

Collectible Bottles of the Future Say 2055, and Beyond

By Bill Baab

Supply and demand dictate values of collectibles and it's no different in the world of collecting antique bottles.

Such an equation has boosted values (and prices) of many bottles beyond the financial means of most of us. In the beginning, it was black glass and sealed bottles, followed by historic flasks and early sodas. Next came bitters and patent medicines. As we moved toward the 21st century, the Hutchinson bottle – particularly “picture” and colored Hutchinsons – came into demand, followed by the crown top as well as the milk bottle.

Bottles that could be purchased for well below \$50 during the 1970s and '80s suddenly rose in value to \$100 and more. While some historic flasks today sell for under three figures, most have taken off to unaffordable heights. Many bitters bottles are out of sight, to say nothing of 1840s sodas and pontiled and colored medicines,

including cures.

For those of us with outstanding collections, we are delighted by it all, the dollar signs whirling about in our minds as we look to the days of our ancient ages when the whole works most likely will be auctioned.

Even so, what does the future hold for collectors of antique bottles? Will there be enough to go around 25 or 35 or 40 years from now? Will they be affordable?

Have you ever really thought about what kind of bottles your grandchildren and even great grandchildren may be collecting 50 years from now?

I checked out the shelves of a local retail liquor outlet in Augusta, Georgia, and found many bottles and go-withs I deemed to have value as future collectibles. Empty, of course. You can do the same in your hometown.

While there were some figurals

involved, the labeled variety seemed to hold the most promise.

Let's check out a few items:

First, there's a statue of Jack Daniel, the Lynchburg, Tennessee entrepreneur, whose sour mash No. 7 whiskey has delighted uncounted imbibers of Jack and ginger (ale) in remarkably tall glasses. Jack is all decked out for the Fourth of July. It's a great go-with to accompany holiday packages from the distillery, such as a wooden case with glass front, back and sides offering a huge, glass-stoppered bottle full of “Jack Daniel's Gold Medal Old No. 7.” The statue also would go well with earlier bottles and stoneware from the distillery.

I have not been able to determine who designed the images on the outside of the tall, frosted Grey Goose Vodka bottles, but he or she is indeed an artist. Snowy mountain vistas, ice-blue lakes and, of course, geese direct the eyes to this French import.

Roosters, silhouetted trees and even shapely legs are to be found on other labels. The rooster named Rex Goliath weighs 47 pounds and occupies most of the Pinot Noir label in brilliant colors. The Black Oak with its tree stark against a sunrise (or

Digging in 2004 dumps, or You Gotta Do What You Gotta Do

By Bill Baab

A few veteran collectors of antique bottles were asked to supply their views on what will make bottle collectors happy 100 years from when this story was written in 2004.

TOM LINES, Birmingham, Ala., former Southern Region FOHBC director:

“All nations on the earth united to conquer the galaxy we are in and by 2100, the last known solar system was conquered. It was known as the “Fohbc” (pronounced fo-beck).

“There were nine planets in the Fohbc system. . .Flaskus, Bitterus, Inkus, Whiskius, Sodaman (with three moons Blob, Hutch and Crown), Jarus, Pontilus, the smallest planet Notmintus and the most prestigious planet Minterian.

“Wars were constant. Each planet sought dominance over its sister planets, each insisting its ethnic purity was more important. For years, the lowly planet Notmintus had dominated the galaxy. Notmintus' drive was to embrace all types of containers, old and new, perfect and flawed, clear or colored, rare of common,

big or small.

“All of the other planets were barely populated at this point. However, disgruntled inhabitants slowly began moving to other planets of their choice, each observing strict adherence to their personal desires. As populations grew on each of these separate planets, their global focus narrowed even more. All shared the view that their sister planets were not as good as they were.

“The movement reached its crescendo in 2100 when the planet of Averagejoey was overthrown by a few dissidents and renamed Minterian, then reorganized as a very exclusive planet for only the choicest inhabitants. Residents not measuring up were relocated to the two moons encircling Minterian, named Nearminterian and Cleanedtominterian.

“The affluence of the Minterians was astounding, with all of the best from each of the other planets invited to come to Minterian at great expense.

“The cost of living spiraled out of control until all on Minterian realized they couldn't continue with their 500% annual inflation

rate. The other eight planets had fallen in stature to near Third World conditions.

“Then a few leaders from Fohbc's council suggested interplanetary peace talks needed to be held. Finally, in 2103, a peace agreement was drafted and signed by each inhabitant of each planet. The key points of the agreement are summarized:

1. All containers were deemed significant and important.
2. Color made little difference.
3. Size made no difference.
4. Shape made no difference.
5. Condition made little to no difference.
6. Age was of little concern compared to intrinsic beauty.
7. Each inhabitant encouraged one another.
8. Relationships were treasured more than containers.

“The coalition of planetary systems that had been conquering other galaxies became known as the AuctionHelpLeague, AuHell for short. Now in 2103, AuHell broke loose again and conquered Fohbc. At first, Fohbc didn't know what

sunset) is yet another brand of the same liquor, while the legs are walking out of the Barefoot Cellars.

