



Did I Tell You?

Did I tell you Mila, my 12 year old daughter, decided to go into debt and buy a light amethyst Dr. Tebbetts from Jim Hall? He had, I think, \$1,400 on it. Mila won a \$100 shopping spree and I told her it's better to buy one \$100 bottle than ten \$10 bottles if she wants to maintain the value she paid. Jim heard Mila and me discussing that she could go into debt and pay off the Tebbetts at her pay rate of \$20 per hour working on an investment house we are renovating. Jim said for a new collector like Mila he could do \$1,100 on it. He is an awesome person. She thought about it and decided it was worth owing 50 hours of labor for the Tebbetts. Mind you, she is not an impetuous girl. She took my phone to the doorway, looked up auctions, and determined it was a good investment. Maybe I shouldn't say she isn't ever impetuous because she was thinking about taking on another \$4k in debt for another treasure Jim has priced at \$4k.

Maybe, just maybe, we have another hard-core collector in the making. She is scuba certified and we got out only once in a very busy summer. Our best bottle was a "J. A. Gilka Berlin Schutzen Str No.9 This Bottle Not To Be Sold." (pictured above) She is considering writing an article on her collecting endeavors for the Federation.

Steven Libbey, Delafield, Wisconsin

By chance, today I went 'splodging'

G'day Ferdinand, thank you very much for doing that for us—greatly appreciated. (editor: posting event information on FOHBC.org) By the way, my great-grandfather was named Ferdinand, so I have a soft spot for your name.

By chance, today, I went 'splodging' (probing for bottles in rivers and creeks) with a mate. I'm now 77, so it's hard yakka at times

climbing under and over fallen tree trunks while at times up to your neck in swiftly flowing water and stumbling up and down steep, blackberry-infested creek banks. All for no reward today! It's getting tough to find bottles here these days. You have to do research, hope that nobody has been there before you, put in the hard yakka, and then hope for the best! Anyway, my mate has been digging in outback New South Wales for many years, and he is very good at probing holes in old abandoned mining and town sites.

It has been folklore here in bottle circles that the Cobb & Co. stagecoach drivers in the frontier days were Americans. That is reputedly the reason why quite a few antique bitters bottles and Townsend's Sarsaparillas have been found at the old hotel and change-station sites along the outback stagecoach routes. They must have been tough old blokes as it is stinkingly hot and dry in summer and perishingly cold and wet in winter, over vast distances on dirt tracks through the bush. It beats me how any of the bottles made it in one piece!



American bitters must have had a reputation for being of the best quality in the early days when colonial (i.e., Australian-made) products were often considered inferior. Accordingly, many Australian bitters were marketed under American names. They often even went to the extent of claiming to be American on their labels or being agents for American companies—all rubbish, apart from Dr. Soule's (in amber, green & black). There is still conjecture whether Soule's bottles were made here (as were the others) or made in America. I favor the latter—possibly at a west coast glass works? Ditto for our early Warner's bottles—they were definitely made in America and appear to be of similar glass to the amber Dr. Soule's Hop Bitters. Even though many of our bitters (generally semi-cabin shape) with American names are very rare, especially the pictorial coloured examples, fortunately for collectors like myself, American collectors have never raided our market. If they had, our rare bitters would have disappeared overnight as they are mostly very rare, with only a very few known of many of them! The pictorial coloured

examples include St. Louis, New York, Boston, Milwaukee, and Philadelphia. Other non-pictorials include Dr. Grant's Dandelion Bitters New York, Utica, American, and Frisco, at least.

Sorry to ramble on Ferdinand. What I am driving at is that my splodging mate has one definitely American Schnapps bottle and an unembossed 6-sided bottle that looks American to me. He dug both bottles where he dug an extremely rare damaged dark glass St. Louis Hop Bitters (flag trademark), in a now non-existent mining town in the New South Wales outback, on a stagecoach route. Unfortunately, as with many bottles from the hot, dry areas of outback New South Wales and South Australia, they are leached from mineralization in the soil. I have attached photos for you, in case they are of interest. My mate would be interested in learning of the Van Brunt's rarity. He dug two (I certainly have never seen any others), but the best one was 'bled' out of him some years ago. We would also be interested in knowing if the 6-sided bottle is definitely American, as we suspect—what a shame that it is not embossed!!! If this is not too much trouble, I'd be pleased to hear your opinions, Ferdinand. Many thanks and all the best. Cheers,

Wayne Harris, Traralgon, Victoria, Australia

[See the balance of images at FOHBC.org, Editors' Picks]

Loss of a Giant—Johnnie Fletcher



The bottle digging and collecting community has lost a giant. Johnnie Fletcher passed away on January 21 after a long battle with cancer.

Johnnie was an avid and very successful privy digger, starting in the 1980s. He dug thousands of bottles in Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Montana, Wyoming, and Oklahoma.

This may not seem exceptional, yet hundreds of these bottles were previously unknown. The discovery of new bottles that are then introduced to the collecting community is essential to the vitality of the hobby. Johnnie located more unknown Kansas bottles than anyone else, significantly contributing to the interest in Kansas bottles.

As newsletter editor for the Oklahoma Territory Bottle and Relic Club, Johnnie produced the monthly Oklahoma Territory News for 34 years and 408 issues. This newsletter has been recognized as one of the best amongst Federation clubs. The excellent digging articles and other information greatly contributed to the knowledge of and interest in bottle collecting throughout the Midwest.

Johnnie exhaustively researched and wrote the definitive bottle

reference books for Oklahoma, Kansas, Arkansas, and Missouri. These books are fully illustrated and include embossed bottles, embossed dose cups, stenciled jugs, and mini jugs. His books provide a wealth of information in a well-organized reference that greatly benefits regional collectors in particular and bottle enthusiasts in general.

