Barrel Containers from the Capstan Glass Company

By Barry L. Bernas

Introduction

In past issues of Bottles and Extras and other venues, I've introduced a wide variety of containers made by workers in the factory of the Capstan Glass Company. These nautically trademarked items were manufactured between April 1919 and February 1938.[i]

Figure 1

Figure 1 has a picture of this firm's signature logo.

Over the years, Capstan officials usually grouped specific styles of packers' vessels under a single series of mold numbers. While not all products followed in line with this observation, the 5800 assembly of jars has up to this point been dedicated to one pattern. In this edition, I'd like to take a look at this type of food container.

Barrel-Shaped Jars

The outward profile of this kind of jar is familiar to most of us. On grocery store shelves today, we find mustard, pickles, sauerkraut, etc. packaged in barrel-shaped glass containers.

In my opinion, the issuance of this style of container by managers of the Capstan Glass Company wasn't significant or unique. I say this because in all of the different advertisements from this concern that I've seen, there hasn't been a picture of this specimen offered for sale. Likewise, no design patent for it was issued to any Capstan employee or assigned to this South Connellsville, Pennsylvania concern by another individual. In fact, other glass container makers were turning out similarly shaped vessels. Since competing manufacturers were putting out a like product, I guess Capstan officials decided to follow suit to keep up with the competition and meet the demands of their customers.

Up to this point in time, I've been fortunate enough to come across five examples of barrel-shaped containers from Capstan Glass that have representative keg motifs molded onto their outer surfaces. For whatever reason, company officials settled on the 58XX numbering scheme for these decorative vessels. From left to right in Figure 2, the smallest to the largest sizes of these jars are shown.

Figure 2

5806

I discovered that Capstan Glass personnel made a barrel-shaped and ornately patterned jar when I initially ran across an example several years ago in an antiques mall in Ohio. Of course, it came home with me. It is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3

This model is the smallest size yet to be reported. It is clear in color and 4 1/16th inches tall. Weighing six ounces empty, it holds about eight ounces of water when filled to capacity. There are three basic parts to this attractive jar. These are its finish, body and base. Its 3/4th of an inch long finish has three segments. The first is a 3/8th inch long threaded area. On it is a 1/8th inch wide, semicircular shaped, shallow continuous screw thread. This portion of the container's sealing apparatus starts just below the lip and descends in a spiral fashion around this region for a little more than one turn. A metal screw cap with a 54 millimeter diameter completes the closure.

On this specimen, the gold lacquered sealer has the following inscribed on its top surface. A cursive capital "E" outlined in red serves as the center piece for additional packer advertising. Above the "E" is a green rectangle with curved top and bottom segments. Within this geometric form is the subsequent wording laid out in curved format on three lines – REG. U. S. PAT. OFF. – Edwards – BRAND. Inside of the top segment of the "E" is a green oval with the phrase – A TREAT TO EAT. The bottom portion of the cursive character carries the final piece of this packer's promotional. In green letters, the next phrases appear one above the other – PURE – FOODS - PACKED BY WM EDWARDS CO. - CLEVELAND, O. Figure 4 has a picture of this cover.

The next part is a 3/16th inch long bracket "]" shaped feature which protrudes outward from the finish. Finally, the last segment is a 1/8th

Figure 4

of an inch long vertical addition which starts directly under the protruding bracket and ends at the shoulder parting line (mold seam) which demarcates the finish from the body.

To the eye, the design molded onto the exterior of both halves of this food container makes it resemble a miniature keg. Twenty-four, flat- surfaced planks serve as the staves. These start at the shoulder parting line and end at the top of the sixth hoop near the base. Aligned beside one another around the outer circumference, each is of equal height, width and form. With the bracket feature in the finish serving as the top hoop, five other 3/16th wide rings seemingly hold the barrel together. Three each are seen on the top and bottom sections. Two dots, simulating rivets or screws, keep the rings in place. All told, the body region (shoulder parting line to the bearing surface) on this version is 3 5/16th inches in length.

Inside of the bearing surface on the post bottom mold style of base (side seams end at this point on the underneath side of the container) is a concave shaped depression. A Capstan Glass Company logo is prominent in the center.[ii] Above this shipboard insignia is the number 5 (probably a mold series digit) while beneath it is the mold number 5806. If the metal closure is an original, some sort of prepared food or condiment, perhaps mustard, from the William Edwards Company, was contained within this model.

5808

The second barrel-shaped jar with a corresponding stave and hoop outer pattern from Capstan carries the mold number 5808. This clear glass example can be seen in Figure 5. It is 4 3/8th inches in height and weighs seven and three-fourths ounces when empty. At the overflow point, its measured capacity is ten ounces.

