

SHARDS OF WISDOM

“Heard it Through the Grapevine”



Ralph Finch, with his little hand, tries to go back in time

Chapter 1 – Watch cases tick on

So, in early January, an interesting—and somewhat common—trade card was offered on eBay. And despite having owned at least a dozen of these things in the past, I wanted another!

See, true collectors don’t know the meaning of the term “enough’s enough.” A few of us, if told by a doctor that we will die by “next Monday,” will realize that we will have just enough time to attend a great auction scheduled for Saturday. If my coffin is being carried to the cemetery, I just hope it doesn’t pass an antique shop; then, for sure, I’ll know I’m being punished for a minor faux pas...or two.

The subject at hand? A trade card for “Keystone Improved Silver Watch Cases” so strong that you could use it to launch a target ball. (It sold for a reasonable \$16.89.) The Keystone firm’s claim was for an Improved Silver Watch Case offered by jeweler W. T. Sargent in Henniker, N.H.



Watch this: A great (and common) trade card illustration, but still attractive after all these years. - image Janet Finch

I wrote to the seller: “Amazing! I am a former collector of Target Balls and, at one time, owned about 12 different examples of that card. I need it to illustrate a story about them I wrote years ago.” (Back then, when I amassed 250 different target balls, I also suffered the compulsion to acquire anything related to target balls.)

The seller, Mary, in Pittsford, N.Y., replied: “My late father-in-law, Robert Green, wrote a book called *Jewelers Trade Cards*. The card you purchased is pictured in the book—I have many more Keystone cards listed in my store at this link” which she provided.

I found a listing for the book, which noted: “*1800 Jewelers Trade Cards 1800-1900 form the source material for the most comprehensive compendium of information concerning one of America’s earliest and most effective forms of advertising.*”

These cards, many rare and some unique, were selected for their striking lithographic color, unusual designs, or historical significance.

“The finest lithographers are Prang, Ketterlinus, Donaldson and Currier and Ives. Such cards were a primary advertising vehicle for a broad range of products in the infancy of American industrial expansion. The text explains their history and importance in early advertising art and gives data, hitherto unpublished, concerning the whereabouts of thousands of artisans, jewelers and the trade during the 19th century, especially the period after the Civil War.

“The soul of the book centers around the cards. These are representative samples of all types, classified into 39 categories. Boss and Keystone cards command a special interest (and high prices), and the collection contains a large quantity. The lists supply over 10,000 facts. Each Jeweler or kindred tradesman has been recorded in an alphabetical as well as geographical listing and a reference shows if the card is in one of four most important publications: MMA, MCNY, Smithsonian, or American Antiquarian Society.

“A chapter is devoted to watches and clocks, and sets forth trademarks for both foreign and domestic wares up to the turn of the century, as reported by JCK at that time. Specialty collector’s items such as Watch Papers, advertising mirrors, and boxes are also illustrated.

“The Burdick Collection in the Print Room of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC, contains many Jewelers Cards which are recorded in this book. This data becomes a valuable source of material not available in the published Burdick Directories.”

Note: The booklet can be found and is available online and via Amazon. Also, FYI, I can only imagine how much time (pardon the comment) and effort Mr. Green poured into the bit of history. After all the typing, I can only imagine his little hand must have been tired. (Face it, I have more bad watch references...I’m just getting wound up, and I hope you aren’t being ticked off.)

Chapter 2 – It’s time to launch a target ball?

In the 1880s, target balls were made by the zillions. And 1880s trade cards for specific glass balls? So far, possibly, zip. But at that time, the firm of the Keystone Improved Silver Watch Cases of Philadelphia was likely selling its products in every town in America, and the company used scores of trade cards with various designs, all using the keystone design. And one featured a watchcase so strong it could be used to launch a target ball!

On eBay, I have seen cards promoting jewelry stores, such as: Edholm & Erickson of Omaha, Neb.; L.V. Stone of Vermilion,

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Ohio; L. Hart of Flemington, N.J.; W.H. Medford of Sidney Centre, N.Y.; Milton Kohler of Hagerstown, Md.; W.T. Sargent of Henniker, N.H.; R. Miller, McPherson, Kan.; Fred Stecher of Zumbrata, Minn.; A.R. McOmber of *Hastings, Mich.; and Parrott's of West Union, Iowa. And, on eBay, a card for S.P. Tobie of Prairie City, Ill., sold for \$17.50, and I missed it. (The usual range is \$13-\$25.)

Hmmmm. Did Bogardus carry a Keystone watch case?

FYI #1: The Keystone Watch Case Co., itself a successor to a number of other watch companies, was the surviving name of a conglomerate of case companies brought together by *Theophilus Zurbrugg by 1904. Keystone stayed in business long past the end of the American-built pocket watch.

FYI #2: In 1880, the population of Hastings was 2,531.

FYI #3: *I don't want to take time making fun of someone else's name—my middle name is Dundas—but how would you like to go through life with the moniker Theophilus Zurbrugg? If I had that name, I'd really be...ticked off.

Is Ralph Finch Lost?

AB&GC writer Ralph Finch submitted this picture. He admits he does not use his "smartphone" GPS and likes to find places the "old-fashioned" way. He says he does get lost sometimes.



Some time ago, Ralph and Janet Finch were looking for the Heckler antique bottle event. We are told that they did find the event after asking for directions at an old country store.



Galaxy Soda Syrup Bottles

[Found online for sale. Submitted by Chris Hartz]

Rare collectors set of 12 Galaxy Syrup Bottles with original shipping case. Manufactured by Space Foods Company, Baltimore, Md. These 1950s, heavy glass, soda syrup bottles are also coin banks! Each metal screw-on lid has a punch-out coin slot! Original cardboard seals are still intact. The bottles stand 8 1/2 inches tall and are in the shape of spacemen wearing a helmet and rocket booster pack. The bottles have never been filled and the company went bankrupt before the product was widely distributed. The case, dated 1953, was found in an old Baltimore warehouse two months ago. The case has nine different figures in various colors and ranks: Space Scout, Space Sentry, Space Admiral, Space Bombardier, Space Ace, Interplanetary Commander, Orbit Admiral, Space Navigator, Asteroid Commander, plus three duplicates. All are in mint condition! Bottles come with original shipping box printed with unique Sci-Fi graphics showing rocket ships and flying saucers! Caps are for five flavors: Grape, Cherry, Raspberry, Orange and Lemon-Lime. Buyer to pay shipping and insurance. Case weighs about 16 pounds.



Rare collectors set of twelve Galaxy bottles and duplicates. Found inside the original shipping case in Baltimore, Maryland. A mint set of these bottles, never used with original box, is around \$300 to \$400.

