

## 大青苦酒中国大复兴

## Ta Tsing Bitters - The Great Chinese Remedy

*Meigs Jackson's Design for a Bottle*

by Ferdinand Meyer V



My first Ta Tsing Bitters bottle from Ed & Kathy Gray at the 2006 Baltimore Antique Bottle Show.

When I first started collecting bottles, specifically bitters bottles, my father and stepmother would recount this story about a great and mysterious Chinaman bottle. They both seemed to drift off in some type of bliss that was infectious as much as tantalizing. What in the world were they talking about and why were they telling me?

With a little prodding, they said that they once owned this figural amazing Chinaman Bitters and that it was a clear bottle that was unfortunately sold with a group of other bitters to a New York City dealer. They apparently tried to sequester this bottle and hold it back but the dealer remembered the bottle and said it was part of the sale. I wasn't collecting bottles then so all this was Chinese to me. I was just getting familiar with the figural queens, pigs, fish, cabins, and barrels.

With some 'blind pig' investigations, as I really did not know too many collectors back then, I found out they were reminiscing about Ta Tsing Bitters which I thought was a cool name. I mean, if you ever watched the epic western television series Bonanza you not only liked big Hoss, you liked Hop Sing too who was played by Jimmy Chan, also a star in Charlie Chan films. From that moment on, I knew I had to get an example. I finally did at the Baltimore Antique Bottle Show in March 2006 when everybody's favorite, Ed Gray, walked up to me and said he heard I was looking for the Chinaman! We quickly discussed and closed a deal and I had my bottle. It was a moment I will never forget and one that makes our hobby so great. That is, obtaining something you immensely desire.



The history of Chinese-Americans or the history of ethnic Chinese in the United States includes three major waves of Chinese immigration to the United States, beginning in the 19th century. The first Chinese people of this wave arrived around 1815. Subsequent immigrants that came from the 1820s up to the late 1840s, were mainly men.

Chinese immigrants in the 19th century worked as laborers, particularly on transcontinental railroads such as the Central Pacific Railroad. They also worked as laborers in mining and suffered racial discrimination at every level of society. Industrial employers were eager for this new and cheap labor, whites were stirred to anger by the "yellow peril." Despite provisions for equal treatment of Chinese

Chinese emigration to America: sketch on board the steam-ship *Alaska*, bound for San Francisco. *Illustrated London News*, Image depicts food being served and eaten by Chinese emigrants between decks. Reprinted a month later in *Harper's Weekly*, May 20, 1876.



DESIGNS,  
Packing and Storing V.  
Bottles,  
Figures.

*Filed July 28 1868*

# MEIGS JACKSON'S DESIGN FOR BOTTLE & TRADE MARK

## No. 2960



Every Bottle has a Story  
FOHBC Virtual Museum  
Bitters Gallery  
Ta Tsing Bitters

PATENT  
MAR 24 1868

Meigs Jackson Design For Bottle & Trade Mark  
No. 2960 on March 24, 1868.



WITNESSES  
*John Gardner*  
*John Gardner*



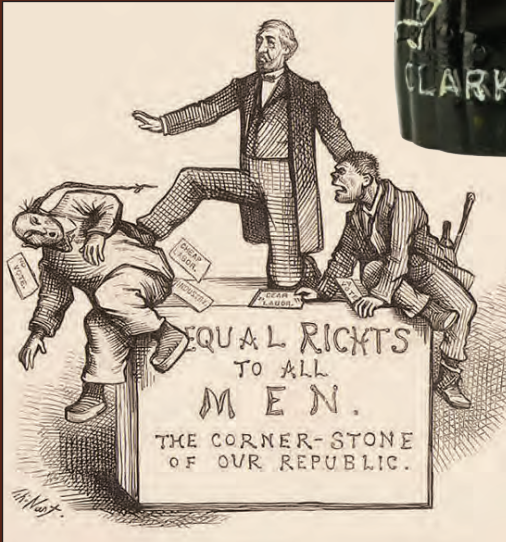
INVENTOR  
*Meigs Jackson*





*The Civilization of Blaine* by Thomas Nast for *Harper's Weekly*, March 8, 1879. In the background and elevated by a storefront step, a Chinese merchant emerges from his store. Nast assigns dignity to this merchant. Nast introduces him as a Chinese diplomat, often referred to as "John Confucius" or "John Chinaman" in Nast's cartoons.

*"Blaine Language"* by Thomas Nast, March 15, 1879 for *Harper's Weekly*. The cartoon capitalized on the popularity of a popular 1870 poem, Bret Harte's "Plain Language from Truthful James," with Nast exploiting James Blaine as Harte's fearful and deeply suspicious character.



immigrants in the 1868 Burlingame Treaty, political and labor organizations railed against immigrants of what they regarded as a degraded race and "cheap Chinese labor."

Within this historical context, it is interesting that two Clarksburg, West Virginia businessmen teamed to make and sell Ta Tsing Bitters using a figure of a Chinaman or Confucius who was traditionally considered the paragon of Chinese sages emphasizing personal and governmental morality, the correctness of social relationships, justice, kindness, and sincerity.

Meigs Jackson, whose name is on the patent drawing as the inventor, was an established attorney who most likely financed the brand while Robert S. Gardner, whose name is embossed on the bottle, had military experience as a quartermaster and was the proprietor of the bitters.

**Cartoons:**  
Referencing  
*Harper's Weekly*  
was interesting in  
preparing context  
and additional  
visuals for this  
article.

Virtual Museum  
example of a T  
a Tsing Bitters  
imaged by  
Alan DeMaison.  
Ex: John Feldmann  
collection.



