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TRAVELING THE CAPERS TRAIL

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TRAVELING THE CAPERS TRAIL

By Curtis Morse, Ph. D.

[Previous Page] A group of capers jars in the author's kitchen window.

Acknowledgments

Articles are not written in a vacuum. Relevant information must be gathered from published sources and from individuals who can assist in the research. I thank Chef Johnny Pol for sharing his impressive collection and knowledge with me, Keir Lewis of France for providing sources of information, assisting in translation and finding capers jars for my collection, Robert Biro for giving permission to include his lovely HCK capers jar and Jeff Merry for allowing me to photograph his labeled capers jar for this article. A very special thank you goes to Ms. T. McGow who provided a wealth of information about the capers jar on the far right in **Photo 1**. Finally, I thank my long-time friend, Sam Fuller, for his assistance with the photography.

The identifiers that match the photos with the collections follow. **Photos JP1–JP10** are from the collection of Johnny Pol, **Photos KL1–KL3** are from the collection of Keir Lewis, **Photo RB** is from the collection of Robert Biro, **Photo JM** is from the collection of Jeff Merry, **Photos A, B** and **C** are courtesy of Ms. T. McGow and all other **Photos** are from the collection of the author.

INTRODUCTION

Picasso once said: “A collector is one who sees what others don’t.” This is so true. For example, an uninformed person may look at an old capers jar as just a piece of junk but a knowledgeable food bottle and jar collector will see a treasure whose attributes might be beauty, form, color, condition, age, rarity, history or desirability. This article presents an in-depth analysis of capers and capers-type jars and the author is pleased to share his experiences and collection as well as examples from other collections.



When pickled, capers are used as a flavoring agent in soups, salads and delicious culinary treats such as smoked salmon and chicken piccata. They are the premature buds of the flowering capers bush and are cultivated in France and all over the Mediterranean. Pictures of the capers bush can be seen online.

This article illustrates, dates and describes a wide variety of blown capers jars and traces their evolution from 1770 to 1920. The captions for the photos give the location within the text where these photos and information about them is referenced using bold-face. Unless otherwise stated, all pontil

Antique Bottle & Glass Collector



Photo GT:
Introduction, Glass-Tipped Pontils



Photo 1: Early Period, Type 1, France c. 1770–1820. These jars were blown at the Gresigne Forest Glass Works. The jar on the left was found in New Orleans, Louisiana. The jar on the right was dug in Saco, Maine.



Photo JP1: Early Period, Type 1, France c. 1770–1820. The jar was blown at the Gresigne Forest Glass Works and was dug in San Juan Bautista, California.

marks on these jars are of the plain “glass-tipped” or disc types pictured in Van den Bossche⁵ Figures 47(1) and 48(2) on pg. 64. **Photo GT** shows the bases of the four capers-type jars in **Photos 7** right, **2, 3** and **U1** with “glass-tipped” pontils. The two jars in the middle have kick-up bases and a thin

layer of glass covers one half to three quarters of the base opening. Measurements are in inches to within one eighth of an inch and have format, *height x base diameter or width x lip diameter*. Some of the jars discussed and pictured here may not have contained capers—only an original label can confirm the

contents. A particular jar could have contained other flavorings, dried herbs, spices, condiments, olives or even truffles. However, any jar could certainly have contained capers and are referred to as a capers or capers-type jar or simply a jar.

THE TRAIL

Traveling in time along the capers trail reveals the evolution of the capers jar. The trail divides naturally into three time intervals called the Early, Middle and Late Periods. The periods are further subdivided into types which describe how the capers jar evolved in shape. Since jar dating is not an exact science, the time intervals for the types are estimates and may differ from the actual periods of production.

Furthermore, these time intervals may overlap because change happens gradually and a later type may not have replaced an earlier type entirely. For ease in drawing diagrams to show the placement of the types on the evolutionary trail, the time intervals have endpoints in tens of years. Using circa in a time interval means that five years added to or subtracted from the ends of an interval may date a type more accurately. Each jar encountered along the way is described in detail, dated and analyzed to tell its story. **Photos 1–13** coincide with **Types 1–13** and provide a visual account but not the whole story of the capers jar's evolution. Some uniquely shaped jars not on the evolutionary trail are also included.

PART I:

THE EARLY PERIOD c.1770–1830

All jars in this section are rare and the collector will have a eureka moment when a Type 1 or Type 2 jar is found. It is certain that many of these early period jars were blown at the Gresigne Forest Glass Works in southern France. The Gresigne⁶ is one of the largest oak forests in Europe making the location ideal for stoking furnaces. Glass was made at this enterprise from the mid 15th century to the mid 19th century when coal became the fuel of choice⁶. More about this glass works is found in the discussion of Types 1 and 3 jars.

Type 1: c. 1770–1820

Type 1 jars were blown in a dip mold, have pontiled bases with a kick-up, conical bodies, tapered necks and sheared lips. Van den Bossche⁵ pictures a Type 1 jar on pg. 225 that is lighter in color than the jar in **Photo JP1** and indicates that his jar and also the jar on the left in **Photo 1** because of its color were blown at the Gresigne Forest Glass Works. He further states that this form was used primarily for capers but does not provide a date. The next two paragraphs zero in on a time interval for the Early Period and Type 1 jars.

The jar on the left in **Photo 1** measures 10 x 2 x 3, is of an unusual light yellowish brown color and is very well traveled. It was found in New Orleans and does not appear to have been excavated. It was purchased by a German collector and subsequently by a French collector who sold the jar to the author. The first settlement in the Louisiana area was in 1699⁶ and New Orleans itself was settled in 1718⁶ so these dates firmly place this jar in the 18th century or later.

