

“Cool” ALUMINUM BOTTLES have arrived!

Yet it’s still illegal in Fairbanks, Alaska, to give any kind of bottle of beer to a moose.

By Cecil Munsey

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About 40 percent of all beer consumed comes out of cans, 43 percent from bottles – both glass and plastic – and 8 percent from the tap, according to the Beer Institute, which tracks industry trends.

Now there is a third kind of bottle for consumers and collectors to consider – aluminum (**Figure 1**)! On August 24, 2004, Pittsburgh Brewing Company (established in 1861), makers of Iron City Beer, introduced the first aluminum bottle in America to contain beer (**Figure 2**). About 20,000 cases of the new aluminum bottles were shipped initially to 28 states. (By January 2005, six months later, more than 2 million Iron City aluminum bottles had been sold.)

The brewery partnered with Alcoa, Inc., the world’s largest aluminum manufacturer, to produce the aluminum bottle that is supposed to keep beer colder for as much as 50 minutes longer than cans or glass bottles. Sounds possible since the bottles contain three times more aluminum than a 12-ounce aluminum beer can. According to CCL Container company that actually makes the impact-extruded (forced through a die) metal bottles, the package’s innate properties are: “*Chill retention, recyclability, durability* [and collectibility]. *Those are a few reasons why the package appeals to consumers.*” And, according to the pioneer user of aluminum bottles, Pittsburgh Brewing Company, “*the consumers we tested say they think the bottles are ‘cool’.*”

Further information from Pittsburgh Brewing Company is that aluminum bottles cost more than twice the price of glass bottles – about a nickel more per bottle.

It’s not the first time Alcoa has teamed up with the local brewery to put out a new product. Way back in 1962, the two put out the first pull-tab beer cans, freeing beer drinkers of the need to carry openers with them. And in 1975, Reynolds (now Alcoa), introduced the Sta-Tab can – where the tab stays attached to the container – it is the most popular one on the market today.



Figure 1

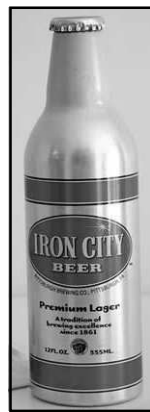


Figure 2

More often than not, they are out of stock.

BOTTLE or CAN? Initially, some folks scoffed and said that the aluminum bottle is not a bottle, it’s made of metal so it’s a can. It does bear a resemblance to the old cone-top cans of the 1930s, which were essentially cans with bottle caps crimped on. But the dictionary says, “... a bottle is a container with a narrow neck and a mouth that can be plugged or capped.”

Pittsburg Brewing Company didn’t seem to care whether or not their container was a bottle or a can because, with the success of Iron City Beer in the new impact extruded aluminum bottle, they quickly introduced Iron City Light Beer (**Figure 3**) in the same package.



Figure 3

Others have followed suit. Customer response, both consumer and collector, to the growing wave of aluminum bottles has been positive. Molson Canada released its latest entry into the beer market – the guarana-laced (Brazilian shrub, used as a tonic or stimulant) Molson Kick (**Figure 4**) in an aluminum bottle. The Molson Kick container is Canada’s first aluminum beer bottle. It would look good in any collection of aluminum bottles.



Fig. 4

Strong demand has also led Anheuser-Busch to introduce three of its brands: Michelob Lager, Michelob Light and Anheuser World Select in 12-ounce aluminum bottles. Its flagship Budweiser brand was introduced in a 16-ounce aluminum bottle (**Figure 5**). Bud Light (**Figure 6**) became the fifth Anheuser-Busch brand to be launched in a collectible aluminum bottle. It was issued in a 16-ounce package.



Figure 5



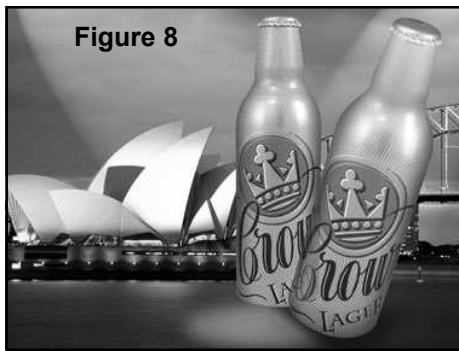
Figure 6



Figure 7

Heineken uses aluminum bottles for its Heineken ‘H2’ premium beer (**Figure 7**). Its minimalist design earned it the Oscar de L’Emballage award for innovation by the French “Institute for Packaging and Packing.” Any bottle collection’s aluminum bottle section would be greatly enhanced by the award-winning metal container.

An entry from Australia into the aluminum bottle market is Foster’s Crown



Lager (**Figure 8**). Foster's is Australia's best-selling beer that was first introduced over a half-century ago to celebrate the 1953 coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Until the introduction of the new aluminum bottles, it had been available only in glass bottles. The new aluminum bottles are, interesting enough, made by CCL Container in North America and shipped to Australia.

