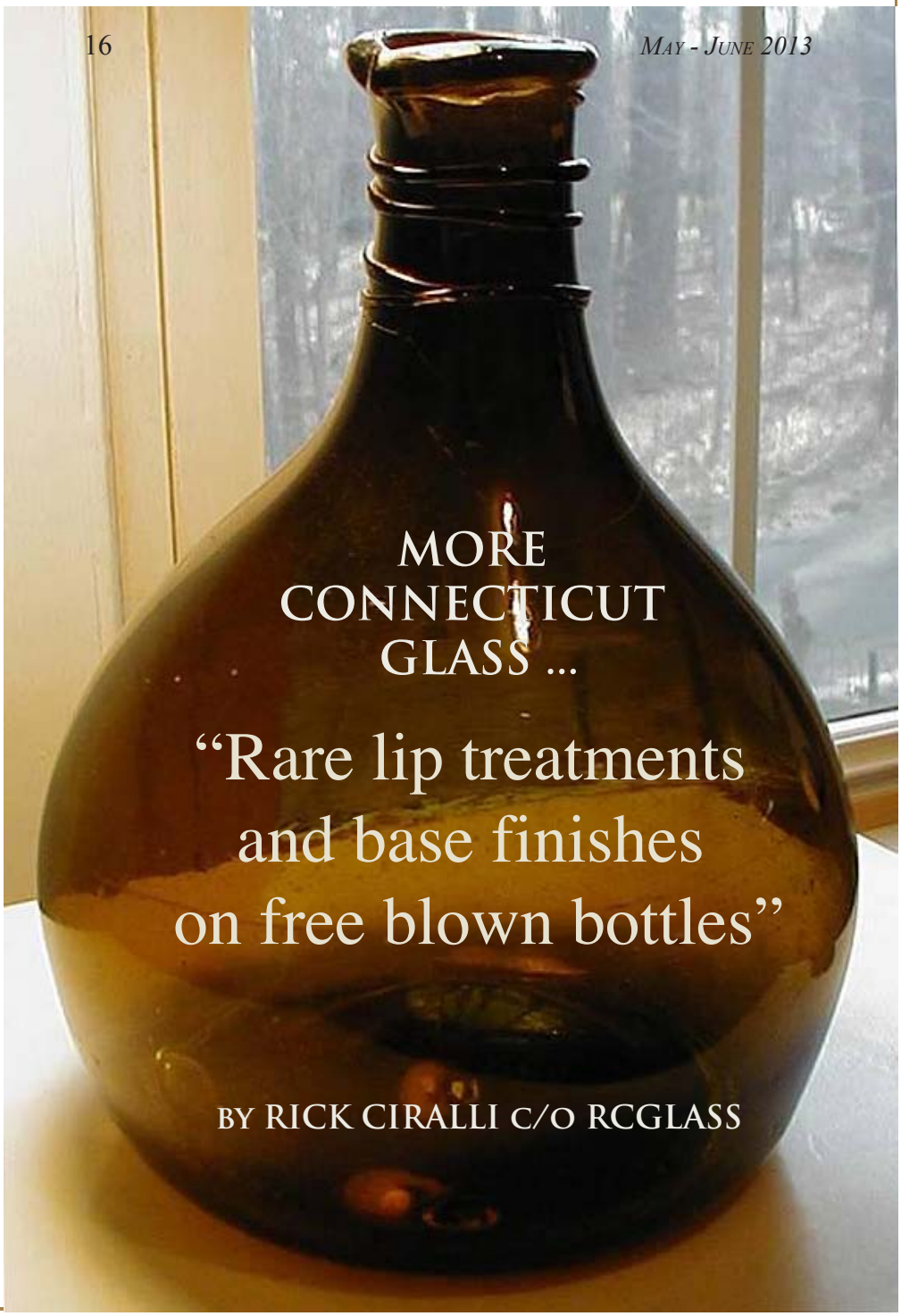

MORE CONNECTICUT GLASS ...

"Rare lip treatments and base finishes on free blown bottles"

BY RICK CIRALLI C/O RCGLASS

Collectors of early American and New England glass can all appreciate the beautiful wares that were produced in the late 18th and early 19th century glasshouses. The earliest bottles were free blown or blown without the use of a mold of any kind. When one thinks of an American free blown bottle, one can't help but think of globular bottles and of course the "ubiquitous" chestnut bottles. These were made in various early glasshouses throughout the Eastern region. The examples shown in this article are most likely from New England, specifically Connecticut. Some glass blowing techniques were specific to certain bottles. These would have included applied strings, seals, handles or bands of glass, to name a few that were done with some sort of tooling. These are rare exceptions to free blown globular bottles and chestnuts and are the basis for this article.

I have always been a fan of the early globular bottles from New England. They come in many sizes, colors and forms. The size rule always comes into play. The smaller and larger examples are considered rarer. The way the glassblowers and their workers made these was truly a work of art. With the molten glass on the end of their blowpipes, they would huff and puff and roll their rods on their marver tables. They would get the desired size and shape and then attach a pontil rod at the other end, push it in a tad and then cut the other end with their shears. Then they'd finish the lip by adding a string or a blob of more glass. In the later production years they would have added a lipping tool resembling a caliper to create a tapered collar etc. Then they would crack off the pontil rod and slide it onto a paddle and into the annealing oven for the final cooling process. Bottles were mass produced this way with only a few exceptions. Here are a few of those examples.

