



The Wearin' of the Green

This spud's for you. Everybody is Irish at least once a year

By now, you've probably heard about my German Uncle Herman, but now it's time to give my Mom's side of the family its due. Yup, Mom had a good bit of Irish blood. Pop Pop's family (as I called him) and Grandma had roots in the Emerald Isle. On top of that, we shouldn't forget my wife's maiden name was McKeon. Oh, yea, there's Irish blood in the Strickhart house here, too.

Mom had several "Irish things" about her, some weird superstitions like never putting shoes on a table, because that would certainly bring bad luck. And carrying a real rabbit's foot as well as a four leaf clover wrapped in cellophane in her purse, as that would always insure good luck. Surely though, the most memorable Irish thing was dinner time and potatoes. Dad liked spuds, said they're good for putting fire in the firebox, and so there was no more encouragement needed.

Mom made potatoes with every meal; boiled, baked, mashed, french fried (especially with Friday's fish), scalloped, you name it, we had it. Mom thought ahead and always made extra taters at

dinner time, because tomorrow morning there was always hash browns to be made or some sort of left-over potatoes served with your eggs.

In our house today we still take day-old mashed potatoes, form them into a patty and fry them up, yum! Mom blended the two family lines in the summer with German Potato Salad and Marianne still makes a great version of it today.

Funny thing, I've had the opportunity to travel to Ireland, but I'm still waiting for this virus thing to get over so I can take Marianne as she's never been there, and she's way more Irish than me. My oldest son had some vacation time before he was married once, and I had just retired, so it was a great father and son deal. I was only there that one time for about two weeks, but let me tell you, it's really green, very wet, full of abandoned castles and most of all, full of truly friendly people. It's a magical place, but quite different. At no time are you more than seventy miles from a coastline, so seafood is great! Brown bread, soup and *Guinness are the staple foods in the pubs and there's a lot of sheep around, so lamb is always a good



William Allen's Congress Bitters
in emerald green.

choice. Ireland has the same approximate latitude as Moscow, so it's generally cool. It rained a lot when I visited, and there really are 29 shades of green everywhere you look. The inhabitants are very happy and open, and if you get the chance, go.



Two examples of Dr. Russell Med Co./Pepsin Calisaya Bitters.

OK, one last thing before we get to the bitters. What's green and sits in your backyard? Patty O'Furniture of course! (My apologies.)

While putting my thoughts together for writing this article, my mind traveled back some thirty years to a fellow who collected bitters and had a great fondness for green bitters in particular. I never had the opportunity to meet Michigan's Cris Batdorff, but he had one of the most astounding collections of bitters you could imagine. Among his collection were some great rarities such as the C.C. Jerome and Company National Bitters in amethyst, a yellow olive Woodgate bitters, and a cobalt blue fish.

When it came time to sell the collection, it was very clear that Cris really had a passion for the color green, especially when you looked at the cover of the auction catalog.

If you opened the catalog completely so that you could see the back cover as well as the front, there was this amazing array of terrific, rare bitters. From left to right were a Fish Bitters, a Catawba Wine Bitters, a Palmers Tonic Bitters, a Canteen Bitters, a W & C pineapple, a Kelly's Bitters, a Drakes Bitters, an HP Herb Wild Cherry Bitters, an E. Dexter Loveridge Wahoo Bitters and a Bryant's Stomach Bitters lady's leg. Some great rare bitters for sure, but the most astounding feature was that all of the bitters pictured were incredible shades of green! I have to tell you that as a young collector it just blew my mind back in 1990.

I thought it might be fun to pick a few green bitters from the shelf and have a short "Wearin' of the Green" party for St. Paddy's day. Green is not a common color on the shelves of most bitters collectors. Nowadays, we commonly see green glass in Heineken bottles, and 7-Up sodas back

in the day, but green bitters are unusual. Out of all the bitters on my shelves, I have to believe that less than ten percent are green, yet they add such a wonderful contrast to the other specimens. You really shouldn't be without some green.

To start us off, let's take a quick look at William Allen's Congress Bitters in emerald green. Although it was originally marketed in Burlington, Vermont, William Allen's Congress Bitters originated in a small town called Fort Edward, New York. Every summer I spend some time on Lake Champlain and have done so since I was a child, when my parents first took my sister and me there on yearly summer vacations. I mention this because we are directly across the lake from Burlington, Vermont, on the New York side, and about an hour or so north of Fort Edward.