The jar on the right in **Photo 1** is an important and remarkable

Photo A:
Early Period,
Type 1, Homestead
where the jar on
the right in **Photo**
1 (opening spread)
was found.



Photo B:
Early Period,
Type 1, Crock lid
that protected the
jar on the right in
Photo 1 (opening
spread) was found.



Photo C:
Early Period,
Type 1, Flag
marking the spot
where the jar
on the right in
Photo 1 (opening
spread) was found.



find. It is in untouched and near-mint condition, measures 10 x 2 x 3 and is blueish in color (see also **Photo KL1**). The author considers this jar the superstar of the article for the following reasons: 1. This find determines the first year in the time interval for Type 1 jars supported by direct evidence; 2. The jar was dug in Saco, Maine which is about 125 miles from the author's home and is one of the earliest bottles or jars dug in the State; 3. The characteristic blueish color identifies the jar as being blown at the Gresigne Forest Glass Works also discussed in the section on Type 3 jars; 4. The jar was found in a shallow creek on the property of a homestead built in 1770. Since 1770 is the earliest possible year for the bluish jar to be discarded, this year is chosen as the beginning of the Early Period and Type 1 jars and is well within the period of operation for this glass works. The ending date for this period is the starting date for the Middle Period and is justified there. **Photo A**, **Photo B** and **Photo C** document where the blueish jar was found.

Type 2: c. 1780–1830

The difference between Type 2 and Type 1 jars is that the former have heavy laid-on ring lip finishes² instead of sheared lips. Generally speaking, applied-lip finishes appear later than sheared lips, thus the beginning date of 1780 for Type 2 jars. Furthermore, time periods for bottles and flasks with sheared lips and those with applied-lip finishes are known to overlap and the same is true for capers jars.

The jar in **Photo 2** is of Type 2, measures 9.5 x 1.5 x 2.5, is greenish aqua in color and the lip and upper neck have dark streaks.

The top-heavy, narrow-based jars in **Photos 1** and **2** seem totally impractical for a food container. They may have been stored upside down for stability and to keep the probable cork closure wet. It is possible that the jar in **Photo 2** was covered with a lead or alloy cap over the cork stopper and embossed for identification of the product and the producer as well as to protect the contents and prevent leakage. This is a well-known practice for early food containers with applied lips here in the United States and in Europe as well. See Zumwalt⁷ pgs. 88, 90, 112,



Photo 2: Early Period, Type 2, France c. 1780–1830. The jar was almost certainly blown at the Gresigne Forest Glass Works.

286, 429, 432 and 434 for examples of these metal caps. Wax may also have been used to seal the cork on capers jars.

Type 3: c. 1770–1820

Type 3 jars have cylindrical bodies, pontiled bases with a kick-up, tapered necks and sheared lips.

Photo 3 shows a Type 3 jar which measures 11 x 2 x 1.75, is light blue green in color and is the tallest capers jar the author has seen. Justification for Type 1 and Type 3 time intervals coinciding as well as for Type 2 and Type 4 is given in the discussion of Type 4 jars.

In the Section titled *Les Verreries de la Gresigne* (The Glassworks of the Gresigne), Bellanger¹ pg. 225 pictures a jar (the only capers jar she shows) very similar to the jar in **Photo 3**. She states that the jar was blown at the Gresigne Forest Glass Works. She further states in this section that the blueish, blue-green and gray-blue colors are due to the ash from ferns used in the glass mix. See Musée du Verre⁴ online for more beautiful glass containers blown at the Gresigne Forest Glass Works or search “Gresigne verre” online. Van den Bossche⁵ in plates 173-182 on pgs. 223-230 shows glass blown at the Gresigne Forest Glass Works in various hues of blueish, blue green and gray blue.

Bellanger¹ pg. 256 mentions capers jars. A portion of the text given in this section translates as “Capers jars are also made in the Provence (Languedoc in southern France), are of the same form as those used for olives and were used in the same manner, both for presenting the contents for sale, as well as for serving at the table.”

Type 4: c. 1780–1830

Type 4 jars are similar to Type 3 jars except the former have heavy laid-on, ring lip finishes² instead of sheared lips.

Photo 4 shows an aqua jar measuring 10.75 x 1.5 x 1.75. The jar in **Photo JP2** exhibits the characteristic yellowish-brown color of many of the jars blown at the Gresigne Forest Glass Works.



Photo 3: Early Period, Type 3, France c. 1770–1820. The jar was almost certainly blown at the Gresigne Forest Glass Works and was dug in New Orleans, Louisiana.



Photo 4t: The jar in Photo 4 before it was tumbled by the author.



Photo 4: Early Period, Type 4, France c. 1780–1830. The jar was almost certainly blown at the Gresigne Forest Glass Works and was dug in New Orleans, Louisiana.



Photo JP2: Early Period, Type 4, France c. 1780–1830. The jar was blown at the Gresigne Forest Glass Works and was dug in San Juan Bautista, California.

As previously stated, Types 1 and 3 jars are assigned the same time interval since they differ only in body shape, were made in the same manner and the author could find no information in the references to conclude otherwise and similarly for Types 2 and 4 jars. Interestingly, the two early jars in **Photos JP1** and **JP2** were dug together by Chef Johnny Pol in San Juan Bautista, California. This discovery strongly suggests considerable concurrency in the manufacture of Types 1 through 4 jars and the four corresponding time intervals reflect this. The Mission San Juan Bautista was founded in 1797⁶, a date well within the Early Period. Observe that beginning in 1780, two different body styles undergo a change in lip finish during the same time period thus creating two branches on the evolutionary trail called the Upper and Lower Branches in **Diagram 1**. Circa 1830 a new type appeared on the horizon, hence the year 1830 is chosen as the end of the Early Period and Type 4 jars although the manufacture of Types 1–4 jars could have continued for a while. **Photo KL1** shows four Early Period jars. Keir Lewis, an expert on French glass jars and bottles, calls the color of the two jars on the left in this photo “true Gresigne Blue.” Compare with the jar on the right in **Photo 1**.

