

# Save Those Boxes

By Charles Harris, Ooltewah, Tenn.  
relicnut@comcast.net

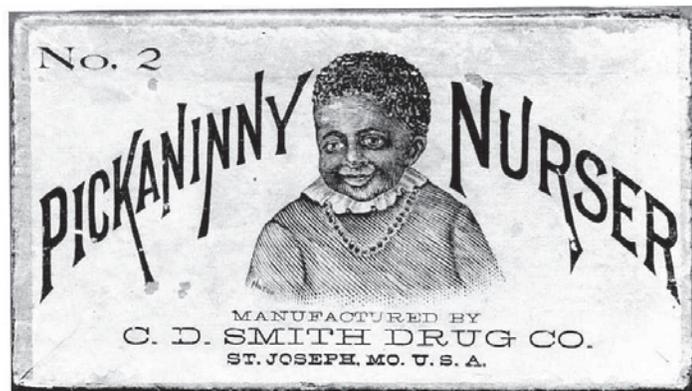
Occasionally, when we luck upon a rarity such as an old bottle still in the original box, the temptation is to keep the bottle and discard that nasty old box that is falling apart. This is especially true if the sides or joints have begun to split and that old basement dampness incubated mold has begun to attack the surfaces, spreading little black dots all over the box.

But what we have here is quite often the only true connection with the origin of this little treasure of ours. Just a single printed mark on that box can tell us bunches about the contents, just like the raised marks on the bottom of the bottle itself.

A good example can be found in first illustration, the beautiful colored box lid for a turtle type baby bottle. The turtle bottle is a round-bottomed flask type bottle lying on its backside with the neck raised. In the lower left corner is a capital letter "M" inside of a diamond. Just that little symbol informs us that the box contained a turtle baby bottle made by the John M. Maris & Co., circa 1860-1880. The bottle came in either green or aqua. In the



The John A Maris & Co. box with its color lithograph. Note the small "M" in the diamond in the lower left corner. The father is cutting the hay with a scythe, the mother is raking it in her red Victorian dress with a huge wooden rake while the baby is under the overhang of a shock of hay sucking on the hose leading up from his turtle-type feeding bottle as the family dog sleeps nearby. (Courtesy of David Cox collection)

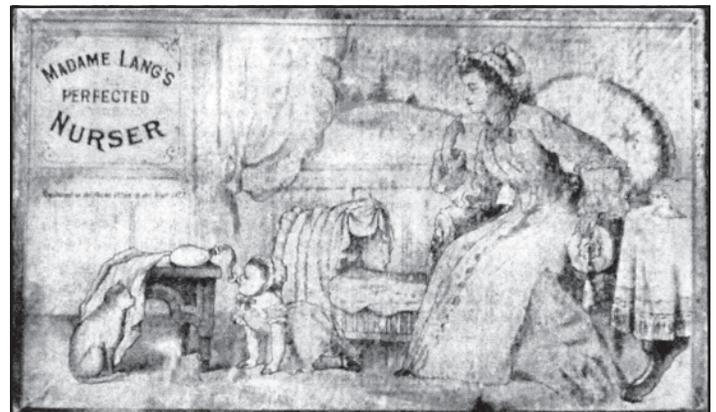


The "No. 2 / Pickaninny Nurser" box lid. Could it be any more explicitly marked than here? — "manufactured by / C.D. Smith Drug Co. / St. Joseph, Mo. U.S.A." The rendition of the little Negro baby is very appealing and cultural, especially for the period when there was to be absolutely no social interaction between the two races. (Courtesy of the David Cox collection)