Seagram's imported Canadian Hunter labels sport a hunter with huskies in two poses with two pairs of dogs whose fur is of different hues. The head of a magnificent buck dominates a tall bottle of tequila.

A Chardonnay called Toasted Head comes in three sizes of bottles in a cardboard carrying case and the outline of a great bear is on the label as well as the carton.

A buccaneer theme is carried out on the labels of Puerto Rico's Capt. Morgan's Parrot Bay rum, complete with parrot. Tropical vistas and sailing ships occupy other rum labels.

A frosty Van Gogh gin bottle purports to show an artistic view of a Venice-like canal (or it could be in Holland from which the stuff is imported). The bottle's Citadelle Gin neighbor carries out a spectacular blue-and-white theme.

Sometimes there's even stoneware. Evan Williams Distillery in Bardstown, Kentucky put out its Masters Distiller's Select Kentucky straight bourbon whiskey

in a "Commemorative Earthstone Jug" before Christmas 2004. It came in a nice-looking box and with an extra cork.

The colorful store displays remind me of a childhood story in which a little boy was so enamored by colorful canned goods labels that he talked his family into buying those he particularly liked. Soon the cans started overflowing the available space and the distraught parents, not wishing to discourage the boy, wondered what to do.

A visiting uncle solved the problem by introducing the child to stamp collecting.

Bottle collectors are a different breed. They know labeled bottles have value, unlike canned goods. They also know what happens when labeled containers are buried in landfills. The bottles stay mostly intact, but paper labels disintegrate over time.

So perhaps now is the time to think ahead 50 years and, to be on the safe side, head to the liquor store of your choice and begin buying mint bottles. If they come in cardboard boxes or wooden crates, so much the better. Boxes with super graphics are sometimes worth more than the bottles.

If you don't drink, pour the contents down the drain, or leave them in the bottles.

If you do drink, do so moderately, but never when you're driving to and from the liquor store or bottle club meetings. If you buy enough stuff, the liquor store owner will soon see you as a valued customer and put up special bottles just for you. You need not tell him how you're disposing of the contents, although he may begin to wonder about your tastes.

Store the bottles and artifacts in a safe dry place and insert a codicil into your will, leaving the collection (with instructions) to your next of kin who shows potential of becoming a collector. If you're 20 years of age or under, with luck you may survive to cash in the collection when you turn 70.

Even supposing that 50-year-old liquor bottles might not be the next collectibles, then leave them in your will to another 20-year-old friend or relative to store for another 50 years.

By golly, that stuff ought to be worth something in 100 years, shouldn't it?

(With thanks to Summerville Ace package store in Augusta, Georgia).

happened, but the residents of Fohbc had such pure hearts and good intentions, they quickly gained control over AuHell. In 2104, the coalition was renamed 'The Federation.'

"The motto was 'A Bottle in Every Pot.' Peace spread throughout the known universe. Scientists discover that Hicks' Capudine actually does cure the common cold.

"Utopia has been achieved."

KATHY HOPSON-SATHE, editor of the FOHBC magazine, *Bottles & Extras*, and other publications:

"Probably we won't even be keeping things in bottles by then. Everything will come as some freeze-dried thing in some high tech plastic wrapper. Or we'll visit some shop for our once-a-week pill we take for all our nutritional needs. Computer chips will be implanted into our brains (by Microsoft!). And all the things now that we see as so "modern" will be obsolete to the average 2104er.

"If history follows and they are collecting items from 100 years ago, that leaves the pathetic plastic things that convenience stores are filled with, or some

horribly dented and faded aluminum can.

"Can you imagine bottle collectors digging through our landfills, through the zillions of un-decomposed Styrofoam Big Mac boxes and the shredded remains of Pampers to that deeply buried Glad bag containing that elusive plastic Coke bottle with Shrek's image on it? Then they'll take it to the next bottle club meeting as a "new find." (It will be interesting to note how they date their trash layers by then.)

"Of course, our local liquor store (in Johnson City, Tenn. — I haven't been in one in Hot Springs, Ark., where I live yet) has "collectible" decanters for some of the whiskey and brandy brands. Some are quite beautiful, if expensive. I suppose someone by the year 2104 will find a display shelf for them and be proud to have them.

"Hopefully, some of the things that will be more than 200 years old by then will still be around for someone to see and enjoy as a 'super-doooper antique bottle.' And someone will still care about what they are and their histories (with a library of *Bottles & Extras* to go with them).

Of course, there are jugs, shot glasses and other assorted stuff at souvenir shops, the dollar store piggy banks, the holiday

glasses that fast food joints give out at Christmas for 99-cents with the purchase of a value meal, not to mention all that pretty stuff at Cracker Barrel...

"After all, the things we collect now are the everyday things our ancestors threw away. I don't think the history of collecting will be as rich as it is on what we are collecting now. Will 2104 collectors be saying: 'Oh, look, they used to drink Coke from a bottle instead of just popping a Coke pill when they want one!'"

CECIL MUNSEY, pioneer collector and author and second vice-president of the FOHBC:

"I have already seen changes in what bottle collectors collect. A decade ago, collectors of applied color label (ACL) bottles came into their own. Next, the specialty bottles were gathered (I recently paid \$50 for a late 1930s, all-embossed Kool-Aid bottle).