PART II:

THE MIDDLE PERIOD c. 1830–1860

This section contains a wide variety of pontiled and attractive capers jars plus some uniquely shaped jars which are of this period but not on the evolutionary trail.

Types 5a and 5b: c. 1830–1850

Types 5a and 5b jars are similar to Types 3 and 4 jars but have smaller kick-ups in their pontiled bases and were blown in clear glass. **Photo 5** shows two Type 5a jars and **Photo KL2** shows a Type 5b jar.

The jar on the left in **Photo 5** measures 9.75 x 1.75 x 1.5 and is identical to an example dug by very knowledgeable collector/dealer David Beeler who kindly shared the following information: “I dug the early capers bottle from an 1830s outhouse pit in New Orleans on St. Bernard St. just outside the French Quarter. It was only three feet deep to bottom but had 1820s pearlware and sealed wines, etc.” The time



Photo KL1: Early Period, Types 1–4, France c. 1770–1830. These jars were blown at the Gresigne Forest Glass Works.



Photo 5: Middle Period, Type 5a, France c. 1830–1845. The jar on the left was dug in the south. The jar on the right was found in North Ellsworth, Maine.

period is also justified by the physical characteristics of these three jars when compared to Types 3 and 4 jars and the fact that a new body style for French jars, namely those of Type 7, appeared c.1850. The jar on the right of this photo measures 9 x 1.5 x 1.75 and similar jars have been found across the United States. The jar in **Photo KL2** has a rolled /folded-over lip finish² which normally appears later than a sheared lip but the time periods overlap since Type 5b jars may not have replaced Type 5a jars entirely as shown in **Diagram 1**.

Type 6: c. 1850–1860

Type 6 jars are similar to the cylindrical Type 5 jars but have pontiled bases with no kick-up.

Photo 6 shows the earliest American capers jar in the author's collection. It is a beautiful example being hammer whittled with numerous distinct etched swirls. The jar measures 9 x 1.75 x 1.25, has a blowpipe pontil, is aqua in color and has a rolled/folded-out lip finish². It is embossed 'W M & P / N Y' for "Wells, Miller and Provost." Zumwalt⁷ devotes pages 428-432 to the history of the company and pictures many bottles and jars including this example. Page 427 lists their products which include capers and this is undoubtedly the jar they used. John B. Wells started the business in 1837, Ebenezer Miller became a partner in 1841 and Stephen H. Provost joined the business in 1844, hence the starting year of 1850 (time intervals have endpoints in tens of years) is selected for Type 6 jars although these jars could have been in production by 1845. It is very likely that the W M & P jars of Type 6 were the first capers jars made in America. This famous countrywide business closed its doors in 1887.

Type 7: c. 1850–1860

Type 7 jars have pontiled bases with no kick-up, rectangular bodies, flat or concave sides and concave edges. This type became one standard body shape (a second is that of Type 11 jars) well into the 20th century. Note that Type 6 and Type 7 time intervals coincide as shown in **Diagram 2**.

The aqua and yellow-green jars in **Photo 7** were blown in the same mold, measure 8 x 2.25 x 1.75 and have tapered necks with rolled/folded-out lip finishes².

Embossed and pontiled capers jars are rare and besides an example identical to the jar in **Photo 7a** and recently sold in an online auction, the author in over 50 years of bottle collecting has encountered only two additional examples shown in **Photos 6** and **JP8**. The jar in **Photo 7a** measures 8 x 2 x 1.75, is yellow green in color, has a rolled/folded-out lip finish² and its original cork. It is embossed 'D & C' horizontally and pictured in Zumwalt⁷ pg. 109 but the identity of D & C is not given. A strong possibility for the "D" is DESEGAULX whose name is on the very similar but later jar in **Photo 9a** or H. DUFOUR whose name as well as DESEGAULX appears on a jar in Zumwalt⁷ pg. 124. A third possibility is A. DUFOUR.

Based on the following observations, it is almost a certainty that the "D" stands for DESEGAULX and the "C" stands for Company as does the "C" on a pontiled, barrel-shaped French prune jar



Photo KL2: Middle Period, Type 5b, France c. 1835–1850.

Mr. Lewis says these clear glass jars are rare in France so they may have been produced primarily for export.



Photo 6: [Left]
Middle Period,
Type 6, USA,
c. 1850–1860. The jar
is embossed 'W M & P
/ N Y' vertically in two
lines and was dug in
the west.



Photo 7a: [Right]
Middle Period,
Type 7, France,
c. 1850–1860.
The jar is embossed
'D & C' on the front, is
attributed to Desegaulx
& Company (see text)
and was found in
Arundel, Maine.

Photo 7: Middle Period, Type 7, France, c. 1850–1860. The jar on the left was dug in New Orleans, Louisiana. The jar on the right was dug in New York.



in the authors collection embossed A. DUFOUR & C / BOR-DEAUX whose specialties were prunes and fruits au jus (with juice). He also used CIE for Compagnie instead of CO (The "IE" and "O" are raised in smaller print) and sold capers and mustard but none of his jars are known to the author nor does his name appear in Zumwalt⁷. Furthermore, the author has pot-shaped,² pontiled mustard jars embossed 'D & CO,' 'H. D. & CO,' 'D & H D' and 'D. F. & CO.' The embossing on the capers jars mentioned above make the initials on these mustard jars easily identifiable. The above observations and the noted similarity of the jars in **Photos 7a** and **9a** plus the fact that there is no room for D & CO (even with a smaller raised "O") on the jar in **Photo 7a** point to the "D" as standing for DESEGAULX and the "C" for Company.

