



South Dakota

Bottles and Advertising Crockery

One Town's Rush to Gold

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Lead, South Dakota

It is said that gold and silver were the elements that brought civilization to western South Dakota, particularly the Black Hills. The Indians had long considered the Black Hills the home of evil spirits, a very dark and fearful place.

Even earlier, some believe that the Spanish explorer Coronado was searching for gold and got as far as present day Kansas before turning back.

In 1833, the Ezra Kind party set up camp in the hills and as the quote goes, "Got all the gold we could carry." This cryptic message was scratched on a stone (now known as the Thoen Stone) by the last survivor of that party.

The gold rush to the Black Hills brought the money responsible for the establishment of many communities - many of which are present day ghost towns. Of all the mining towns and camps established within the Black Hills, three became permanent fixtures - Lead, Deadwood, and Central City. Lead City, which later became Lead (and is pronounced 'Leed'), was the home of the

mighty Homestake Mining Company.

As Homestake mining operations increased, merchants flocked to Lead, each out-doing each other in attempt to capture the miner's dollars. And those merchants produced some of the finest bottles and advertising pieces in the state of South Dakota.

W.R. Dickinson

Two of Lead's most prominent early day businessmen were Dr. Daniel K. Dickinson and his brother W. R. Dickinson. D. K. Dickinson arrived in the Black Hills in 1877 and set up his medical practice in Lead.

Dr. Dickinson served as the head surgeon for the Homestake Mining Company and in later years served as a county surgeon for Lawrence County. His brother, W. R. Dickinson, gained fame by producing local cures (with Homestake's blessing) and became a very wealthy businessman.

In the early years, W. R. Dickinson operated a pharmacy with his business partner Frank Cornes (Dickinson & Cornes). They operated pharmacies in each of the mining towns of Central City, Lead City, and Carbonate Camp before W. R. Dickinson bought out his partner in the 1890s.

W. R. Dickinson ran a pharmacy for many years and his name is associated with three desirable embossed bottles from

the Black Hills. Pictured are three known embossed bottles from W. R. Dickinson. [See Fig. 1]

W. R. Dickinson also produced a number of different pharmacy bottles that have been dug in various areas of the Black Hills. But the three bottles above are the crown jewels from his business.

W. R. Dickinson was known as "Billy Dick". There are numerous old advertisements for other 'Dick' products, such as Dick's Toothache Drops, Dick's Corn Cure, Dick's Peptorated Beef Iron and Wine, and Dick's Benzoated Cream Lotion. As of today, there have not been any embossed bottles found bearing these strikes, but you never know, someday one might just surface.



[Fig. 2]

L. P. Jenkins

L. P. Jenkins received fame as Lead's second mayor from 1894-1898. Today, many of his pharmacy bottles deserve a place on any South Dakota collector's shelf. The emerald green pharmacy bottles [Fig. 2], as well as his ornately shaped pharmacy and paper label cure bottles were an attempt by this early pioneer to influence the buying patterns of the early day consumer.

In its heyday, Lead had more



[Fig. 1]

Left: Homestake Sarsaparilla
Middle: Homestake Cough Cure
Right: Marcoux Rheumatic Elixir

pharmacies than any other community in the Black Hills. Just like today's modern business, the early pioneer had to find ways to attractively package his product to lure sales away from the competition.

Richardson and Maillard

Lead was not without its early seller of soda. Henry Maillard established himself as one of the premiere soda distributors in the Black Hills.

His Hutchinson sodas [Fig. 3] can be dug from the extreme northern portion of the Hills well into the Southern Hills.

Maillard first established his business in Deadwood, South Dakota, but later moved it to Lead. Early day advertisements for Maillard showed him offering a Maillard's Paris Cocktail Bitters, which was sure to cure all ailments.

J. R. Richardson made his unique mark with a line of beautiful green seltzer bottles - his name elegantly etched on the glass and again engraved in the metal band around the neck. In later years he became the Coca Cola distributor in Lead. Coke bottles bearing the Lead, S.D. embossing on the bottom are not terribly rare and can still be found in thrift shops and garage sales throughout the area. [See Fig. 4]

Advertising Crockery

Over the years, more crock advertising jugs from Lead have been dug than anywhere else in the state. Due to the wealth that Homestake brought to many merchants, early day Lead was a haven

for minorities and ethnic communities, each segregated within various parts of the town.

Many advertising whiskey jugs such as those bearing stenciled 'labels' for the Cristoforo Colombo Saloon (misspelled as Christoforo) and Serasio Saloon represent this ethnic diversity.

The English also had a strong influence in early day Lead, with James Cotton one of the premier early liquor dealers. His liquor partnership with William Andrews enabled the two to attract a strong following that seemed to outlast the numerous liquor dealers that came and left Lead. [See Fig. 5]

Digging in the Lead area

Today, just as everywhere else, legal opportunities to dig these types of bottles and advertising jugs have become increasingly rare. Mining restrictions, federal access laws, and historical preservation efforts have made digging not only difficult, but nearly impossible - in some cases, illegal.

Even obtaining permission from private individuals is much more difficult than it was thirty years ago. Perseverance, however, might possibly get you access to old sites that still contain some of the premiere, perhaps even unheard of, bottles from Lead and Lead City.

Present Day Lead

On December 31, 2001, after one hundred and twenty-five years of active gold mining, the Homestake Mine ceased



[Fig. 4]
Etched Richardson
seltzer bottle

production and is now in the process of closure and reclamation.

The gold mining era in the Black Hills may be drawing to a close but the heritage, history and precious artifacts that it leaves behind will be a pleasure to study and even more exciting to discover for years to come.

[Fig.3] Three different Maillard sodas



[Fig. 5] Left: Cotton and Andrews
Right: Serasio Saloon