Figure 5

The 3/4th inch long finish on this model consists of a threaded region, a protruding neck and a canted out and downward segment which melds neatly into the jar's body. A 58 millimeter metal screw cap would be used to seal the contents securely within this container.

For the initial part, the threaded area is 3/8th of an inch in length. On it is a 1/8th inch wide, semicircular-shaped, shallow continuous screw thread. This portion of the closing mechanism starts just below the lip's surface and winds around in a descending fashion for a little over one turn. For the rest of the finish, the neck comes in two segments. Initially, there is a 1/4th inch long bracket J-shaped piece that protrudes outward directly under the threaded region. As was the case on the 5806 edition, I believe this feature represents the top hoop around the mouth of the barrel. Beneath it is a 1/8th inch in length part which slants downward at an approximate 170 degree angle. [iii]

A mold seam or shoulder parting line separates the finish from the container's body. Around the outer circumference of this section, there are twenty-four, flat-surfaced panels of equal size, form and width adjoined side by side. These represent the staves of the keg. In addition to the bracket neck feature, five other simulated hoops combine to bind the barrel design together. Each one is 3/16th inch long. Two hoops are around the top of the vessel's body right under the neck with the remaining three on the bottom segment. Two mock rivets hold each of the five rings together. From the shoulder parting line to the bearing surface, the overall length of this region is 3 5/8th inches.

This example also has a post bottom mold style of base. After the bearing surface, the underneath area has a 1 3/4th inches in diameter concave surface. Directly in its center is a 7/16th inch in diameter circular valve mark with the Capstan Glass Company's trademark inside of it. Above this nautical symbol is the probable mold series number 4. Positioned at the underside of the shipboard equipment logo is the likely mold number 5808.

I was lucky enough to acquire this example at the 2007 Pittsburgh Antique Bottle Club's show and sale. Unfortunately, this model was dug without a label or corresponding metal screw cap. Thus, I'm unable to venture even a guess as to what product was originally packed within it.

5813

The next size of barrel shaped and applicably patterned jar from the Capstan Glass Company that I've come across is shown in Figure 6. You'll note that two examples are depicted.

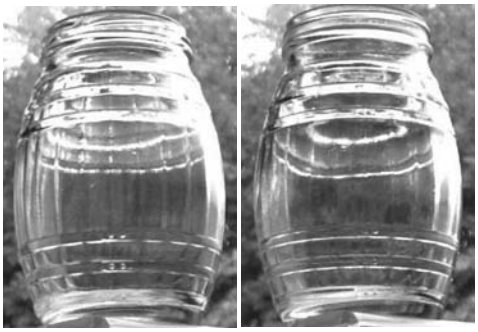

Figure 6

Each one is clear in color, nearly 5 inches tall and weighs ten and one-half ounces devoid of contents. Their capacities calculate to sixteen fluid ounces at their overflow points. The 11/16th inch long finishes on both of these models are slightly different in composition than those witnessed on the related 5806 and 5808 numbered specimens.

Looking at the jar on the left in Figure 6, it has a 3/8th inch in length threaded region with four, 1/8th inch wide, 1 ½ inches long, raised, semicircular shaped, slanted lugs as part of its sealing tool. To complete the closure on this model, a 63 millimeter Amerseal quarter-turn metal cap is required.

On the smaller examples (5806 and 5808), a bracket J-shaped protruding feature followed next after the threaded area. However, on this larger edition, a 1/8th inch wide and 3/16th inch long annular bead is found instead. Directly under the diminutive bead is a 1/8th inch long vertical segment which ends at the shoulder parting line.

The Capstan container on the right-side in Figure 6 has similar measurements and features for all of the parts of its finish except the threaded region. As opposed to a four-lugged sealing mechanism, this sample has a 1/8th inch wide, semicircular-shaped, shallow continuous screw thread. This raised aspect starts just below the vessel's lip and angles downward as it winds its way around this piece of the finish for little more than one turn. A 63 millimeter metal screw cap finishes off the closing method.

The body on both jars is 4 1/4th inches in length when measured from the shoulder parting line to the bearing surface. Twenty-four, flat-surfaced staves compose part of the barrel design on their outer surfaces. Assembled in a side-by-side motif around the outer circumference, each is of equal size, width and form. These simulated wooden planks start at the bottom of the first hoop and end at the top of the sixth one.

Still another difference between the 5813s and the 5806/5808 issues is apparent when looking at the hoops on the containers in Figure 6. On these models, there are six 3/16th inch long rings (three on the top and three on the bottom) with two simulated rivets holding each together. Unlike their 5806 and 5808 counterparts, the annular bead isn't an integral part of the barrel pattern as the protruding bracket "]" shaped feature was on the smaller prior specimens.