WHO ELSE? A group of California winemakers and bottlers have joined together to form the Aluminum Bottle Consortium with the express purpose of marketing an array of aluminum wine bottles to the U.S. wine industry.

Pepsi-Cola North America recently introduced Mountain Dew, its popular carbonated soft drink, in a series of 12 limited-edition, 16-ounce impact-extruded



Figure 9



Figure 10

aluminum bottles. The bottles called the Green Art series feature designs created by a variety of artists. The artists were given a plain, 16-ounce aluminum bottle and asked to create their expressions of Mountain Dew. Treating the bottles as a canvas, the artists used a variety of approaches and applications including tattoo design, cut-and-paste materials, paint, charcoals and

computer graphics. The resulting bottles are attractive and colorful and easily considered as collectors' items.

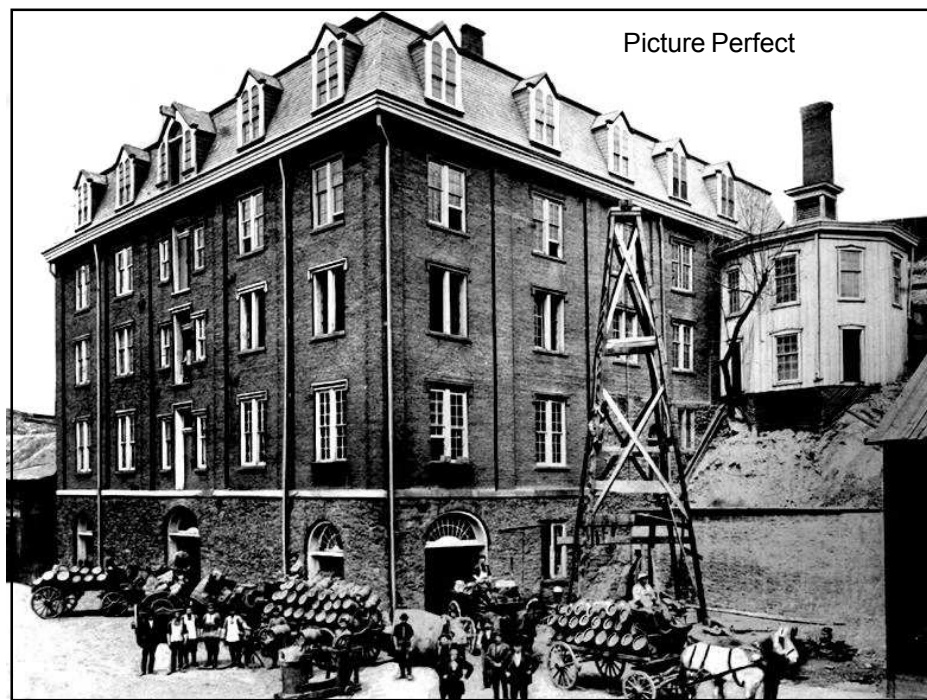
This series marks the first time a carbonated soft drink was packaged in an aluminum bottle in the U.S. Among the participating artists: Paul Rodriguez, a professional skateboarder sponsored by Mountain Dew, collaborated on a design with skater-turned-artist Chris Pastras to create one of the aluminum bottle designs featured here (**Figure 9**); another participating talent, tattoo artist Troy Denning, collaborated with New Era on a limited edition hat based on his design featured on one of the Mountain Dew aluminum bottles. (**Figure 10**).

Instead of collecting bottles which have stood the test of time and are of proven collectible value, this could be the time to gamble on current bottles that has every indication they will successfully stand that same test of time. "Cool" aluminum bottles could be a future antiques easy to acquire today. How many times have you wished you "... knew then what you know now?"

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Picture Perfect

There's the Steelers, Heinz Ketchup and a true Pittsburgh icon, Iron City Beer. The brewery has been making beer for well over 100 years.

Iron City Brewing Company was formed by young German immigrant Edward Frauenheim in 1861 in the bustling river port known at the time as the "Smoky City." The

mills were busy; there were jobs for all and the beer flowed freely. The business soon outgrew its original location on 17th Street and, in 1866, moved to a four-story brick building that the company built on the corner of Liberty Avenue and 34th Street, then worth an estimated \$250,000. Three years later, Iron City Brewery erected an additional three-story building on the site, where it continues to operate today.

The two buildings carried an average stock of about 10,000 barrels and used state-of-the-art brewing equipment.

The first American brewery to produce a lager and the first to brew a true light beer, many more inventive products and packaging have been introduced by Iron City. Among them are: the snap-top can (1962), twist-off resealable bottle tops (1963), draft beer in cans, the original light beer, Mark V (1976), the first brewery to have its own presidential candidate, Dan Crawley of Churchill, Pa. and aluminum beer bottles (2004).