Ta Tsing is most likely in reference to the Burlingame - Seward Treaty which was initiated as the Treaty of Tianjin on June 18, 1858, between the United States and the Ta-Tsing empire. This treaty was signed in July 1868 and outlined a friendly relationship between the two countries and gave both China and the United States the rights to move freely in each other's respective countries. The new treaty also established some basic principles that aimed to ease immigration restrictions and represented a Chinese effort to limit American interference in internal Chinese affairs.





*Let the Chinese Embrace Civilization, and They May Stay,  
Thomas Nast illustration for Harper's Weekly.*

The museum is fortunate to have on display an excellent example of my second Ta Tsing Bitters bottle. This is a label-only figural bitters so the word “Bitters” is not embossed on the bottle.

“The Chinaman,” as it is affectionately called, has plenty of other embossed details including Chinese text characters, the owner’s name, ‘R. S. GARDNER & CO PROPRIETORS,’ and location, ‘CLARKSBURG, W. Va.’ The figure has a long pigtail on the back of the bottle and has a Fu Manchu mustache. There is a prominent smooth embossed placard that is being held by two hands on the front of the bottle. On the patent drawing, the sign reads, “The Great Chinese Remedy and Ta Tsing Bitters” with four (4) Chinese characters. There is a label area on the reverse of the bottle. No labeled example is extant though Carlyn Ring and W. C. Ham record that a label was seen reading, “Ta Tsing Bitters The Great Chinese Remedy.” You can see all this best illustrated on the Meigs Jackson trade-mark drawing.

We can better understand Meigs Jackson and R. S. Gardner by looking at two historical references.

### DEATH OF MEIGS JACKSON

*The Weston Democrat*, April 03, 1876

The sad intelligence of the death of Meigs Jackson reached Clarksburg, on Thursday. He died at his residence in Nevada, Missouri, on Wednesday evening, 22d last, of pneumonia. Meigs Jackson was born in Clarksburg in 1843 and was the son of the late Major James M. and Mrs. Caroline Jackson.

When he grew up, he studied law and commenced the practice of his profession in Washington City, in 1864. In 1865 he returned to Clarksburg and associated himself with Hon. C. S. Lewis, and soon obtained a lucrative practice. In 1869 he removed to Nevada, Missouri, where he soon attained distinction at the bar. Shortly after he settled in Missouri, he

returned to Clarksburg and married an estimable young lady of this place, who accompanied him to his new home. In the autumn of 1874, he returned with his family to Clarksburg and remained until October 1875, when he and his family returned to Missouri. Mr. Jackson was a genial, warm-hearted gentleman who made friends of all with whom he came in contact. He had fine legal and literary attainments. His personal integrity was of the highest order. His industry was very great, and he was fast rising to distinguished eminence as a jurist.

He was the grandson of Hon. John G. Jackson, who became so distinguished in the early history of Clarksburg. He leaves a wife and one little son, and a mother, brother and sister, and numerous other relatives and friends to mourn his death. He was well known and well-beloved by all our citizens. His remains will reach Clarksburg this morning and will be interred in the family burying ground.

### ROBERT SKILES GARDNER

The necessities of war brought into service some of the best business talent and integrity in the Union. When vast forces were to be moved, or supplied with food or clothed, it required rare ability to accomplish it promptly and with the least friction. To many, the face fronting this sketch will be familiar as of the U. S. Quartermaster’s Department.

R. S. Gardner was born in Bellfontaine, Ohio, on January 18, 1839. His father, Isaac S., was a native of Pendleton county, and his Grandfather, Andrew, of Front Royal, Virginia. His education was in common schools, Geneva Hall and Ohio Wesleyan University at Delaware. He graduated from Cincinnati Law school, April 1860. June 6, 1861, he joined the Twenty-third Ohio Regiment, was promoted to Quarter-Master Sergeant, then Regimental Quarter-Master, then Captain and Assistant Quarter Master of Volunteers on Pope’s staff; Depot Quarter-Master at Clarksburg from January, ‘63, to February, ‘64, and at Harper’s Ferry from March to November, ‘64; then Assistant Chief Quarter-Master Depot of West Virginia, with the rank of Major, to June 1865; Depot Quarter-Master at Wheeling to March 12, 1868, when he was mustered out of service.

Major Gardner was also in the mercantile business at Clarksburg to April 1879, when he was made Special Agent in the United States Indian Service April 19th, 1879, to June 30, 1880, then Indian Inspector, and served to June 30, 1888, and reappointed the Special United States Indian Agent March 16, 1889. He crossed the Continent thirteen times, and inspected and visited every agency of Indians from two to six times. He possesses superior business qualifications, and in all public stations rendered faithful and efficient service.

Robert Skiles Gardner — *Prominent Men of West Virginia: Biographical Sketches, the Growth and Advancement of the State, a Compendium of Returns of Every State Officer* by George Wesley Atkinson and Alvaro Franklin Gibbens, 1890

The Carlyn Ring and W. C. Ham listing in *Bitters Bottles* is as follows:

**T 4 L ... Ta Tsing Bitters The Great Chinese Remedy**  
**// b // R. S. GARDNER & CO. / PROPRIETORS / CLARKSBURG, W. VA. //**

11 x 3 ½ x 2 ½

Figure of a Chinese man with long pigtail

Amber, Applied mouth

Design patent No. 2960 issued to Meigs Jackson of Clarksburg, West Virginia on March 24, 1868.



This is the third in a series highlighting select specimens in the Virtual Museum. See and read the gallery version online at [fobhcvirtualmuseum.org](http://fobhcvirtualmuseum.org)