Both the lugged and continuous thread jars in Figure 6 have a post bottom mold style of base. The left side container rests on a 3/16th inch wide flat surface. The example to the right of it has a smaller, 1/8th inch wide flat bearing surface as the stabilizing part of this vessel. Inside of the bearing surface on the left-hand edition is a 2-inch-in- diameter concave shaped surface. Its mate to the right has a similarly formed depression that is 2 1/8th inches in diameter. No valve mark is visible on either jar. In the center of each concave surface is a Capstan Glass Company trademark. Below it on the left side barrel container is the mold number 5813. Above it is the likely mold series number 6. Conversely, the right side sibling has the 5813 series of digits above the logo with same mold series digit (6) below it.

Since these two 5813 numbered containers hold one pint of liquid, I'm guessing that there is at least one, if not two, other models between it and the 5808 edition that are yet to be identified.

There is something else to keep in mind about the right-hand jar in Figure 6. The 63 millimeter diameter of its mouth and the style of sealing apparatus on it made it adaptable for a metal insert and screw band of the same dimensions. Thus, once emptied of its original contents, this issue from the Capstan Glass Company could be reused for home preserving purposes. It is readily apparent to me that the housewife who was attracted to this jar for the product therein also got a stylish added benefit with her purchase.

5814 ¼

The barrel jar in Figure 7 is remarkably similar to its 5813 cousins. While slightly shorter in height (4 15/16th inches) and a little heavier in weight (ten and three-fourths ounces), it holds the same amount of water at the brim (16-ounces or one pint).

Turning to the initial part of this model, the entire three-section finish is 1/16th of an inch shorter (5/8th inch) than any of the 5813 variants (11/16th inch). However, the sealing method, annular bead and vertical segment all are

Figure 7

designed the same and have exactly the same measurements as their 5813 mate on the left in Figure 6. For the body, it is 4 3/16th inches in length or 1/16th inch shorter than both 5813 editions (4 1/4th inches). The raised keg motif on the outer surface is precisely portioned as the barrel pattern described in the 5813 portion of this article. The manner in which the Figure 7 specimen was designed and manufactured differed slightly from the three previous sizes of barrel jars from Capstan Glass. On this example, there is a cup bottom mold kind of base (side seams terminate at the bottom parting line or mold seam which separates the body of the jar from the base) vice a post bottom version. Being 1/16th inch in length, the final circular part of the jar in Figure 7 has a 2 7/16th inches outer diameter. In the center of this slightly concave surface is the Capstan Glass Company's trademark. No valve mark is visible. Above the maker's logo is the likely mold series number 7. Below the nautical symbol is the mold number 5814 1/4.

The odd-looking fractional mold number may have some significance. It could be indicative of a particular product that was originally packed within this container. I've seen ketchup/catsup bottles that have whole number mold identifiers with the fractions ¼ and ½ added after them. Before it wound up in a dump, could this jar have started out life as a tomato flavored condiment container? Additionally, since this barrel-shaped vessel had a different design characteristic, I wonder if it was added by Capstan officials to the 58XX product at a later date in response to a customer requirement?

5830

The last jar in the 58XX assembly is also the largest size discovered to date. See Figure 8 for a picture of this packers' container. Without a cover, it is 6 11/16th inches in height. Empty, it weighs one pound two and one-fourth ounces. When filled to the brim with water, its capacity is 32-ounces.

Figure 8

As you would expect, the finish on this bigger model is taller than any of the other examples that were previously shown. Composed of the usual three elements, the first part of this stout vessel is 1 inch long. The initial region of the finish is 5/8th of an inch tall. On it is a 1/8th inch wide, semicircular-shaped, raised, deep continuous screw thread. Starting just under the lip, this sealing means descends around this area for about a turn and one-fourth before terminating above the next feature. Following immediately thereafter is a 1/4th inch wide and 1/4th inch long annular bead. The last component of the finish is a 1/8th inch long vertical segment that ends at the jar's shoulder parting line.

A 70 millimeter metal screw cap would provide the airtight seal for this container. For this example, the original contents may have been processed fish, probably herring. I say this because my model came with a gold lacquered metal screw cap with an orange and black colored circular advertisement on its top surface.[iv] It is shown in Figure 9.

The 2 1/8th inches in diameter circle has an orange background with four concentric tiers within it. In black capital letters, the following is found

Figure 9

around the cover's outer tier – HANSA BRAND MARINE HERRING. In the same area but in smaller black capital letters placed above the words – MARINE HERRING – is the phrase – CONTENTS 32 OZS. Below the same two words (MARINE HERRING) is found – PACKED BY VITA FISH PRESEVING WORKS, N.Y. – in small black capital letters.