There are pontiled American jars of this period which, except for having concave sides and sloping shoulders, fit the description of Type 7 jars but are always referred to as spice jars.

Middle Period Uniquely Shaped Jars

There are some singular attractive and shapely pontiled capers jars which date c. 1830–1860 and therefore places them timewise on the trail.

The free or dip mold blown pontiled jar in **Photo U1** measures 7 x 2 x 2, has a skillfully applied laid-on, ring lip finish² and is aqua in color. The unusual green pontiled jar in **Photo U2** measures 9 x 2.5 x 2.5, has a square base which was added handwork for stability and a rolled/folded-out lip finish². Three of these jars were found in a French house. The jar in **Photo JP3** is similar but smaller.

Photo U3 shows two pontiled and smooth-based coffin-shaped capers jars measuring 8 x 1.5 x 1.75 and 9 x 1.75 x 2 respectively. Interestingly, the upper one quarter of the body has convex edges whereas edges of the lower three quarters are concave. These two jars were likely blown in private molds (as many capers jars were) over a 30-year period to identify the producer just by the shape of the jar.

Both jars in **Photo U4** are American, were blown in the same mold, measure 8.5 x 2 x 1.5, have blowpipe pontils, petal-shaped bases, convex fluted and slightly tapered bodies and double-ringed necks. The jar on the left is forest green in color and has a laid-on ring lip finish². The jar on the left in **Photo JP4** is deep blue green in color and a rolled/folded-out lip finish².

The jar in **Photo U5** is a very attractive jar, measures 8.25 x 2.5 x 1.5, is aqua in color, has alternating flat and concave vertical flutes that widen out towards

Photo U5: Middle Period
Uniquely Shaped Jars, France
c. 1850–1860. The jar was
dug in Old Sacramento,
California





Photo U1: Middle Period Uniquely Shaped Jars, France, c. 1840–1850. The jar was dug in New Orleans, Louisiana.



Photo U2: Middle Period Uniquely Shaped Jars, France, c. 1850–1860. The jar was found in a French home.



Photo U3: Middle Period Uniquely Shaped Jars, France c. 1850–1860. The pontiled jar on the left was found in Lawrence, Kansas. France c. 1860–1880. The smooth-based jar on the right, while not of this period, is included here for comparison purposes and was dug in New Orleans, Louisiana.



Photo JP3: Middle Period Uniquely Shaped Jars, France, c. 1850–1860. The jar was dug in the United Kingdom.



Photo U4: [Left] Middle Period Uniquely Shaped Jars, American, c. 1850–1860. The jar on the left is from a Heckler auction. The jar on the right was dug in San Francisco, California.

Photo JP4: [Right] Middle Period Uniquely Shaped Jars, American, c. 1850–1860. The jar on the left was dug in a 15 foot privy pit in Old Sacramento, California. The aqua jar on the right is also in Photo U4 after being tumbled by the author.





Photo JP5: [Above] Middle Period Uniquely Shaped Jars, France c. 1850–1860. Both jars were dug in 1969 at the Embarcadero Urban Renewal Project in San Francisco, California.

its pontiled base and a laid-on, ring lip finish².

Photo JP5 shows two similarly shaped beautiful medium green jars in different sizes.



Photo 8a: [Right] Late Period, Upper Branch, Type 8, France c. 1860–1880. The jar is embossed 'THLE ROUNARD' vertically on one side and was found in Campbell, California.

shows four medals, a crowned shield and the words MARQUE DE FABRIQUE (brand). The main label features a footed bowl in the center filled with vegetables, four medals and the words MEDLO HORNEUR (medal of honor) / MAISON (house) / JOURDAN-BRIVE / FILS AINE (eldest son) / MARSIELLE / MEDIALLE DOR (gold medal). Unfortunately, the labels are generic and do not list the contents but some jars certainly contained capers. Perhaps the top of the closure displayed a contents label. The jar appears to have been exposed to ultraviolet radiation. There are faint mold seams almost to the top of the neck.

Photo 8a shows a crudely formed jar that measures 8.25 x 1.75 x 1.75, has a partially fire-polished, burst lip and a hammer-whittled body that makes the jar display beautifully in a window. The jar is listed in Zumwalt⁷ p.354 but no information is given.

Type 9: c. 1870–1890

Type 9 jars have the same rectangular body shape as Type 8 jars but have straight necks, laid-on ring or rolled/folded-out lip finishes² instead of sheared lips. Normally, applied or rolled lip finishes appear later than sheared lips but the associated time intervals can overlap as shown in **Diagram 2**.

Photo 8: Late Period, Upper Branch, Type 8, France c. 1860–1880. Both jars are embossed 'G JOURDAN-BRIVE' and 'MARSEILLE' vertically on opposing sides and the labeled jar was found in Florida.

Part III:

THE LATE PERIOD c. 1860–1920

This section contains the blown, smooth-based jars. During the 1850s through the mid 1860s, the snap case and sabot mostly replaced the pontil rod². Beginning in 1860, the evolutionary trail has two branches called the Upper and Lower Branches in **Diagram 2**. It is the body shape of the jars that determines the branch but the time intervals are the same.

A: Upper Branch

The jars belonging to this branch have rectangular bases and straight bodies instead of tapered bodies.