Below (**Fig: 1**) is a gorgeous globular bottle in a better than average size and a tad "out of round" in its form. It's about 10.5" tall and in a rich olive-amber. The master gaffer expanded the neck and mouth areas

Fig 1: 10.5" globular bottle

Fig 2: Expanded neck and mouth with handsome lip

Fig 3: Attractive pour spout

and outwardly rolled a handsome thickened lip. (**Fig: 2**)

He then proceeded to form an attractive pour spout. (**Fig: 3**) On the interior section of this pour spout, there is a distinct tooling line. It appears to be exactly at the point of the "pinch." Then he used an ancient technique of an applied string or snake of glass around the neck. The practical theories are one can grip one's fingers around the threads when utilizing the object or intertwine some type of string or leather straps and hang it like a saddle flask. A simple globular bottle then became an exceptional serving decanter that was grasped at a table and its contents poured into goblets, tumblers or wine glasses. It is unique because it is impossible to have two identical free blown items, let alone one with any applied features. This exceptional bottle is attributed to the Coventry Glassworks (1813-1848). The method of manufacture, the period when it was made, the color of the metal and the use of applied threading are all indications of known items from this glassworks. The earliest source of reference, and one of my all time favorites, is the Edwin Atlee Barber book entitled American Glassware, Old and New (Copyright 1900). Go to the small section on Coventry on page 57. Read about globular decanters and a tall vase with a spherical body with a snakelike ornament wrapped around the long slender neck. There is also a pretty good track record of tableware items like applied handle pitchers, creamers and even bowls with this type of threading.

We have also excavated some shards near the glassworks site with the threading clearly evident as well. Those are retained in the collection of the Museum of Connecticut glass located in Coventry. As of this date and time, it is the only known example of such a decanter and is unique and ultra rare!

The next globular bottle is more typical in form and color and is also about 10.5 inches tall and in a darker shade of olive-amber. (**Fig: 4**) Upon close inspection of the applied blob lip, you will see two distinct vertical tooling lines. (**Fig: 5**) It is my

Fig 4: Example 2 (on right)

Fig 5: Tooling lines

Fig 6: Beautiful Chestnut on the left

Fig 7: Beautiful Chestnut tops

Fig 8: Base of Chestnut on the right

opinion that these were used to secure some type of wire or string to seal the top. Examples of closures would have been wooden or cork. This also could be the signature mark of a specific glassblower.

This is a chestnut (**Fig: 6**) with the same type of tooling lines confined in the lip area. These lines are more pronounced. At 8 3/8 inches tall, this beautiful bottle was in the famed (Charles) Gardner collection and was lot No. 1991 in the legendary sale back in 1975. It sold then for $55 plus the buyer's premium. Old Charlie paid $2 for it. Both of these are attributed to the Pitkin Glassworks (1783-1830). Again, we have excavated shards at the site with these types of tooling marks in various lip treatments and those are also retained in the collection of shards at the Old Manchester Museum in Manchester, Conn.

In my 35 years of collecting bottles and glass, these are the only two intact examples (**Fig: 7 and 8**) of these types I have ever seen or handled. I know there is a connection!

Speaking of chestnuts, here are two more examples with some "extras."(**Fig: 9 and 10**) Again, perhaps the glassblower used a tool and inserted it into the base to create a spray of faint lines all coming from the center. This was done before the pontil rod was attached as the lines are under the pontil scar. There is no known utilitarian function of this base tooling so it has to be a "signature" of some kind. Or was the object pushed up against some type of insert to create uniformity in the base area? Intriguing? Absolutely!

Fig 9: 2 more Chestnuts

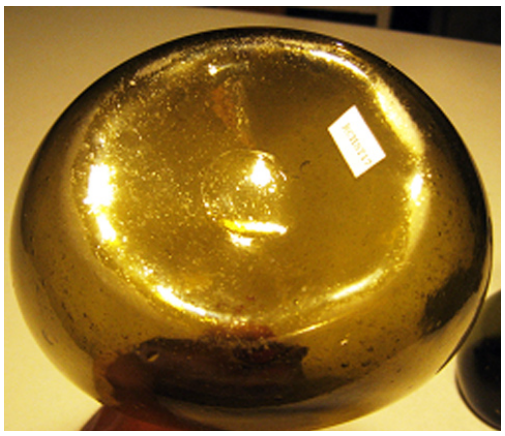

Fig 10: Base of above Chestnut

Fig 11: Chestnut on the right

Rare? Unequivocally! This first example is 8.25 inches tall with a pleasing plump form. (**Fig: 11**)

The second example is a smaller green bottle around 5.5 inches tall and again with the same type of base tooling done the same way. (**Fig: 12**) These are attributed to a Connecticut glasshouse, probably Pitkin or Coventry (1783-1830). I tried to highlight the lines.

Since New England chestnuts are readily available in just about every bottle auction or show, why are there not more of these available out there? Since these were mass produced and the gaffers had

Fig 12: Base tooling of the Chestnuts

their daily quotas to make, slowing down the flow of work to add some extras to the bases for no apparent reason seems inefficient, but it was obviously done on a few examples that withstood the test of time remarkably well!

So there we have it! Some rather common to scarce examples of utilitarian wares (**Fig: 13**) with some unique and rare features. All are from my personal collection and probably done by a glassblower named George Hanover from Pitkin & Coventry. More on that later...

Next up, I will show some rare base finishes on some utilitarian dip-molded bottles. Like I always say, Knowledge is Power...

If any of the readers out there can share some examples or shed some light, please feel free to contact me directly. Rick Ciralli can be reached at richardciralli@sbcglobal.net

Fig 13: Some rather common to scarce examples of utilitarian wares with some unique and rare features.