"In the future, I still expect the post Prohibition whiskey bottles (the ones embossed FEDERAL LAW FORBIDS THE RE-SALE OR RE-USE OF THIS BOTTLE) to catch on. I first called

The Federation of Historical Bottle Collectors Membership Benefits

Individual Membership

Open to any individual that has an interest in bottles, flasks, jars or related items, some of the benefits of membership are:

- A full year subscription to our quarterly 84-page publication *Bottles and Extras*, which contains specialty articles, regular columns, classified advertising, show reports, reports pertaining to our clubs and a listing of bottle shows nationwide.
- Quarterly newsletters detailing news of the Federation and the hobby.
- Free advertising of "For Sale" items in *Bottles and Extras* (a trial period of 1 year duration, beginning with the Summer (July) 2003 issue. Restrictions apply - ads may be up to 100 words, items must be of \$25.00 or greater value, and free advertisements are limited to the first 100 received, based upon date mailed.)
- One free ad of 60 words each year for use for items "Wanted", trade offers, etc.
- Advice on publishing your book / manuscript, and a forum for your articles.
- The opportunity to obtain "Early Admission" to the annual Federation shows.
- Access to the informational FOHBC Slide Show Presentations.
- Individuals holding full membership may additionally request Associate membership for their spouses and children up to age 18. The costs for this is \$5 per individual.

Affiliated Club Membership

Available to any club, association or organization which has ten or more members and has an interest in bottles, flasks, jars, or related items, some of the benefits of affiliated membership are:

- A full-year subscription to the quarterly magazines and newsletters, plus...
- A 50% reduction in the cost of display advertising in the magazine and the newsletter.
 - In addition to this, there is a free ¼-page advertisement in the newsletter and free posting of the ad on the Federation website, www.fohbc.com, as a part of the advertising package when you advertise your show in the magazine.
- One complimentary individual membership per year is provided to Affiliated Clubs for their use as an honorarium, raffle item, door prize, etc.
- The Federation will post links from our website into your clubs website free of charge and will assist with creation of a web page for you, as our webmaster's time allows. You supply the photos and general text and we will do our best to get you up and running!
- A show ribbon for Most Educational Display at your show.
- Access to the informational FOHBC Slide Show Presentations.
- Each year, the Federation elects members to the Honor Roll and Hall of Fame to recognize their individual contribution to the hobby of bottle collecting. Our clubs are encouraged to sponsor individuals for these honors.

attention to those bottles in my 1970 book, 'The Illustrated Guide to Collecting Bottles.'

"In more distant futures, I expect to see the popular ceramic bottles of the 1960s and 1970s re-emerge as fairly popular bottles to collect. Some interest in Avon bottles also will re-emerge.

"I am almost positive the ACL bottles of the 1990s and this century will become collectible. These are the bottles that can be bought off store shelves today. One can drink the contents and save the potentially valuable bottle. Bottle collecting has never been this good before.

"Way into the future, I suspect that plastic bottles will become a big collectible category. In general, any container made in the future will have collector value."

RON FOWLER, longtime collector (44 years) who is compiling a voluminous Hutchinson book:

"My earliest collecting activities date to when I was but five years old and collecting (of all things!) soda bottle caps. I'd go over to the service station next door and they'd let me have all the crown caps

from their chest cooler. I was 'rich' with the hundreds of caps I accumulated. Alas, if only I'd kept them! It was almost ten more years before I discovered bottle collecting and then zeroed in on soda bottles in particular.

"The one consistent thread in my more than 44 years of collecting bottles has been nostalgia. The bulk of my collection (I quit counting at 2,000 bottles) of Oregon and Washington soda bottles are ones that remind me of times gone by, whether during my own childhood or simply remembering the fun of acquiring the bottle.

"Without question, collectors 100 years from now will collect bottles that produce that same warm, enjoyable, nostalgic link to their own pasts. It's hard for me to imagine some collector affectionately caressing a plastic bottle, but it WILL happen.

"The other thought I had was to ask myself which bottles I'd put into a footlocker and stash away for the next 100 years. As much as I love soda bottles, I'd choose to stuff the footlocker full of the wide variety of beautiful ACL beers that are for sale in most areas of the country. They're

colorful, typically have beautiful graphics, and often include specific geographical references.

"Collectors in 2104 will probably wonder why collectors in 2004 weren't smart enough to salt a bunch of these babies away!"

RALPH VAN BROCKLIN, Johnson City, Tenn., longtime collector and immediate past president of FOHBC:

"As long as bottle collecting continues to exist, there will always be the desire to add items of color and beauty of form to the shelf.

"The historical flasks, bitters and early Eastern whiskeys will remain at the fore of the collectors' desire. The further we get from the pontiled era, the more fascination pontiled items will entertain.

"As a method of manufacture and pertaining to a certain period in collecting, the ACL sodas will continue to kindle interest.

"Plain looking bottles with minimal embossing will tank and the throw-aways will ultimately be re-thrown away."