

Let's Talk About Ink

[Fig. 2]



with Ed & Lucy Faulkner

Keep It Interesting

When we tell another bottle collector that we collect inks, it often seems that they picture the little round or square 2-ounce bottles from the early 1900's. Those bottles are part of most ink collections, surely, but they are not often what the collector likes best about his inks. Ink came in many interesting shapes and colors of bottles, sometimes in containers that would hardly be recognized as an ink. In this issue we thought that we would offer pictures of what we consider some of the more interesting inks from our collection. Some of these bottles are relatively inexpensive and sometimes not even pretty, but we find them interesting!

My wife and I have widely divergent

[Fig. 1]



ideas as to what makes an ink item interesting, so if a master ink is the topic, I (Ed) am probably writing, and if it is a small ink or an inkwell, then Lucy is likely the author. She likes small pontiled inks and colored inks of various shapes.

In the first half of the 19th century ink was still fairly scarce, so even the master inks were small, typically about 5" tall and an inch in diameter. In Fig. 1 is a typical master ink of that period, open pontiled and an olive green. This one is fairly crude and has a nice list to the side. I find them interesting because they are so old and many have survived with their label intact as well.

The Morgan's Patent dome bottle is a common bottle worth very little for the most part. The one in Fig. 2 is a version that has nearly all the embossing backward. It is the only one I have seen like this and the mold was probably remade as soon as the error was discovered. Morgan had several versions of this "bottle" and I am sure they didn't want to sell versions with such mixed up letters.

Odd containers have always been interesting to me because of the inventiveness of the ink maker or bottler. A lot of merchants bought ink in bulk and rebottled it for sale. This sometimes meant that non-standard bottles were the only thing available and had to be used. Fig. 3 shows a bottle I found at the end of the Baltimore show which is certainly atypical. It is for the Penene Corporation of New York and is what would normally be thought of as a quart vinegar cruet. I suspect that Penene sold ink in bulk with labels and that some local retailer actually came up with this neat container. Another example of this is in Fig. 4, where the National Ink Company of N.Y. used what appears to be a standard beer bottle to hold their product. Pint and quart medicine bottles were sometimes used as well.

Shape can make for an interesting item as well. In Fig. 5 the cubical shape with a side hole was a design that didn't get very far, as they are pretty scarce. The one shown is large, 3" square and 4" on the vertical side, and a small round version of the same concept can also be found. We hope to have more on this design in a later article on patents.

I am sure you are asking what is interesting about an aqua umbrella ink with partial label and a chip out of the lip (Fig. 6). This ink has always been interesting to us because it is the only label we

[Fig. 3]



have seen for Warren's Congress Ink and identifies the company as being from Wheeling, Va. (Wheeling became part of West Virginia in 1863 when W. Va. became a separate state.) All other Warren's inks we have seen were without labels.

Size can sometimes make an otherwise plain bottle interesting to me. The half-gallon unembossed bottle in Fig. 7 is of a similar shape to a couple of ink companies from that period. Its nice iron pontil is visible in the picture and the 10" tall bottle is quite delicate in appearance. In the opposite direction is the small Diamond & Onyx in Fig. 8. It is probably

[Fig. 4]



[Fig. 5]



[Fig. 6]



[Fig. 8]



[Fig. 11]



a master ink, shaped like a miniature soda bottle, and only 5.5" tall. It held 3 ounces. Diamond & Onyx was an ink company from Philadelphia. It has no connection to the Diamond Ink Company of Milwaukee.

I find it interesting when a company makes an unusual bottle in different sizes. Such is the case in Fig. 9 with the three Dovell's ink or glue bottles. Old labels show addresses for Dovell's as New York and London. Size ranges from 2-ounces to a quart and the distinctive shape makes them stand out on a shelf. Errors interest me as well, and the middle size of the trio has a reversed "N" in the embossing.

[Fig. 7]



Another trio of different sizes is the group of Paul's Writing Fluid from the Paul's Safety Bottle & Ink Company, NY, in Fig. 10. Without the label they are often taken for something other than ink. These were advertised as being useful for many purposes such as water carafes and vases after contents were used. The bottles in the picture are the 4-ounce, pint and quart sizes.

I like mostly the earliest of masters, but sometimes a label can really be attractive to me. Such is the case in Fig. 11, the label on the U.S. Acid Proof Writing Fluid. It was Frost Proof, something that I hadn't thought of as a problem, but ink freezing in bottles really was a concern. There are two nice eagles flanking the U.S. Shield. This impressive product was produced by the Anti-Fraud Ink Co of Washington, D.C.

A sander (container for sand or pounce)

[Fig. 9]



[Fig. 10]





[Fig. 12]



[Fig. 13]

was a necessary item for use with ink before blotters were common. Fine sand or pounce was spread over the written words to keep ink from smearing. The sander in the picture [Fig. 12] is unusual because it had a fitted metal top and handle to open. The bottom has handwritten on it what was probably the owner's initials and

the date 1837.

One of the most interesting items we have in our collection is an inkwell that apparently was a souvenir of the Gettysburg battlefield made not too many years after the end of the war. As seen in Fig. 13, it has a glass inkwell with a two-part brass screw top, probably circa the 1870's. The thing that makes this so neat to me is the bullet embedded in the wood opposite the bottle. A small piece of paper on the back indicates that the bullet and wood came from the Round Top area of the battlefield. I expect that when tourists started visiting the battlefield and cemetery after 1865, someone started making these inkwells for people to take home as a memento.

Teakettle inks are not quite as popular as bottles with some collectors, but we like the amethyst one shown here in Fig. 14 because of the beautiful color and unusual top that could have held stamps or used as a pen ledge. It is thought to be an American inkwell, but it has no identifying marks.

The French snail inkwell in Fig. 15 is interesting for its delicate, hand painted beauty. This inkwell probably dates to 1860-1870.

Color is the theme of the group shot in Fig. 16. Inks come in a wide variety of colors and can be collected at a relatively low cost for some types, such as cones and plain masters.



[Fig. 14]



[Fig. 15]

No matter what you find interesting about bottles, we think that you can find some area of ink collecting that will satisfy that interest. We certainly did.

NOTE: [Fig. 2] The Embossing reads: TNETAP SNAGROM / JULY 16 1867. The "J" is reversed left to right.



[Fig. 16]