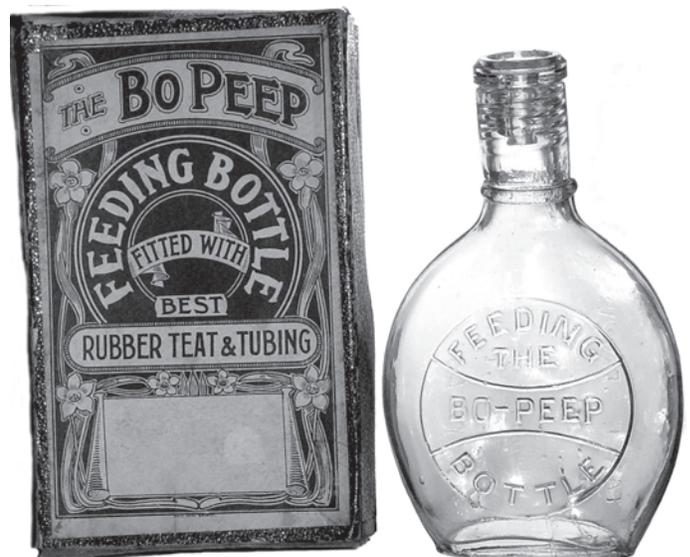
American Collectors of Infant Feeders (ACIF) club there are only five examples known and one of the club members, David Cox, has the only known box.

The graphics on the box are a work of art in themselves — boy what a collectible? It is a beautiful color lithograph. And what a statement on the conditions of 19<sup>th</sup> Century America. The scene is on a working farm. The father is using a scythe cutting the hay while the mother is in her red Victorian dress with about a 4-foot wide wooden rake raking the hay. The baby is sitting in the shadow side of shocked hay on a blanket sipping from his John Maris baby bottle with the family dog watching over (actually sleeping) the feeding baby. By the way, this type of baby bottle acquired the nickname, the "murder bottle," because the hose from the bottle to the nipple was very difficult to thoroughly clean, leaving dangerous bacteria inside. Many a child was brought to death's door or died because of these bottles.

Another beautiful box is for the "Madame Lang's Perfected Nurser," registered in the patent office in the year 1877. It is also

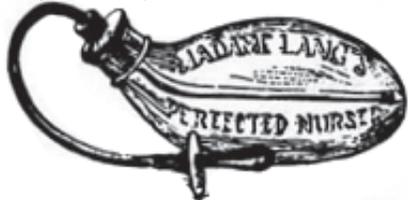


Madam Lang's Perfected Nurser color lithograph label on the top of its box. Again the Victorian lady is beautifully dressed, this time in her comfortable parlor chair, while her little girl, crawling on her hands and knees, is sucking milk from the feeding bottle as the family cat looks on jealously. (Courtesy of the David Cox collection)



The Bo Peep Feeding Bottle in its blue and white box. This is the English version of the standing turtle feeding bottle — note the internal threads with the glass screw-in stopper that held the internal glass straw and the external hose. The English internal threads is a feature that was never adopted for manufacture in the United States. (Courtesy of the Teresa Harris collection)

[Drawing courtesy of the ACIF Baby Bottle Guide.]



a color lithograph showing a well dressed Victorian lady lounging in her ornate overstuffed chair watching her cute little crawling girl about to suck milk from the Madame Lang's Perfected Nurser sitting on a table above her while she is being observed by the family cat. This turtle type bottle was advertised in the circa 1870 Wholesale Drug catalogue, circa 1878 Colburn, Birks & Co. catalogue and circa 1878 and 1879 Jeremiah Quinlan catalogues.

Another quite interesting bottle of which a very few exist even has a cultural historical lineage attached to it. This is the Pickaninny Nurser. It has always been thought to be a bottle made in Great Britain for the American market, as is also "The Little Alabama Coon Feeder" which was definitely made in England in the 1870s. Of course the common associated definition for Pickaninny and Coon has been a degrading term for a young black person and are now strongly associated with the "N" word. I believe that the derivation actually goes back to the children of the southern cotton pickers, kind of a contraction of "Picking Any?" As surmised by the label, this bottle was made especially

for the Negro market when it was unpopular to even drink from the same water fountain as a black person at the train station. Recently David Cox sent me a photo of his "No.2 Pickaninny Nurser" box (he doesn't have the bottle) and there in large letters is "manufactured by / C.D. Smith Drug Co. / St. Joseph, Mo U.S.A." How much more American can you get than that? And this bottle is not even in the *ACIF Bottle Guide* — at least not yet.