Type 8: c. 1860–1880

Type 8 jars have smooth, rectangular bases, flat or concave sides, concave edges and tapered necks with burst/sheared lips which usually date before 1870² or sheared lips with rolled/folded in finishes² which are uncommon for this type.

Photo 8 shows two such jars each measuring 9 x 2 x 2. The jar on the left has a partially fire-polished lip. Surviving labeled, blown capers jars are quite scarce especially with two labels. The jar on the right has ultra fancy labels, a rolled/folded-in lip finish² and is listed in Zumwalt⁷ pg. 259 but without labels. The neck label





Photo 9: Late Period, Upper Branch, Type 9, France c. 1870–1890. Both jars are embossed vertically ‘LOUIT FRERES’ (brothers) on each side.



Photo 9a: Late Period, Upper Branch, Type 9, France c. 1870–1890. The jar is embossed ‘DEGAULX FRERES (brothers) & CO’ and ‘BORDEAUX’ vertically on opposing sides.



Photo RB: Late Period, Upper Branch, Type 9, USA? c. 1870–1890. The jar is embossed ‘HCK’ and was dug in Savannah, Georgia.

In the 19th century, the Louit Freres³ (brothers) were by far the most prominent exporters of French food-related products. In 1825, Peter Louit started a small company in Bordeaux to sell food products, in particular mustard and chocolate, and became the largest industry in southwest France. At the end of the 19th century, Louit Freres and Company had produced 2,000 tons of chocolate⁶. By the end of World War I, the company had expanded its distribution of mustards into northern Italy. Due to the scarcity of raw materials in World War II, the company abandoned the production of chocolate. In 2013, the Pucci Company acquired the Louit Freres brand. Zumwalt⁷ pgs. 285, 286 pictures many of their product jars and also two of the lead caps referred to earlier and used to cover the cork for product protection and identification. Two of the brothers’ product jars are in **Photo 9**. The taller jar measures 8 x 2.25 x 1.25, has a rolled/folded-out lip finish² and a very unusual grayish-blue color. The smaller jar measures 7 x 1.75 x 1.5, has a laid-on-ring lip finish², is medium green in color and embossed like the larger jar. These two jars are earlier than the example pictured in Zumwalt⁷ pg. 285.

The French prefer shades of green for many of their food-related products. The jar in **Photo 9a** measures 8.25 x 2 x 1.75, has a molded neck ring, a rolled/folded-out lip finish² and is green in color. This jar is listed in Zumwalt⁷ pg. 286.

The jar in **Photo RB** has a beautiful light teal blue color and a laid-on-ring lip finish². The sides are flat and the edges are concave. This jar is not listed in Zumwalt⁷. The identity of HCK is unknown.

Type 10: c. 1890–1920

Type 10 jars like Type 9 jars have a rectangular body shape with straight sides but have “standard” tooled-lip finishes². A patent for the tool used was granted to J. B. Wilson in 1884², hence the beginning year of 1890 (time intervals have endpoints in tens of years) is chosen for Type 10 jars but the tool could have been put into use by 1885.

Photo 10 shows two Type 10 jars of different sizes used by the same producer. They are medium and dark green and have concave edges. The smaller jar measures 7.75 x 1.75 x 1.5 and retains its original cork. The larger jar measures 9.25 x 2.25 x 1.75 and is quite hefty. Potin is not listed in Zumwalt⁷. Felix Potin⁶ was a Paris businessman who received vast quantities of goods from various manufacturers, repackaged and sold them in chain and branch stores. He was born in 1820 and opened his first shop in 1844. In 1870, he started a home delivery service. His business continued to expand even after his death in 1871. “By 1923, the



Photo 10: Late Period, Upper Branch, Type 10, France c. 1890–1920. Both jars are embossed vertically ‘FELIX POTIN’ and ‘PARIS’ on opposite sides and were found in France.



Photo 10a: Late Period, Upper Branch, Type 10, USA c. 1890–1920. The jar is embossed ‘JAMES P. SMITH’ and ‘NEW YORK & CHICAGO’ vertically on opposing sides.



Photo 10b: Late Period, Upper Branch, Type 10, France c. 1890–1920. The jar is embossed ‘MAILLE’ vertically and was found in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Felix Potin name counted 70 branches, 10 factories, 5 wine stores and 650 horses⁶.” His enterprise survived until 1956 in much the same form when it was bought out. In 2003, the Société Philippe Potin acquired the rights to use his name for their distribution network.

The American jar in **Photo 10a** measures 8 x 2.25 x 1.75, is quite heavy and has a double neck ring. Zumwalt⁷ pg. 384 provides information on James Percival Smith company. He started his business as an importer in 1875 and moved around a bit in New York City. In 1915, he had offices in Paris. The author found an interesting March 16, 1924 newspaper advertisement where he wanted to hire experienced female olive fillers promising good wages. He was still in business in 1933 and perhaps a little later.

The jar in **Photo 10b** has flat sides, beveled edges, measures 6 x 1.75 x 1.5, is green in color and is not listed in Zumwalt⁷. Maille⁶ is the name of a company founded by Antoine-Claude Maille in 1747, initially called La Maison (the house of) Maille, and became the official supplier to the court of Louis XV. Interestingly, his father of the same name made vinegar and became famous in the 1720s for promoting his product as a cure for the plague. The company is still in business today as a subsidiary of Unile-

ver. Maille gourmet products are probably available in your local supermarket.

B: Lower Branch

Jars belonging to this branch have rectangular bases and narrow, tapered bodies. The justification for dating the types is the same as that for the Upper Branch.

