

The Fleischmann Co. Orange Bitters

By Michael Seeliger

For several years I have picked up these unusual and decorative “canteen” pottery jugs. I believe they were produced by the prominent firm The Fleischmann Co. out of New York, Cincinnati, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Buffalo and San Francisco.

Knowing the firm’s popularity, I assumed these were produced to contain one of their many popular spirits. After viewing an example with a label in John Feldmann’s Bitters collection, I realized they may all have contained Orange Bitters. Since the labeled one has a FDA endorsement, this product was advertised and sold after 1906, when Fleischmann Company was in the patent medicine business, capitalizing on flavored liquors for the medicinal trade.



Example of a paper label of The Fleischmann Co. Orange Bitters New York City. The Fleischmann Distillers, New York, Cincinnati, Baltimore, Pittsburg, Buffalo, San Francisco. Guaranteed By The Fleischmann Co. Under The Food And Drugs Act June 30th 1906. 600-606 West 34th Street.

Examples of some of The Fleischmann Co. unusual “canteen” pottery jugs.

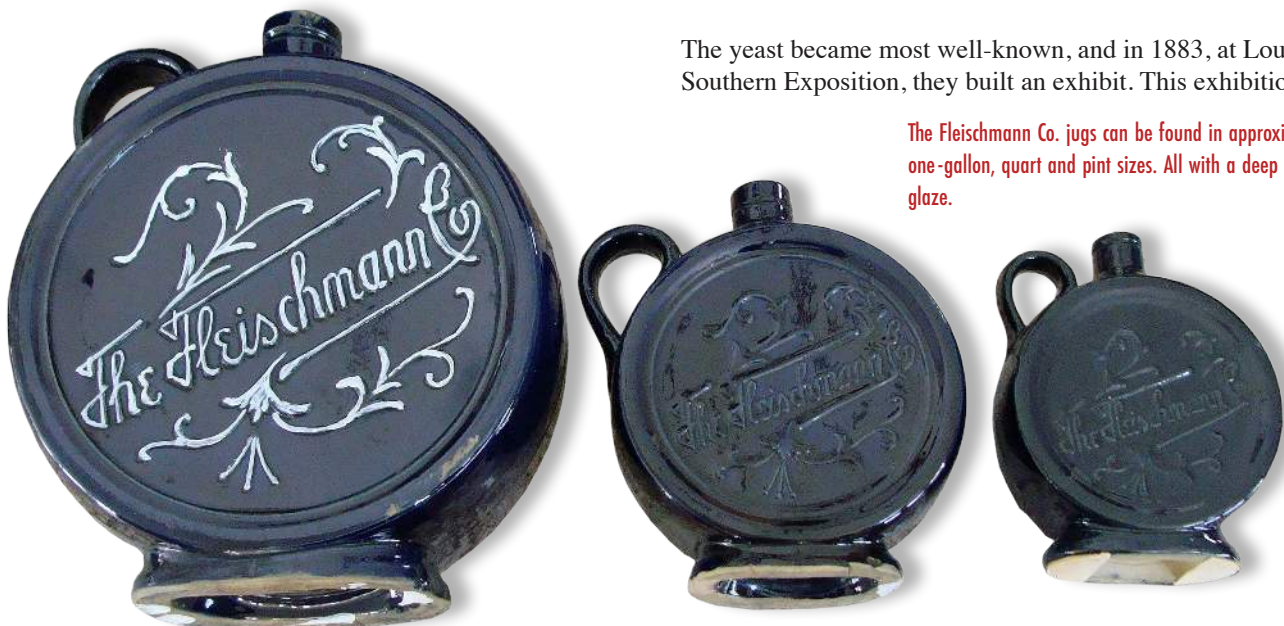


Most of us are probably familiar with Fleischmann’s Yeast “with the Yellow Label,” which has been successful since 1868 alongside Fleischmann’s thriving distilling operation.

Charles Fleischmann was born in Budapest in 1834. With his younger brother, Maximillian, born in 1846, they came together, settled in Cincinnati, Ohio, and built a distillery with James Graff at Riverside, Ohio, just west of Cincinnati. They began making gin and branched out into bourbon in 1870.

The yeast became most well-known, and in 1883, at Louisville Southern Exposition, they built an exhibit. This exhibition ran for

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four years and provided tremendous exposure to their yeast.

Doing so well financially, they opened an office in New York City in 1892 and introduced “Royalty,” a London dry gin.

Maximillian died in 1890 and Charles in 1897. The company continued to grow, and in 1900, they introduced “Congress Hall Rye.” The following year, a distillery was built in Peekskill, New York, to make the rye whiskey.



Fleischmann's Mixers Manual. The Fleischmann Co. produced quite a lot of marketing ephemera including pamphlets of recipes to promote various Fleischmann products such as various American whiskeys, gin and vodka and Black & White blended Scotch.

Fleischmann's Yeast with the Yellow Label advertising trade card. Fleischmann Co. Compressed Yeast product.



CHARLES FLEISCHMANN

In 1908, the company released an “Eastern Rye” made again from 100% rye grain. In 1910, they expanded to include a line of cordials to accompany their distilled spirits. Possibly, this is when the “Orange Bitters” was produced. Why the fired clay jugs? They had to be expensive to produce compared to glass bottles.

The jugs can be found in approximately one-gallon, quart and pint sizes. All with a deep blue glaze. Sometimes, the handle on

the jug is on the left and sometimes on the right side of the jug. The picture label that appears at the beginning of this article was reproduced from the original John Feldmann jug label. I could not determine whether they produced the clay jugs before the Orange Bitters and used these vessels due to leftover stock or if they were made specifically for the Bitters.

Prohibition shut down the distilling business, and the yeast allowed them to survive until Prohibition was repealed. They reopened the Peekskill, New York distillery, and started making gin. In 1938, they signed on as distributors of “Black & White Scotch.” In 1940, they purchased the Daviess County Distillery in Owensboro, Kentucky and began making straight Bourbon and Rye whiskeys. Fleischmann's Vodka was added in 1956. In 1962, they began production of the Vodka in Clinton, Iowa.

Fleischmann's Distilling Corporation continues today, purchased in 2009 by Sazerac, the present owners of Fleischmann's trademarks.

Resources:

Fleischmann's Yeast website.
Bourbonveachdotcom, Bourbon History
Bitters collection of John Feldmann

