



# Collecting Owl DRUG STORE Stuff

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## MILK GLASS OWLS

White milk glass was manufactured many years before it was used by the pharmaceutical companies to package and sell products. The common formula for this glass contained tin, zinc or fluoride to make it white. Many objects from the nineteenth century were made of milk glass, such as doorknobs, insulators, bottles, door pulls, jars, lightening rod fixtures, glass lamps and shades, etc.

In the cosmetic and pharmaceutical trade, "milk" was described as a product that is thick and white, such as "cleansing milk." The old English "mil" meant to "to rub, milk." In addition, white is a standard for purity. Milk glass is also opaque and protects the contents from sunlight.

The Owl Drug Company used milk glass containers (bottles, jars and rounds) to package lotions, cosmetics and balms

along with salves and ointments. Basically there are three categories: bottles, ointment jars and rounds. There are several different varieties of the "cold cream rounds." These 3 ¼-inch rounds have both a bottom and top. The top has the famous embossed trademark owl figure and the early ones have 1128 Market St., San Francisco. They come in both one-wing and two-wing versions. Somewhere along the line, a blue milk glass version was manufactured and I have heard of, but not seen, rose milk glass and green milk glass versions. The much harder to find embossed ointment jars come in sizes from ¾-inch up to three inches. Some of these are embossed on the bottom and others had metal embossed lids. Because many of the jars were buried in the ground, the tin/aluminum lids are even harder to find because they deteriorated from contact with the soil.

Owl Drug collectors generally believe the milk glass medicine bottles come in five

sizes: 3 ¼-inches, 4 ½-inches, 5-inches, 5 ½- and 6-inches. The 4-inch and 5-inch bottles have known variants of ½-inch and ¾-inch. The photograph included with this article has six bottles in series including a 4-inch. It is unknown by this author whether there are actually six different capacity bottles. All of the Owl milk glass bottles are one-wing. Some are labeled rose water.

The photograph showing the "cold cream" rounds has seven, all with a different Owl embossed on them. They generally contained "white rose face cream."

The photograph showing five embossed jars with a cold cream round for comparison shows one with a partial metal lid. The metal lids were not embossed.

The photograph showing three ointment jars with metal embossed lids are all of the same size; there are one-wing and two-wing lids.

The photograph showing three labeled ointment jars is typical of later Owl Drug ointment jars.

The photograph showing the owl figure is only another example of a milk glass jar and is **not** from the Owl Drug Company. It is an early mustard jar.

All embossed milk glass bottles and containers are very collectible and are sought after by different types of collectors. If there is one thing I have learned over the years it is something different will show up from the Owl Drug Company sooner or later.

Jim Bilyeu





**Left:** Seven Cold Cream “rounds.” These generally contained White Rose Face Cream.

**Below:** These embossed jars had metal lids which were not embossed. A cold cream jar is shown on the right for comparison.



**Right:** Ointment jars had metal embossed lids. They are found in both the one-wing and two-wing varieties.



**Left:** These labeled ointment jars are typical of later Owl Drug ointment jars.