Another interesting box and bottle that we recently acquired came from Great Britain. Its only design and lettering are done in dark blue and white. It contained "The Bo Peep Feeding Bottle." This bottle was what is referred to as a standing turtle. Its base is flat and it can stand on its own. Actually, I'll have to admit that we don't normally collect British bottles, but somebody sent me the eBay link and I opened it with only three minutes to go and no other bids. Impulse got me and I bid and won. It is a nice box and bottle with all the fittings (the glass straw, cleaning brushes and ivory disc that butts up to the base of the nipple at the end of the missing hose.) So overall it was a fair purchase, but the postage was more than the bid — Oh, well.

Another English bottle that we obtained a couple years ago in its original box was the "Boots 'Perfect' Feeding Bottle." The illustration on the lid is strictly black and white, but nicely done. It even contains the directions for cleaning the inside of the

bottle within the illustration and is distributed by the Boots Cash Chemists. The bottle that came with the box is the interesting double-ended, banana-shaped bottle. Many people, when they first see the bottle, think that it is for feeding twins, which is far from the truth. Because of the problems realized in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century with uncleaned bacteria, the British developed this style of bottle and used it up into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The opening at each end allows easy cleaning of the inside. It also cures another problem attributed to the early bottle designs — it helped prevent colic, thought to be the result of the baby sucking too much air during the feeding. One end had the feeding nipple and the other end had a rubber valve that looks similar to a nipple. The valve let air into the bottle as the milk was sucked out.

Another interesting box that we obtained with that same collection is an English box that contained what is commonly referred to as a breast pump. It was made by S. Maw, Son & Sons which dates it to approximately 1900. The label shows a young mother using the breast pump by sucking on the hose with the glass reservoir surrounding the nipple on her bare breast. Truly a picture is worth a thousand words.

While I am deviating from actual baby bottle boxes and getting into the go-withs, I had to bring in another box that excited me when I first noticed it in the Rubin Clet collection. Its content is an old pacifier,



The "Boots Perfect Feeding Bottle" was sold by the Boots Cash Chemists during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. This double-ended feeding bottle was strictly an English invention and never adopted in the United States, though many were imported for sale and use. The double open ends made for very easy cleaning and no bacteria trapping hose was needed, just a nipple on one end and a valve type nipple on the other end. (Courtesy of the Teresa Harris collection)



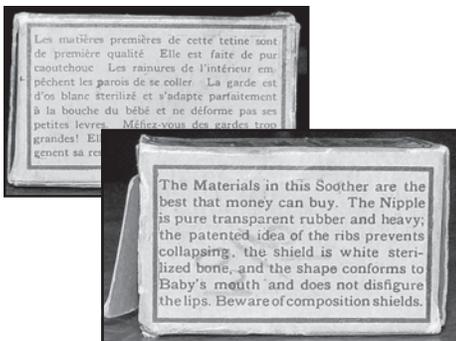
Though not a baby feeding bottle, the illustration on the top of this breast pump box is, in itself, worth a 1000 words, as any mother that ever used one can tell you. It was made about 1900 by S. Maw, Son & Sons in Great Britain. (Courtesy of the Teresa Harris collection)



The small but very informative “Rigo / Pretty-Lip / Soother” or pacifier box with its original contents, a shaped pacifier sucking nipple with a “the shield is white sterilized bone... Beware of composition shields.” With recent environmental health warnings, it looks like Rigo was ahead of its time. The use of bone or ivory definitely predates the age of plastics. (Courtesy of the Rubin Clet collection.)

nice in its own right, but it *is* just a nice old pacifier. The original box that it came in, however, opens up a new story. The label reads “Rigo / Pretty-Lip Soother / Made in England / for the / Richards Glass Co. / Limited / Toronto / and / Montreal.” Produced around 1900, what really sets this box off is that one side of the box is in English and the other side is in French. It was made in England for the French-Canadian market in eastern Canada and ended up in a collection in California.