Type 11: c. 1860–1880

Type 11 jars have rectangular bases, narrow, tapered bodies with flat or concave sides, concave edges and tapered necks with sheared lips. These jars like those of Type 7 also became a standard body shape well into the 20th century.

The very attractive deep emerald green jar embossed ‘W & R’ in **Photo 11** is of Type 11, measures 8.75 x 1.75 x 1.25 and is listed in Zumwalt⁷ pg. 415 but the identity of W & R is not given. There are mustard jars embossed ‘W & R’ and ‘Wolff & Reessing, NY.’ The author has a French example without embossing of Type 11 which was dug in New Orleans, Louisiana.



Photo 11: Late Period, Lower Branch, Type 11, USA c. 1860–1880. The jar is embossed 'W & R' vertically on the front for Wolff & Reessing (see text) and was dug in Wyoming.



Photo 12: Late Period, Lower Branch, Type 12, France c. 1870–1890. Both jars have the AG monogram. The jar on the left is embossed 'DEPOSE' near the base. The jar on the right is embossed 'ALEXIS GODILLOT JEUNE' (junior) and 'BORDEAUX' vertically on opposing sides and was dug in Montana.



Photo 13: Late Period, Lower Branch, Type 13, USA c. 1890–1920. The jar is embossed 'J. P. S & CO.' vertically on the front.

Type 12: c. 1870–1890

Type 12 jars differ from Type 11 jars by having straight necks and laid-on-ring lip finishes² instead of tapered necks and sheared lips. Note that Type 11 and Type 12 jars have overlapping time periods as shown in Diagram 2 because applied lips may not have replaced sheared lips entirely.

The two interesting and attractive jars in **Photo 12** are of Type 12 and are connected by a common feature, namely both are embossed with identical 'AG' monograms. The jar on the left measures 8.5 x 1.5 x 1.25, is medium green in color and is embossed 'DEPOSE' (registered, patented). Zumwalt⁷ pg. 163 attributes the AG monogram to Alfred Gounelle and states that he held many French patents and trademarks. Possibly he held a patent (patents are usually awarded for the shape of a container) for the shape of the jar but definitely for the AG trademark. The author has several attractively designed food containers in his collection, some with AG on the face of the jar and some on the base. The jar on the right measures 9 x 2 x 1.75, is medium green and has a unique bombe-shaped neck. The jar is listed in Zumwalt⁷ pg. 255 but as ALEXIS CODILLOT. It is a little hard to explain why Alexis used a registered trademark. Perhaps Alfred allowed Alex to use

his trademark AG monogram or Alexis did so without permission which would certainly raise a red flag.

Type 13: c. 1890–1920

Type 13 jars have narrow, tapered bodies, straight necks and "standard" tooled-lip finishes². Observe that the time intervals for Type 10 and Type 13 jars coincide as shown in **Diagram 2**.

The American jar in **Photo 13** is deep green in color, measures 6.25 x 1.25 x .25, has concave sides and edges and a single neck ring. Although quite common, this jar is not listed in Zumwalt⁷.

Photo JM shows a Type 13 jar still full with its original cork. It measures 8 x 1.5 x 1.5, has a rectangular base, concave sides and concave edges, a straight neck with ring and a "standard" tooled-lip finish². The neck label reads "CAPERS NONPAREIL CONTENTS 5 OZS." The front label reads "CAPERS / IN / VINEGAR / S.S. PIERCE / CO / BOSTON." The S.S. *Pierce* trademark appears on both labels.

Samuel Stillman Pierce⁶ (1807–1881) was a grocer in Boston who founded SS Pierce & Co. in 1831. Pierce and his partner,



Photo JM: Late Period, Lower Branch, Type 13, USA. c. 1890–1920. The main label partially reads “CAPERS IN VINEGAR” and “S.S. PIERCE CO. BOSTON”

Photo U6: Late Period Uniquely Shaped Jars, USA c. 1898. The jar is embossed ‘CHARLES GULDEN / IMPORTER / N. Y. / PATENTED MARCH 29 1898’ vertically on the front in four lines. Clearly, Gulden wanted his capers to be recognizable just from the shape of the jar.



Photo KL3: Late Period Uniquely Shaped Jars, France c. 1890–1920. The jar on the left has a label which partially reads “CAPRES.”

Eldad Worcester, started out by wholesaling provisions to ships in the very crowded Boston Harbor. In 1972, the company was sold to the Seneca Foods Corporation of New York which adopted the S.S. *Pierce* name until the 1980s.

Late Period Uniquely Shaped Jars

This section shows two singular, very attractive and shapely smooth-based jars that date to this period and therefore places them timewise on the trail.

The jar in **Photo U6** is by a very well-known producer. This jar measures 8.5 x 1.75 x 1.25, has a triangular base, concave sides with beveled edges and is medium green in color. The mold seam ends about three quarters of the way up the neck. This jar is listed in Zumwalt⁷ pg. 190 and a discussion of his business is found on pgs.188-191. This jar is an exception to the period in which sheared lips usually date (prior to 1870²). By 1883, Gulden’s product line included capers⁶ and he surely had the identical jar

without embossing made at sometime before he was granted a patent.

The jar on the left in **Picture Photo KL3** has the word “CAPRES” in its label. This jar and the one on the right are typical of the attractive, well-designed and very collectible green French and American jars used for food-related products.

Additional Jars: Chef Johnny Pol Collection

The beautiful teal blue jar on the left in **Photo JP7** is of Type 7 and the olive green jar on the right is of Type 9. Both the olive and medium green jars in **Photo JP8** are of Type 7. The jar on the right of **Photo JP9** is a beautiful shade of blue and is of Type 9. The jar in **Photo JP10** is particularly outstanding. Except for the jars dug in England, France and the United Kingdom, the remaining jars in this section were dug by the Chef.