Inward from the first is the next circular tier. This section has a mostly black background with orange lettering on it. By using the face of a clock and the hour hand thereon, I will describe the positioning of the following phrases within this segment. The word – TRADE – is at the eleven o'clock site. To the right of it at the one o'clock position is the trailing part – MARK. Between the seven and four o'clock spots is the advisory – KEEP IN A COLD PLACE.

Another 3/16th of an inch wide circular backdrop follows as the third tier. It is also mostly black in shading with orange lettering thereon. Cupped around the top of it is the phrase – HANSA BRAND. Opposite it are four different geometric forms with an unidentified design within each one.

The last and innermost tier is composed of a black-colored circle with an orange crest (possibly representing the Vita Fish Preserving Works). Looking at the crest, I can identify two inwardly facing seahorses with three other designs stacked one atop the other in the center. I don't know what they signify. Below these features, there are three rectangles that make up the bottom part of the crest. Inside of the top left one is the word – FORTITER. The lower center edition contains – DEFENDIT. On the top right is the other word – TRIUMPHANS. I didn't take Latin during my educational upbringing so I'll leave it to those who do recognize these words to come up with an appropriately translated meaning.[v]

From the shoulder parting line to the bearing surface, I calculate the body of the container under this section to be a little over 5 1/2 inches in length. As with all the other examples in this article, twenty-four, equally formed, flat-surfaced staves are assembled side by side to make up the underlying outer barrel design. Six 3/16th inch wide hoops (three at the top and three at the bottom) with two coupling simulated rivets or screws each are overlaid to hold the keg motif together.

This version also has a post bottom mold style of base. Inside of the bearing surface, there is an initial 3/8th inch wide slanted downward smooth area. It is followed by a 1 7/8th inches in diameter flat region. In the center, the embossed Capstan logo stands out. Above it is the mold number 5830. On the opposite or lower side of the trademark is the likely mold series digit 9.

As was the case with the earlier 5813 edition (right side jar in Figure 6), there is a second utility aspect to consider about this example as well. The diameter of its mouth, style and size of its screw thread and dimensions of its annular bead are the same as those seen on any standard, Mason-type, bead seal fruit jar of that time. Thus, once emptied of its original contents, this edition from Capstan Glass could be used for home canning purposes, if desired by the owner.

Postscript

Do the five jars I've just described constitute the full line of barrel-shaped and patterned jars within the 58XX series? Without a product catalog from the Capstan Glass Company to use as a guide, I can't say for sure. Nonetheless, my intuition tells me there are probably many more containers in the keg motif

yet to be discovered and reported. It is my impression that this pattern was much too popular for only a small number of sizes to have been produced.

Are you thinking about expanding your collecting interests into another area? Why not consider putting together a collection of barrel-shaped and patterned jars from Capstan. To make it even more challenging, try to assemble this stylish group by finding examples which have original labels and metal caps. On a wider scale, a set of Capstan containers of this ilk would compare nicely with similarly patterned jars from other glass makers. Just think of the discussion possibilities that could result when guests encounter your home display of these items.

Whatever your interests may be, the gauntlet has been thrown down. I'm asking for your assistance in finding and recording the existence of other sizes of the barrel style of food container in this series, labeled and/or originally capped examples of the ones disclosed in the article and finally, other Capstan trademarked jars in the 58XX series that aren't barrel shaped/patterned. If you run across any of these, I request that you contact me directly so that the documentation process can be started. In the meantime, happy hunting for this decorative piece of Capstan ware or whatever item satisfies your collecting passion. BLB

Bibliography and Footnotes

[i] *Tumblers, Jars and Bottles; A Product Identification Guide for the Capstan Glass Company, South Connellsville, Pennsylvania*, Barry L. Bernas, 239 Ridge Avenue, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania 17325, 2007, pgs. 1, 10 and 54. The Capstan Glass Company was incorporated in the State of Delaware on April 12, 1918. Its factory opened on April 17, 1919. The first shipment of glass containers left the plant on June 9, 1919. The name – Capstan Glass Company – was officially changed in the concern's original charter to the Anchor Hocking Glass Corporation of Pennsylvania on February 18, 1938. Anchor Hocking officials kept the former Capstan works operating in South Connellsville until September 1938. Once shutdown, this facility remained closed until Anchor Hocking directors reopened it on March 15, 1941.

[ii] There is no trace of a valve mark on this jar's base. In itself, this fact is unusual for a machine blown container.

[iii] Note that this segment differs from the same part of the finish on the 5806 edition.

[iv] I'm hopeful that this screw cap was an original but I've no way of proving my aspiration at this point.

[v] I don't know if the left to right order in which I listed these words is correct. The sequence could be left, right and lower. An Internet Latin to English translation website gave the following meanings to the three words: FORTITER – bravely, valiantly, strongly; DEFENDIT – to support, to defend, to ward off, to protect, shelter and TRIUMPHANS – triumphal.