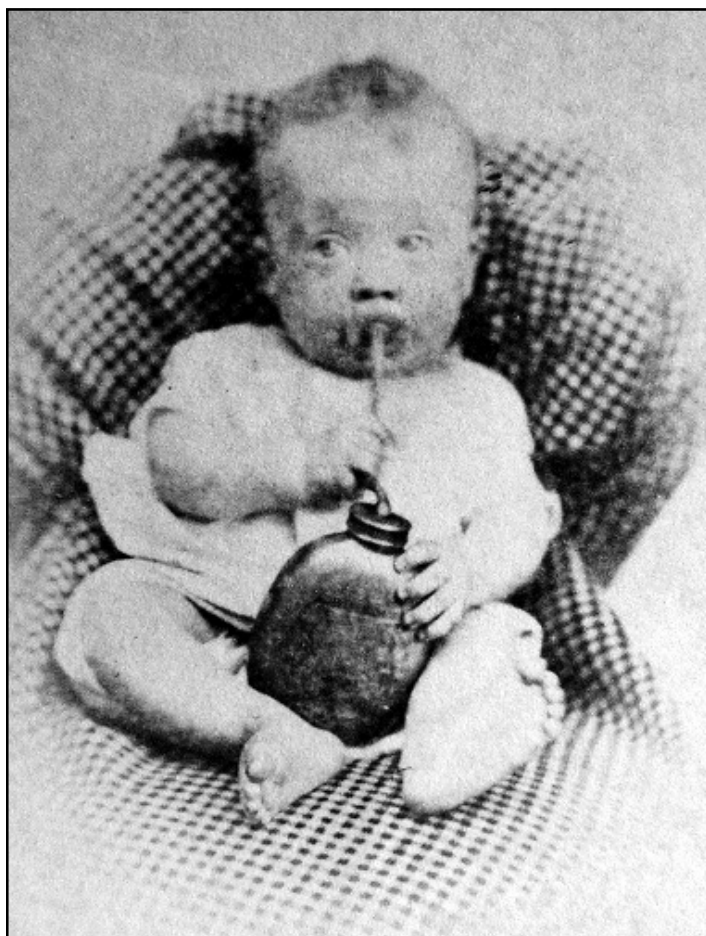
produce enough milk for their baby, or for some other reason could not breast feed the infants. The design of the feeding bottle was so that it did not have to be held by the mother during the feeding period. This concept was great and widely accepted until medical research finally caught up with its fallacies.

The basic design was that of plugging the opening of the turtle- or flask-shaped bottle with a cork. Through this cork was inserted a hose that in turn connected to a glass straw. The weight of the glass straw allowed the heavy end to settle to the lowest point of the bottle so the last drop of milk could be sucked out by the feeding infant. After the hose exited the cork, its length (from 6-20 inches) terminated in a rubber nipple and an ivory or bone disc, looking something like a pacifier. In using this

method the mother could lay the infant in a crib, on her lap, or wherever and let the baby suck milk till it was full — then continue later if still hungry. The nipple attached to the hose also substituted as a pacifier when needed.

The concept was fantastic, except for one major flaw — the interior of the hose could not be properly cleaned and sterilized. Germs and bacteria were not known about at this time and the babies were dying from unknown causes. The TV series, *Dr. Quinn Medicine Woman*, did a fantastic presentation on this exact problem, precipitated by her being jailed for treating a baby for stomach ailments which died soon after she treated it. Now, to add insult to injury, I recently heard that this type of feeding system is being reintroduced on our modern day market. I hope that the new mothers are able to truly clean and sanitize the hoses.

Enough of my rambling for the moment. Let's get back to the photograph of the baby using the pewter bottle with the sucking hose. Pewter bottles had been around since



Civil War (early 1860s) CDV (carte de vista) photo of a young infant using a sucking hose coming out of a pewter flask-shaped bottle. I love those eyes looking off to the side at some distraction (probably the mother making funny hungry gestures.)



With her striking face this Native American looks out at us and speaks to us across many decades of time. The infant's mother has probably died and this is the grandmother taking care of it during an extremely difficult period of history and survival. An long-dead anonymous photographer has here captured a moment of our cultural heritage and also shown us that the feeding of an infant could be accomplished through the white man's invention of rubber.

the 1700s but almost all of them had a stem with a knob protruding from the screw on top of the pewter bottle. Normal procedure was to wrap a cloth, chamois cloth or a pickled cow's teat around this metal teat so that the infant could slowly suck the milk through it and not be drowned by the flow. Unknowingly, though reality, this was a superior system to the later sucking hose, because the wrapped cloth was most probably actually washed and cleaned on occasion, accidentally destroying some of the bacteria. What is so unusual about this photo is that we have a crossover bottle here. It is an earlier type pewter bottle, a flask, rather than the pear shape, with the later sucking hose. The photo was taken in the early 1860s, as identified by the fine-line gold border around the edge of the card that to which the print is mounted (not shown here because I cropped in on the actual image of the infant.)

