



# Fruit Jar Rambles Extra

By Tom Caniff — Photos by Deena Caniff

## MASON'S (shield) UNION JARS

The MASON'S (shield) UNION fruit jar (Figure A) is one of those unusual jars that has a closure that's worth much more than the basic jar itself. A nice quart or half-gallon jar, with an estimated value of about \$100-150 without the zinc cap, can rise in value to about \$2,000 or so with an original marked cap in good condition.

In December 1973, Dick Roller showed the ad in Figure B in his newly launched (July 1973) *FRUIT JAR NEWSLETTER*. Dick found this undated ad in the *MASON JAR CENTENNIAL* booklet, which was prepared in 1958 for the hundredth anniversary of John L. Mason's most famous patent.

Dick felt that the ad's main historical value lay in the depiction in the ad of the MASON'S IMPROVED and MASON'S (keystone) KEYSTONE jars and the mention of the "Mason's Union and Standard" jars. The first three jars were known at this time. But the MASON'S (flag) STANDARD had yet to be discovered, although a trademark for a "Mason's (flag) Standard" had been used by the Mason Mfg. Co. in 1871.

Interestingly, the ad is titled "Payne's Improved, or The Common Sense Fruit Preserver!" The canner is marked on the side "Pat. Sep. 3, 1867 Pat. Oct. 26, 1869," and the text reads, "The above cut represents an improved apparatus for Preserving by Steam, Fruits, Vegetables, &c.; an arrangement regarded by scientific judges as the most extensive for that purpose ever offered to the public. Its construction is perfectly simple and easy to manage. Six or more jars can in as many minutes be preserved, with one-fourth of the labor and fuel usually required by any other process. When perfect jars are used (those

represented in the cut, with Mason's Union and Standard, are regarded by him as among the best), and our directions followed, success is guaranteed! Price of Preservers: Single pipe, \$3; two pipes, \$4; for pipes, \$5; six pipes, \$6."

"Liberal arrangements made with the trade and good canvassers. For particulars, address Williams & Chase, 35 Park Place, N.Y. City."

In his 1983 *STANDARD FRUIT JAR REFERENCE*, Dick Roller listed Patent 918 MASON'S / shield / UNION with three styles of screw caps. 1: With the impressed shield and two vertical wrench lugs soldered on the top; unlined. 2: Stamped MASON'S UNION PAT'D FEB'Y 15 1859 \* ALWAYS SAFE \* around the shield; wrench lug pressed out from cap's outer skirt; liner; the cap having a porcelain-covered iron disk. (bottom, Figure C) And 3: Stamped MASON'S UNION \* PAT JUNE 6TH 1871 ALWAYS SAFE \* around shield, wrench lug pressed out from cap's outer skirt, liner; cap with a porcelain-covered iron disk.

John Mason's patent 115,754, for an "Improvement in Screw-Caps and Rings for Fruit Jars," registered on June 6, 1871 showed the pressed-out wrench lug found on both lined cap varieties. (Figure D)

The MASON'S UNION jars are scarce, but finding one with an original cap is a rare occurrence. Photo 1 shows a cap of style No. 1, unlettered, unlined, vertical-wrench-lug caps, with the shield in the center. Pint examples take a cap 1/8" smaller in diameter than the quarts, while the half-gallon jars take a cap 3/8" larger than the quart.

FIGURE A: MASON'S (shield) UNION quart fruit jar.

FIGURE B: Undated Payne's Improved or The Common-Sense Fruit Preserver! ad.