What I have realized by looking at these old boxes is that there is a lot of beauty in the period of their production along with a history lesson that could never adequately be put into words. The graphics are pleasing to the eye and significant as pieces of artwork. One of the greatest assets we have found in our ACIF organization is that among the 1500 or so American-made baby feeding bottles, there are at least six different bottles known to exist only because one of the ACIF members has only the box that it was sold in. Other than the box, these particular bottles would not be known to exist.



Both sides of the Rigo box, front in English and behind in French.

## A Look at the Capstan Glass Fluted Tumber Series by Barry Bernas. Continued from page 39.

### Summary

The examples documented in this write-up were either advertised by Capstan or an actual example has been located and verified. I was limited to these two sources because a product catalog from the Capstan Glass Company hasn't been found. Because of the latter limitation, I don't know the full extent of the fluted tumbler line that was manufactured by factory hands for this South Connellsville firm. There may be many more paneled models still on the loose that need to be corralled and branded as authentic. If you can help me increase our knowledge base about this type of food tumbler or just want to discuss any aspect of this article, please don't hesitate to contact me directly.

BLB

### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> *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, pg. 11.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid, pg. 55.* Either Capstan Glass ads or actual labeled tumblers were used to compile this brief listing of possible foods that could be packaged into this type of glass container.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid, pg. 10.* This reference has a sketch of the Capstan logo extracted from the trademark paperwork and pictures of how this symbol was replicated on a machine pressed tumbler and a machine blown jar or bottle.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid, pg. 63.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid, pgs. 72-73 and 137.* For more information on other design patents issued to Theodore J. Piazzoli, please look for my article titled *Piazzoli Designs from Capstan Glass* in another issue of *Bottles and Extras*.

## Pisgah Forest Pottery by Lindsay Lancaster Continued from page 40.

mud and there were spiders crawling everywhere. Leftwich said so much was lost to flood damage and to silver fish eating up a lot of the paper. Almost all of the books were destroyed along with all of the pottery.

In the library, he did find a couple of letters. Leftwich's eyes welled up when he talked about finding Stephen's description of his very first piece of pottery, and how he made and fired the pot, but the glaze had only half-way melted. Stephen wrote that he was so frustrated, and that “my little mother encouraged me.”

His mother's kind words prompted him to turn the pot upside down and re-fire it. It turned out okay and he ended up selling that first pot decorated with cotton blooms.

In just about every letter that Stephen wrote, he referred to his persistence and “doggedness to stay with things,” a trait which he believed he had gotten from his father, who was a Mason that came from Scotland, Leftwich said.

After a lot of searching and making contacts with people who may have collected some of Stephen's pottery, Leftwich was lucky to find some in the Memphis area.

He happened to be going to Memphis and had found a person with a pot that identically matched the description of Stephen's very first pot, signed Stephen and son, before a name was chosen for the pottery. The piece dates back to around 1907.

“We found that [first] pot,” Leftwich said. “We're pretty sure, as much as we can be.”

In the letter, Stephen also talked about the hardships he faced, and described his first kiln.

Case has a collection of Stephen's pottery at Asheville Art Museum, some of which are his favorites.

“They're really nice and they're sort of special to me,” he said.

Leftwich hopes that someday, there will be a way to fund the creation of a video to have a record of what's there.

A wide range of pottery made at Pisgah Forest Pottery and Leftwich's book are available for sale. Pottery prices range from around \$10 to \$400.

For more information about the pottery, call Tom or Dot Case at 828-684-6663.