

History in a Name?

In ghost names, the past comes alive

By Jeff Mihalik

Over the years, I have read several articles that focused on bottle embossing that indicated a town or other place of origin associated with long-lost ghost towns, pre-statehood and territories, and towns and cities that have had their name change over time.

Although I do not specifically collect these types of bottles, I have always thought how cool they are. I especially like territory bottles, as they are tangible pieces of U.S. history that are now generally lost to most Americans. Several Midwest and Western states were once territories, and many bottles are out there that have preserved these names.

I lived in Texas for over fifteen years, so one of my favorites is the Republic of Texas bottle (extremely rare) which I was able to see at the Lexington National show a few years back. I think that whenever I stop digging, I will try and focus on putting together a collection of territory bottles. (I probably should have started sooner!)

For this article, I wanted to present dug bottles in my collection (about 98 percent of the bottles in my collection are dug) that indicate a historic town or state name. Since most of my digging has been in the local tri-state area, I'll present these bottles by state.

OHIO (Columbiana County)

In the long-lost ghost town category, I present a crock embossed with a 2 (for 2 gallon) enclosed in circles over J. Buck

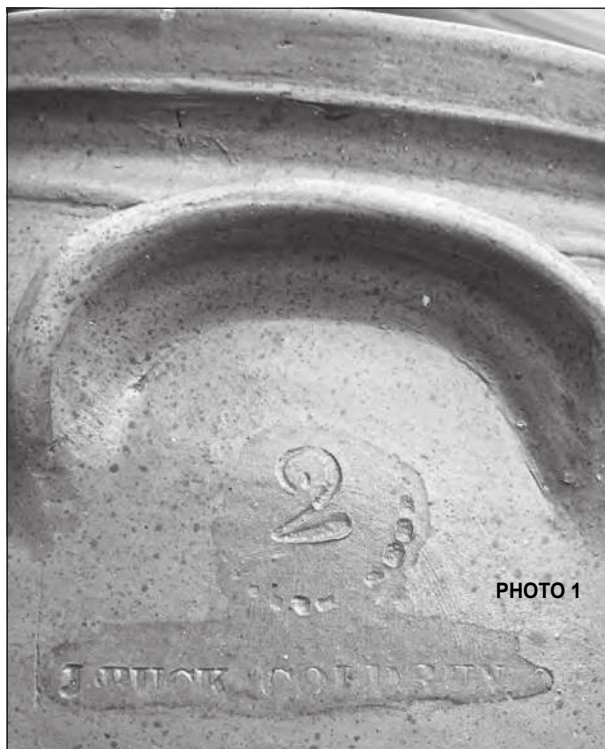


PHOTO 1

Cold Run, O. in one line (Photo 1). The embossing is washed in blue. This crock was restored from the pieces that I dug in a privy not far from Cold Run, a stream in eastern Ohio (thank you, Jim Healy!). There is no town named Cold Run now, but this area does show up on a Bing search as near the headwaters of Cold Run the stream.

During the Sandy and Beaver Canal period (1830s to 1850s) Cold Run was in close proximity to the canal, a reservoir used to supplement water during low flow, and several early canal centers such as Lisbon and Hanoverton. A man named Jonathan E. Buck is listed as a potter in



PHOTO 2

the 1850 Columbiana County census. These crocks, which are very hard to come by, are proof of his production of utilitarian stoneware during this very exciting period of time, and Cold Run as most likely a small village or community which is not known now.

Staying in this general area, I have two drugstore bottles, a JS Marquis, Druggist with fancy initials and a PM Armstrong & Co, Druggists over a mortar and pestle, both embossed "New Lisbon" Ohio (Photos 2 and 3). In 1895, the town of New Lisbon changed its name to just Lisbon. You can spend many hours researching the history of New



PHOTO 3



PHOTO 4



PHOTO 5



PHOTO 7



PHOTO 8



PHOTO 6

Lisbon and the colorful characters who called Lisbon home. New Lisbon's heyday was in the 1830s, as it was the headquarters for the Sandy and Beaver Canal and its operations.

WEST VIRGINIA (Wheeling)

Although these next items are not part of a territory that had a name changed, Wheeling is one of the very few West Virginia cities or towns that have bottles and stoneware (not to mention the china, wood, paper and metal items) that reveal its pre-statehood history.

Looking through my collection, I find one soda, three flasks, one ink, two drugstore and three stoneware beer bottles that have Wheeling embossed or stamped on them. Presented here are the three stoneware beers (Pfarr and Winterholler, Garforth and F.J. Rothacker Lager Beer) which are all stamped with Wheeling VA (Photos 4, 5 and 6). I would have more examples of Wheeling bottles, but the Wheeling collectors are some of the most persistent, passionate, and organized group out there. It's not uncommon for me to get a phone call asking if I found anything yet, even before I start to dig a new privy!

Wheeling, along with all the current state of West Virginia, was once part of Virginia. When Virginia voted to secede after the outbreak of the Civil War, the majority of West Virginians opposed the secession. Delegates met at Wheeling, and on June 11, 1861, nullified the Virginian ordinance of secession and declared "The Restored Government of Virginia," headed by Francis Pierpont. During the next few years, Confederate forces occupied a portion of West Virginia during the war, but West Virginian statehood was nonetheless approved in a referendum. A state constitution was then drawn up and in April 1863, U.S. President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the admission of West Virginia into the Union effective June 20, 1863.

Another bottle in the lost town category, is an iron pontil soda with the town name of Fulton on it (Photo 7). It was put out by C. Snider and J. Konic & Co. (the & Co. was squeezed onto the base to make it fit — you've got to love these crude early embossings!). This bottle is very rare with maybe a handful or less of these sodas known intact. The town of Fulton no longer exists, but is now a part of Wheeling and is still known to many locals as the Fulton area of Wheeling.

PENNSYLVANIA (Pittsburgh)

I have three interesting items that show how one town (a section of Pittsburgh's north side) can be referred to and/or change its name many times over the years. I believe that one of the first names was Alleghenytown. I have that name embossed on an extremely rare six-sided open pontil ink embossed Sargent's / Japan Ink / Alleghenytown (circa 1830s-'40s). It's very crude, as they just barely were able to get the last "n" on the bottle (Photo 8). My example is damaged on two panels, but it is one of the favorite inks in my collection and came out of an early north side of Pittsburgh privy.

The next item is a 1-gallon jug stenciled E.L. Cooper / Liquor Dealer / 42 Diamond St. / Allegheny City / PA / Made by T.F. Reppert Greensboro Pa (Photo 9). It does have a free-hand squiggle on the shoulder and blue wash on the lugs and at the bottom of the stenciling. I believe it to be from the 1880s era and was dug in Beaver County, Pennsylvania. Lastly, I dug six cures

out of one pit (in Washington County, Pennsylvania) that were embossed Fry's Great Rheumatic Cure / Allegheny (Photo 10). I have also had a bottle embossed N.S. (North Side), so you can really see how this particular area of Pittsburgh went by at least four different names over the years!

So, that's a wrap up of some of the very cool town names that are no longer here, town names that have changed over time, and pre-statehood names stamped, stenciled and embossed on dug bottles and stoneware in my collection. I hope you enjoyed this short look at history!



PHOTO 9



PHOTO 10