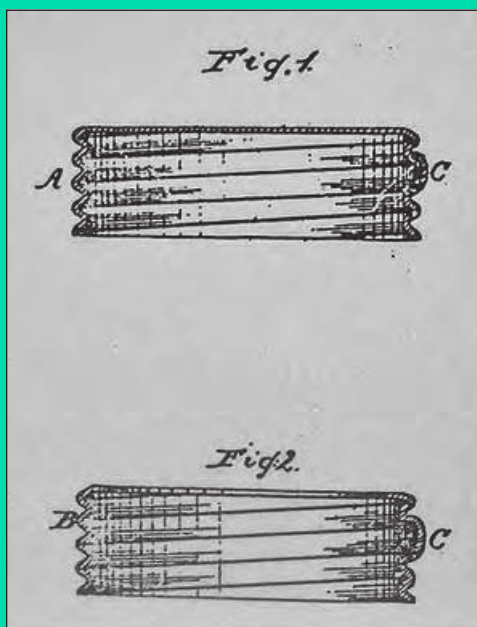
**PAYNE'S IMPROVED, or THE COMMON-SENSE  
FRUIT PRESERVER!**

The above cut represents an improved apparatus for preserving by Steam, Fruits, Vegetables, &c.; an arrangement regarded by scientific judges as the most extensive for that purpose ever offered to the public. Its construction is perfectly simple and easy to manage. Six or more jars can in as many minutes be preserved, with one-fourth of the labor and fuel usually required by any other process. The results retain all their solidity, flavor & beauty, requiring no sugar, unless preferred. And mechanical fruit-packer, the inventor, is available. When perfect jars are used these represent the cut, with Mason's Union and Standard, are regarded by him as among the best, and our directions followed, success is guaranteed! — Price of Preservers—Single pipe, \$3; two pipes, \$4; four pipes, \$5; six pipes, \$6. Liberal arrangements made with the trade and good canvassers. For particulars, address WILLIAMS & CHASE, 35 Park Place, N.Y. City.



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**Fruit Season**  
...Specialties!  
\*\*\*\*\*  
**Best Goods!**  
\*\*\*\*\*

	Per Doz.
Mason Jars, 1-2 gal.	70c
" " quarts,	53c
" " pints,	49c
Union Jars, quarts,	50c
Jelly Glasses, 1-2 pints,	20c
Mason Jar Lids,	25c
Union " "	05c
Stone " "	05c
Crystal Ceiling Wax, a lb.	05c
Quart Tin Fruit Cans, doz.	40c

**S. R. STARK,**  
MARKET ST.

The “MASON’S UNION” trademark patent 1,308 was registered June 10, 1873 by the Consolidated Fruit Jar Co. Its use was claimed back to 1870. The Consolidated Fruit Jar Co. had acquired the trademark in late 1871 when it bought the Mason Manufacturing Co., owned by John L. Mason.

The “Union Shield” on the jar is basically the same (with stars rather than “E Pluribus Unum”) as that found on the reverse of our current Lincoln head pennies, first appearing on the coins in 2010. (Figure E) The shield design is said to symbolize President Lincoln’s preservation of the United States as a single, undivided country.

“MASON’S (shield) UNION jars,” according to Roller’s *STANDARD FRUIT JAR REFERENCE*, “with ‘Metal Cap’ or ‘Porcelain Cap,’ were advertised on July 3, 1872 by J. P. Smith, Son & Co., a Pittsburgh glass jobber.”

Accurately dating the use of these MASON’S (shield) UNION jars is difficult. There were several cork-top and wax-seal UNION fruit jars marketed over the years, making identification of “Union” jars featured in ads difficult. Indeed, for years the term “Union” was used in relation to groove-ring wax-seal fruit jars in general, even when unembossed.

## LEFT COLUMN:

**FIGURE C:** MASON’S (shield) UNION zinc cap styles #1 and #2.

**FIGURE D:** John L. Mason’s patented pressed-out wrench lug for jar caps.

## RIGHT COLUMN:

**PHOTO 1:** Unlined MASON’S (shield) UNION cap without lettering.

**FIGURE E:** 2010 Lincoln penny with Union Shield.

**FIGURE F:** 1900 newspaper ad for Mason and Union fruit jars.





A letter from the Bellaire Stamping Co., a Bellaire, Ohio, glassmaker, to mold maker Charles Yockel, of Philadelphia, dated May 2, 1888, asked, "Do you happen to have any moulds in stock for the Union or Wax Top Jar. This is the Jar that takes a small tin cap with a wire and is made air tight with sealing wax."

Figure F shows an S.R. Stark ad from the July 31, 1900 *DAILY GAZETTE*, of Steubenville, Ohio, offering generic "Mason" and "Union" jars, along with trimmings and "Crystal Ceiling (sic) Wax."

Just as a point of interest, several years back, someone showed the UNION jar in **Photo 2** on the internet. I've lost track of whether the jar was for sale or just being shown, but it had a repro shield screw

cap (**Photo 3**). I don't know if the shield was molded in plastic or like material and applied or just how it was done, but it looked impressive in the photo, standing out boldly from the cap's top, flanked by the two vertical wrench lugs. It sure looks good on the jar, assuming that an original shield cap wasn't available.



**PHOTO 2 (above):** MASON'S (shield) UNION quart with repro cap.

**PHOTO 3 (left):** Reproduction MASON'S (shield) UNION zinc cap.

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