



VIRTUAL MUSEUM NEWS

By Richard Siri

The FOHBC Virtual Museum has been established to display, inform, educate, and enhance the enjoyment of historical bottle and glass collecting by providing an online virtual museum experience for significant historical bottles and other items related to early glass.

The museum doors will open soon, no kidding! The FOHBC Virtual Museum will have a soft opening to bring in the New Year. What a nice way for us antique bottle collectors, our membership and the FOHBC to start 2020.

Alan DeMaison, Ferdinand Meyer V and Miguel Ruiz have been hard at work and the first two galleries, as stated before will be bitters bottles and historical flasks.

Later in the quarter, spirit bottles such as whiskey and bourbon will be ready with fruit jars and target balls following shortly thereafter. Alan has been referencing Jerry McCann's *Fruit Jar Annuals*. The 2019 edition contains 388 pages and is cross-referenced with Dick Roller's, *Standard Fruit Jar Reference*. Listing information on availability, closures and history in the glass houses that manufactured or jobbed the jars is included. We will also reference *Red Book Collectors Guide To Old Fruit Jars* by Douglas Leybourne and tap into the vast knowledge of Greg Spurgeon and his *Antique Fruit Jars* web site and *North American Glass* auction house. The information is out there, we just need to go out there and get it!

For target balls, we will reference John Pastor's *American Glass Gallery* catalogs containing the Ralph Finch target ball collection. Ralph himself will provide the history on the target balls.

The process of building the Museum is a very technical chore most of which I haven't a clue as to how it's done other than taking the photo images. Past that, Alan tunes up the images and he and Miguel populate the galleries. Ferdinand, Alan and Miguel are also developing the process that presents the Museum to FOHBC members and other collectors who will be able to access the Museum with a Day Pass or Construction Pass. You can get more information at FOHBC.org or look for our full-page Virtual Museum Soft Opening announcement this issue of *Bottles and Extras*.

Out West, Gina Pellegrini will be sharpening her skills photographing and imaging her father's great food bottle collection. Here we will work with Lou Pellegrini and reference Betty Zumwalt. Betty

earned the prestigious FOHBC Hall of Fame award in 2008. She searched and co-wrote *Spirits Bottles of the Old West* with her first husband, Bill Wilson. They later published *Western Bitters* and *19th Century Medicine in Glass* (1971). Betty also researched and published *Ketchup-Pickles-Sauces, 19th Century Food in Glass* (1980). It has become the standard for this division of bottle collecting. I think the next subject for Gina will be Gold Rush Sodas and 1860s and 1870s western sodas. The reason for that is there is history already done for them thanks to the late Peck Markota. We also have access to Jeff Wichmann and *American Bottle Auctions*. Jeff is a solid supporter of the FOHBC in many ways.

One of the major reasons for the slow growth of the Museum is that besides the bottles themselves, we want to provide the history that goes with them and that seems to be where we get slowed down. Eye candy is great but the story behind it is what holds your interest and will hopefully draw more people in to the hobby.

Going forward, we will focus on categories that have available history and that should speed up building more walls and galleries. So if you collect a category of bottles, insulators or other glass objects and want to see them in the Museum, research them so we don't have to learn your collecting area. It usually takes forty items to build a wall but it could start with less and be added to.

I asked Ferdinand to add a little copy below to explain our soft opening and why we are doing it. Obviously the full museum is not done so this is a way to open sooner.

First of all, we need to build buzz. Imagine 30 people attend our soft launch and love it. These people will tell their friends, who tell their friends. Slowly but surely, 30 people who know about our Museum becomes sixty. Sixty becomes one hundred and twenty. One hundred and twenty becomes two hundred and forty. Buzz builds, and on the grand opening day we may have a queue of visitors at our digital doors! This is the power of a successful soft launch.

Secondly, this will prepare our museum team with operational action that will test our skills, and we can assess what we need to do to improve. A soft opening gives us a chance to tweak the logistics and working mechanics of our Museum.

We also want to get feedback early. A soft launch is an ideal time to obtain constructive feedback from our guests. We will ask them what they thought about our concept, galleries, and service. With timely adjustments, we can improve the experience before our Museum grand opening!

This will also help boost FOHBC and Museum revenue. Many visitors who enjoyed the Museum experience may return later, and we're also likely get several new visitors through word of mouth advertising – all of which leads to more revenue and profits.

So, please visit our Museum. Take us for a test drive and get back to us with your comments and bottles you might like to see. Eventually, this will be a full Museum with Public Space, Galleries, Special Exhibitions, Hall of Recognition for donors, Gift Shop, Research Library and so much more. Thank you for your patience and we'll see you soon!