Photo JP6: [Left]
Additional Jars,
 The jar on the left is of Type 12 and is discussed in that section. France c. 1876. The jar on the right is embossed 'AG' for Alfred Gounelle, has an '1876' registry mark on its base and was dug in France.



Photo JP7: [Left]
Additional Jars
 France c. 1850–1860. The jar on the left is pontiled and was dug in Old Sacramento, California in the same 15 foot privy pit as the jar on the left in **Photo JP4**. France c. 1870–1890. The jar on the right was dug in Manchester, England.



Photo JP8: [Right]
Additional Jars
 France c. 1850–1860. Both jars are pontiled. The jar on the left was dug in 1969 at the Embarcadero Urban Renewal Project in San Francisco, California. The jar on the right is embossed L. F. for Louit Freres (brothers) and was dug at the Jack London Square Parking Lot Project in Oakland, California.



Photo JP9: [Right]
Additional Jars
 France c. 1890–1920. The jar on the left was dug in the United Kingdom. France c. 1870–1890. The jar on the right was dug in the United Kingdom.

DIAGRAM 1

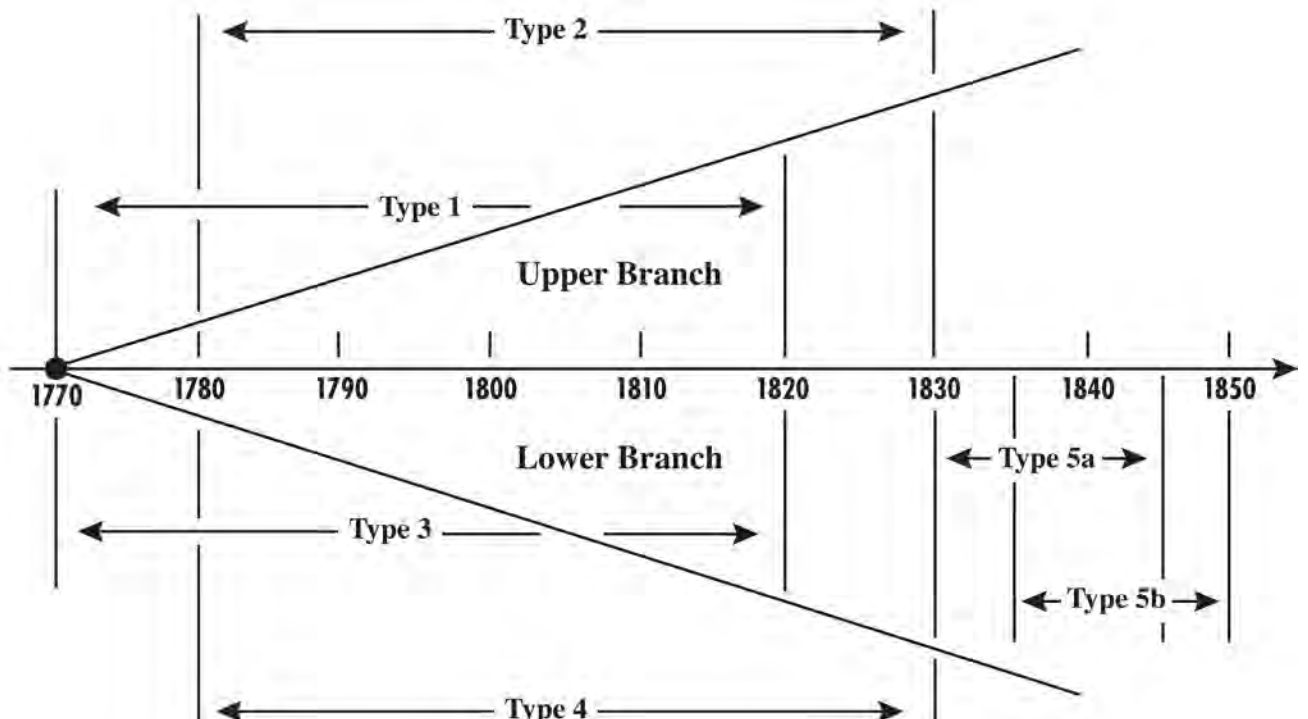


DIAGRAM 2

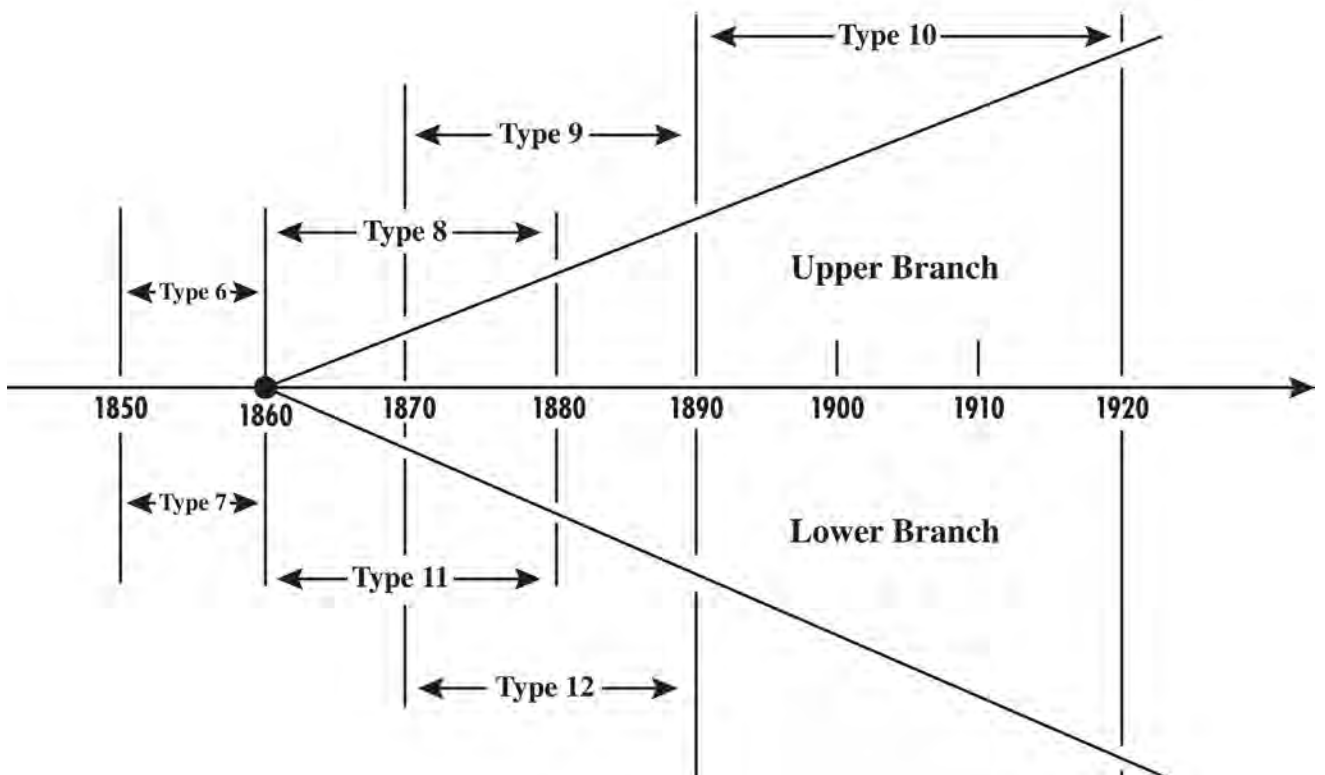




Photo JP9: Additional Jars, Italy c. 1870. The jar was dug in Oakland, California and is embossed 'B. SENISE / NAPLES' and 'B. SENISE / NAPOLI' on opposing faces.

The end of the capers trail in this article is reached. The classification of capers jars by type may be useful in determining the date of a particular jar. **Diagrams 1** and **2** show the placement of the Types 1–13 jars on the evolutionary trail. The diagonal lines highlight the Upper and Lower Branches.

Diagram 1 has two branches beginning in 1770. Commencing in 1780, the conical and cylindrical body styles undergo a change in lip finish during the same time period.

Diagram 2 has two branches starting in 1860. Commencing in 1870, the tapered and straight body styles undergo changes in lip finish during the same time periods.

Conclusion

Unlike the coveted historical flasks, many of which were lovingly passed down by our ancestors, the mundane capers jars were mostly discarded thus making the early types and even some later types a challenge to find. For about 20 years, the author had a bottle shop and tumbling service located on US Route 1 in Searsport, Maine. Many of my customers were not bottle collectors but just wanted some inexpensive, nicely shaped and colored bottles to display in a sunny window. Except for the ones I kept, mostly in **Photo G**, I sold every capers-type jar I could find. I learned that all kinds of folks like old bottles. I even sold some inexpensive bottles to be used as props by movie makers filming in the area. However, customers who were bottle collectors never paid much attention to my capers-type jars. It is hoped that this article will generate more collector interest and appreciation of these colorful and shapely jars and also the less publicized and less costly food-type bottles in general.