William Allen's Congress Bitters is unusual in that it is more common in green than it is in amber. A good subject for a future article, the semi-cabin shape is particularly appealing. In emerald green, I think this bottle is extremely desirable and you don't see them all that often. Save your money, because a good example will cost you in excess of \$2,000 - \$3,000, but it is well worth the green.

If you've read my articles, you know that I've explained that I believe the backbone of this hobby is the regular working guy without millions of dollars in a bank account. Well, if you want to add some green to your shelf and you're on a budget, perhaps you'll consider Dr. Russell Med Co./Pepsin Calisaya Bitters. This bottle hails from Chicago and it dates to around the beginning of the 20th century. Eventually this bottle morphed into the Augauer Bitters, also from Chicago. I have included two examples of this bottle because, as you can see, this bottle is available in a variety of shades of green. You should be able to get a nice example for around \$100 and it is a great bunch of green for your green.



Ask any bitters collector to name a green bitters and they probably will say Dr. Loew's. L-111 Dr. Loew's Celebrated Stomach Bitters and Nerve Tonic / The Loew's and Sons Company / Cleveland, O is the most commonly found specimen. There are a couple variants of this bottle and even quite a few different sample-sized bottles. While you might find an amber sample-sized bottle, which I think is very rare, I can never remember seeing a full-size specimen in any other color than green.

Usually that green is sort of washed out, like yellow green, but I know there are specimens that approach a more emerald or 7-Up green tone. With its iconic fluted neck, there are other bitters that share this exact bottle style and that is a topic for a future article. Dr. Loew's are scarce and a good example will set you back quite a few bucks, but come on, it's Saint Patty's day, splurge a little for the green!

The next two participants in our Saint Paddy's day parade are tough bitters to acquire, but they add a wonderful splash of green.

With its beautiful shade of green and fantastic embossing, Dr. Birmingham's Anti Bilious Blood Purifying Bitters is one of my favorite green bottles of all time. These bottles come with and without a

pontil mark and are extremely rare. The bottle is heavy, the glass maker didn't spare any glass. I honestly know very little about who produced this bitters or where it originated. What I do know is that it's really green and really cool!

Dr. A.W. Coleman's Anti Dyspeptic And Tonic Bitters has to be the oldest participant in our parade here today, with its incredibly crude iron pontil mark the bottle has to date to the 1840s. Ring/Ham reports that Coleman was a druggist in Mobile during the late 1840s.

Both the Birmingham's and the Coleman's are extremely rare and seldom seen. When you do find one, get your checkbook ready.



ABOVE: All of the bottles mentioned in this article.

LEFT: Two Dr. Loew's examples.

In 2010, a green, crude pontilled A.W. Coleman's with minor stain sold for over \$7,400 at auction. Only about a dozen Birmingham's have shown up at the auction block over the last few years and you can expect to spend \$3,000-\$4,000 for a good one. As with all things in collecting, there's always something to shoot for.

Well, that's our "Wearin' of the Green" party for St. Paddy's Day 2021. Stay safe bottle family, and may the road rise up to meet you, may the wind be always at your back, may the sun shine warm upon your face, the rain fall soft upon your fields, and until we meet again may God hold you in the palm of his hands.

Ireland Forever - Erin Go Bragh!

To email Robert Strickhart, write to strickhartbob@aol.com

Editor's note: Wikipedia adds: "The Wearing of the Green" is an Irish street ballad lamenting the repression of supporters of the Irish Rebellion of 1798. It is to an old Irish air, and many versions of the lyric exist, the best-known being by Dion Boucicault. The song proclaims that "they are hanging men and women for the wearing of the green." The revolutionary Society of United Irishmen adopted green as its colour, and supporters wore green-coloured garments, ribbons, or cockades. In some versions, the "green" being worn is a shamrock rather than fabric.

And: *Guinness is a dark Irish dry stout that originated in the brewery of Arthur Guinness at St. James's Gate, Dublin, Ireland, in 1759.



LEFT: Dr. Birmingham's
Anti Bilious Blood
Purifying Bitters.

RIGHT: Dr. A.W. Coleman's
Anti Dyspeptic And Tonic
Bitters.