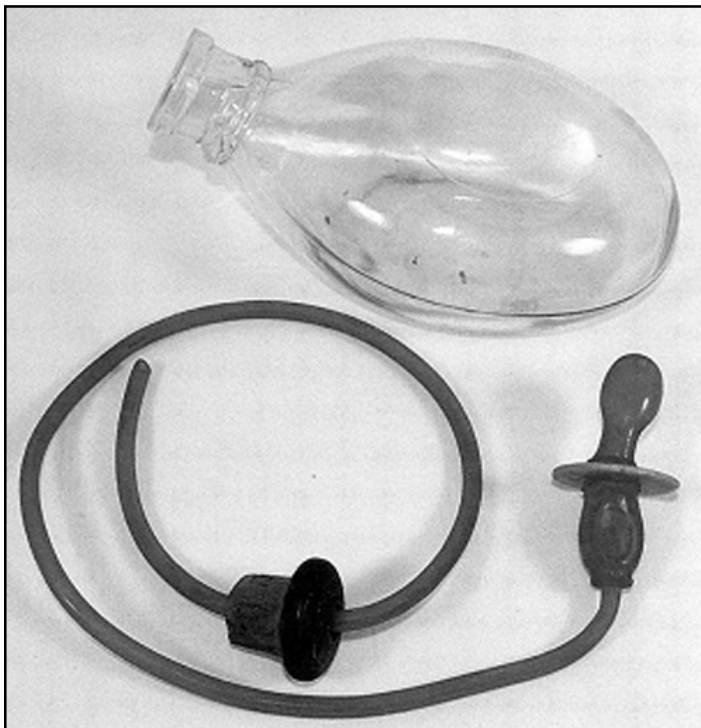
The other significant photo found on eBay is a Native American (Indian) Daguerreotype of mother and baby and it is truly important in many different regards. First is that it is of an American Indian woman (most likely the baby's

grandmother). She has a very striking face, which seems etched with suffering and she is wearing a black mourning hat and veil. If this is indeed true, the birthmother probably died from disease or from the birthing of this young infant. This woman speaks to us across the decades of time. The image came out of Independence Mo. and is a 1/9th plate (2 1/2 x 3 inches). We bid on this photo and thought we had a good chance of winning it. Just a few minutes before the auction completion we had to leave the house. When we returned we found out that we had been outbid by one increment with the final sum of \$261.72.

Yes, decades of time! This is a Daguerreotype photo, the first successful form of photography. Invented in 1839 and perfected over the next few years, it fell into disuse between 1855 and 1859 when it was replaced by the Ambrotypes. A Daguerreotype photo has emulsion coated onto a highly polished copper plate that has been silver plated in advance. The wet emulsion-covered plate is taken to the camera in the dark and exposed. Some exposures take five minutes or longer. Then the exposed plate is developed by holding

it over hot mercury fumes (highly poisonous). Those photographers had a short life span. Their replacements, the Ambrotypes (invented about 1855), had the emulsion wet-coated onto glass and when it was developed, a negative image was produced on the plate. When looked at with a black backing behind the glass plate, the image suddenly becomes positive. The exposures were also much shorter in duration, but still long. Any ideas of why you rarely see the people smiling in these old photos? Try to hold a smile for 1-5 minutes.

The bottle itself is a rectangular patent medicine with the black rubber hose, disc and nipple. I know this system was actually used during the American Civil War in the early 1860s because I have photographic proof of its use (see the CDV and description earlier in this article with the pewter bottle, hose and nipple), but how early was it introduced and actually used? — I'm not quite sure. Rubber was not successfully vulcanized until about 1840. To me, this is one of the most significant photos that I have seen in a long time.



An example of the famous "murder bottle" that was first introduced into use in the 1850s. This particular example, this FF&W Nursing Bottle is unembossed even though the blank circular slug plate is visible on the front of the bottle. It was manufactured in 1895 by Fox, Fultz & Webster, No.18 Blackstone Street, Boston Mass. as noted on the lid of the box in the photo below. Of additional interest it might be noted that the nipple section could be removed from the hose at a later time and used as a pacifier if desired. It could also serve as a pacifier, in situ, after the milk had been sucked out of the bottle by the infant.



A portion of the original lid for the box supplied with the FF&W nursing bottle illustrated above. Note that the child is reaching for the hose and you can see the glass tube inside the bottle. The box also states "Complete with tubes, nipples and brushes" and then states "Directions: Cleanse the bottle and fittings immediately after using with soda, borax or salerated water, finishing with pure water. To cleanse the tubes, remove the nipple, and insert the long tube brush (wet) wire end first."