Johnnie was one of the greatest goodwill ambassadors the hobby has ever had. Johnnie was extremely generous in sharing dug bottles with homeowners. These acts spread an appreciation for antique bottles and bottle collecting and provided a positive image for the hobby. Johnnie unselfishly shared his knowledge of the specialized skill of privy digging. Without a steady stream of new bottles and people capable of digging them, the hobby risks getting stale and losing participants. Johnnie personally taught me, as well as many others, how to locate and dig privies. Johnnie taught an Atchison, Kansas gentleman how to dig privies. This man, in turn, taught his grandson how to locate privies, thus ensuring another generation of bottle diggers. Johnnie regularly supported and attended bottle shows in several states as both a dealer and buyer.

Johnnie assembled several important bottle collections. His Kansas bottle collection is the largest and most complete in the country. Visiting his bottle museum was a fantastic experience.

Johnnie was inducted into the FOHBC Hall of Fame in 2009. I had the honor of introducing Johnnie at his induction ceremony during the National Antique Bottle Show in Pomona, California. The hobby has lost one of its most enthusiastic supporters, and I have lost a good friend.

Ed Stewart, Paola, Kansas

Altering Glass

Ferdinand, this subject has been discussed before, but I believe that it is definitely affecting both of our hobbies, so would like to propose something. Here is the response that I sent to the insulator community:

Fellow NIA Members and Collectors, After Dario DiMare's post yesterday, there have been several comments and opinions on the altered insulator subject. Daryl Stahler and Dario both laid out the facts. Other than sending the individuals messages, or not purchasing any of their items, there is not much to be done. The NIA nor the FOHBC can act like policemen. In regards to this particular individual, most of the glass currently listed by him on eBay is altered, but he has identified it as irradiated...insulators, bottles, jars, dishes, etc. What he is doing is legal, even though a lot of us would think of it as unethical. Mark also mentioned something important and that is this in-

Continued...



dividual's attitude and comments about "harassment and defamation." A person or an organization has to be careful of accusing someone of something, without proof of intent and illegal action.

Obviously, Dario determined, and others have also, that this individual doesn't care what he is doing to the hobbies affected by his actions. Others have told me before when I have asked them about why they alter insulators, that as long as someone will purchase their items, they will continue to alter them.

Yesterday, I did reach out to my counterpart in the FOHBC (Federation of Historical Bottle Collectors) and they have the same rules as the NIA if someone is a member of our organization and they are misrepresenting and/or altering items from our respective hobbies, the most that the National Insulator Association can do is revoke their membership with the NIA. Same goes for the FOHBC. What we can do as collectors is avoid buying from people that alter. Show hosts can institute their own rules or state that they will use the NIA's rules for fake and/or altered insulators. If dealers start asking show hosts to keep these items out of their shows, that might also help. The NIA has an Altered Insulator Display that is normally at the National show every year. There is also information on altered colors at nia.org. You can view various irradiated and heat-altered colors. The best things for collectors to do is educate themselves.

Now for those that would throw stones at the NIA's efforts for the hobby, here are a few comments and questions. First, what happened 15, 20 or more years ago doesn't really have anything to do with our efforts today. Mistakes have happened in the past and we strive to not make the same again. Benefits have improved and efforts are ongoing to promote our hobby and the NIA to the Public in general.

Second, if you are a current NIA Member and have proof that someone is doing something in an unethical or criminal way and that person is a current NIA member, then file an official complaint with the NIA's Ethics Advisor. If you don't have proof of inappropriate action or if the person is not a current NIA Member, then there is nothing that the NIA can do. If you just try to blow smoke at the hobby in general, you are not accomplishing anything that benefits.

Third, what have you contributed to the hobby and, more importantly, what have you volunteered for to support the NIA and its efforts for the hobby? Have you filled any committee or leadership position? If you don't think that the NIA is doing enough, then get involved, or stop complaining... especially if you aren't even a current NIA Member.

Fourth, in the best interest of our hobby, educate yourself and get involved. We can use your help.

Feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions, suggestions or comments. A realistic solution with a complaint is always appreciated. If you made it this far, thank you for reading.

Darryl Wagner, NIA President
50+ year Collector & Hobby Promoter

Baab's bottle library being downsized

I have reached my 87th birthday and have decided to downsize my personal library of antique bottle and pottery-related books, especially those unwanted by my local libraries. One of the first books in the discard pile is *Bottles From the Deep, Patent Medicines, Bitters and Other Bottles from the Wreck of the Steamship Republic*, by Ellen Garth, 2006. In 1865, off the Georgia coast, the sidewheeler *SS Republic* sank after being battered by a hurricane. During July of 2005, Odyssey Marine Exploration's team of searchers came across the wreck after many days of frustration. Using a remotely operated submersible dubbed Zeus, the team eventually brought not only thousands of classic 19th century bottles to the surface, but gold and silver coins, all destined for New Orleans which was hard hit economically by the occupation of Union troops during the Civil War.

Ms. Garth's vivid story of the recovery of thousands of bottles and other artifacts will entertain collectors of antique bottles and the 112-page book is loaded with color plates showing many of the finds. The first *Antique Bottle & Glass Collector* reader to contact me at riverswamper@comcast.net can own the book by sending me a check for \$7.50.

Bill Baab, Augusta, Georgia

No Repeat in 22!

Ferd, was recently going through some old cartoons and came across this one. I'm sure everyone is diligently striving not to repeat Reno 2012 (scheduling conflicts)! LOL. I loved drawing these. I may get back into it again sometime! Hope things are great! Take care and be blessed my friend!

John Akers, Charleston, West Virginia