DIAGRAM 1: [Left Page] Evolutionary Trail, Types 1–5a and 5b.

The **Upper Branch** shows the placement of **Types 1** and **2** jars on the timeline. Note that the time intervals of **Types 1** and **2** jars partially overlap since **Type 2** jars probably did not replace **Type 1** jars entirely. The **Lower Branch** shows the placement of **Types 3** and **4** jars on the timeline. Similarly, the time intervals of **Types 3** and **4** jars partially overlap since **Type 4** jars may not have replaced **Type 3** jars entirely. As explained in the text, **Types 1** and **3** jars were likely manufactured concurrently and similarly for **Types 2** and **4** jars so the time intervals of each pair coincide. The time intervals of **Types 5a** and **5b** jars partially overlap since **Type 5b** jars probably did not replace **Type 5a** jars entirely.

DIAGRAM 2: [Left Page] Evolutionary Trail, Types 6–13.

Types 6 and **7** jars occupy the same period on the timeline. It so happens that **Type 6** jars are French whereas the **Type 7** jar is American. Beginning in 1860 the **Upper Branch** shows the placement of **Types 8–10** jars on the timeline. Note that the time intervals for **Types 8** and **9** jars partially overlap since **Type 9** jars probably did not replace **Type 8** jars entirely. The **Lower Branch** shows the placement of **Types 11–13** jars on the timeline. Similarly, the time intervals for **Types 11** and **12** jars partially overlap since **Type 12** jars may not have replaced **Types 11** jars entirely. Observe that the time intervals for **Types 8** and **11** jars coincide since they differ only in body style and were mold blown with sheared lips so these two types of jars were likely manufactured concurrently. Similarly, the time intervals for **Types 9** and **12** jars coincide since they differ only in body style and were mold blown with applied or rolled lips so these two types of jars were also likely manufactured concurrently. Starting in 1890, the timeline shows **Types 10** and **13** jars likely being manufactured concurrently since they were mold blown with "standard" lip finishes² and differ only in body style.

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