

# Registering Bottles

By Tod von Mechow

One key to a profitable bottling business was getting used bottles returned so that they could be cleaned, refilled and sold. In the 1850s, the price for a bottle of soda water was about 2 ½ cents wholesale and 4 ½ cents retail in the larger cities where there was competition. The expectation was that the bottles would be returned. The bottles themselves cost about \$5 per gross or about 3 ½ cents per bottle. This would require a bottle to make at least three round trips to cover the cost of the bottles, investments in machinery, materials and labor.

There were several reasons that bottles were not returned: the consumer using the bottles for other domestic purposes, consumers disposing of the bottles as trash, and the theft of bottles for sale to other bottlers who used them illegally. Oftentimes these bottles were shipped to other states where the buyers were beyond the reach of the law. This is supported by the following article involving John & Alexander Dearborn of New York City that appeared in the *New York Tribune* on June 8, 1850:

## **CHARGE OF STEALING SODA-WATER BOTTLES.**

*A complaint was made on Wednesday against Daniel Tuttle, driver of a soda-water wagon, by Mr. Alexander Dearborn, who charges Tuttle with stealing during the month of May last past, 200 dozen soda-water bottles of his property, valued at \$124. The bottles, it seems, were in baskets standing at the South Ferry, and Tuttle was seen by George W. Prescott to convey one basket of bottles, which basket bore the direction of J. & A. Dearborn. The case will be heard before Justice Osborne.*

These used bottles were valued at two cents apiece. To protect their bottles, vendors initially started to mark their bottles with their names and location. An example of this is William R. Evans of Philadelphia, who ran the following ad that appeared in the *Public Ledger* on December 9, 1844:

## **TO BOTTLE DEALERS, BOTTLERS, AND OTHERS**

*The subscriber has suffered great inconvenience from the loss of BOTTLES, used in his business, by their being purloined from his customers, and sold, and has been induced to incur the expense of having them manufactured for his own use, having his name on them. Now this is to notify all dealers in the article, and the public, that whenever such bottles are ascertained to be in other than the possession of his customers, prompt legal means will be adopted to recover them, as stolen property.*

WM. R. EVANS

Bottlers who used unembossed bottles had a very difficult case to make, claiming that unembossed bottles were stolen from them. Later, starting in 1845, some bottlers started adding phrases like "THIS BOTTLE IS NEVER SOLD" to their bottles as in this advertisement by Adam W. Rapp in the *New York Herald* published on May 5, 1845 stated:



J. & A. DEARBORN  
NEW YORK MINERAL  
WATERS (motif of  
star) UNION GLASS  
WORKS



W. R. EVANS  
PHILAD.A

**TO THE PUBLIC  
TO WHON (sic) IT MAY CONCERN.**

*THE subscriber has, at great expense and labor, got up a Glass Bottle, in every respect improved on those now in use in this city, for Soda or Mineral Waters, in the following particulars – the color blue, partially oval, size larger, and stamped on one side, **this bottle never sold**, and A. W. Rapp, proprietor, on the opposite side, A. W. Rapp, New York. These alterations and additions have been made with a view of distinguishing the Waters and Syrup manufactured by myself from inferior articles which have been deceptively palmed upon the public as being of my manufacture.*

*I therefore now thus publicly **caution all those concerned, and others, against purchasing, using, or keeping in their possession any of the said Bottles**, as there are none bearing any resemblance whatever to them in this city, a plea of ignorance, therefore, will avail nothing; and those bottles will be taken when ever they are found, and persons prosecuted to the extent of law for using, purchasing, or keeping them in their possession, as they are not intended for sale but for my special and exclusive use.*

*Orders for Soda or Mineral Waters handed to either of the drivers, transmitted through the City Dispatch post, or from a distance by mail, inclosing cash, will meet prompt attention.*

ADAM W. RAPP,  
No. 95, 3d Avenue, N. Y.

**T**he bold body text highlights in the above are mine. Legal actions brought by bottlers against illegal users of their bottles were difficult to prosecute and sometimes bottlers took the law into their own hands as documented by this episode involving Eugene Roussel of Philadelphia in the *Public Ledger* on March 15, 1845:

*James Guyer was put upon his trial for assault and battery upon Geo. W. Boggs. The defendant was in the employ of Eugene Roussel, and he went on the occasion in question to the premise of the prosecutor, in company with Mr. R. to seize some mineral water bottles with Mr. R.'s names cast on them, which the prosecutor had in his possession. Mr. R. claimed them as his, from the fact of the name being on them, but Boggs resisted, and a melee ensued. The jury found the verdict of guilty, and the Court sentenced the defendant to pay a fine of one hundred dollars and the cost of prosecution.*

**I**t is possible that George W. Boggs of Boggs & Company used the proceeds to have his own bottles made. After years of petitioning, state legislatures slowly reacted. The first law passed was one in New York State on May 7, 1847. This was followed by a similar law in Pennsylvania in 1849. Other states were soon to follow. The Pennsylvania law was explained as follows in an article in the *Public Ledger* on April 18, 1851:

***Seizure of Bottles and Penalty Imposed.***

*By a law passed in 1849, the manufacturers and venders of Mineral Water and other beverages in bottles, when complying with the requisitions of said law in regard to having their bottles marked and publication there of duly made in the newspapers,*



BOGGS & Co  
MINERAL WATERS  
B



J. DEANE  
164 BROADWAY

are protected specially against the loss of bottles by stealth or improper detention. It is made unlawful for any person to sell or dispose of or to buy or traffic in bottles thus marked not belonging to them, and gives the owners the right and power under a warrant, to search for them in the suspects premise, and to seize and take them away forthwith. The law also imposes a penalty of 50 cents for every bottle so recovered, upon the person in whose possession they are found.

After these acts were passed, bottlers quickly began to advertise for protection of their bottles. Sometimes these were as generic as marking their names on their bottles, but other times the embossing would get very specific, such as this ad following passage of the New York law by Thomas D. Greene and recorded in the *Evening Post* on June 18, 1847:

**Caution.** – The following description of the bottles used by me in my business, is published in Compliance with the Law recently passed by the Legislature:

The following name or mark, to wit, “J. Deane, 164 Broadway,” is stamped on some half pint bottles used by me in the bottling of porter, ale and cider. Said bottles are of green glass, and a description of said names or mark and said bottles has been filed in the office of the Secretary of State, and in the County Clerk’s Office for the City and County of New York.

THOMAS D. GREENE.  
152 Broadway.

Greene had just purchased the business from James Deane and had not yet had his own bottles manufactured. Some advertisements listed multiple bottles and many of

these ads did so with great detail, which is helpful in identifying the dates of usage of specific bottles. One such ad is that from Robinson, Charlesworth & Tryner of New York City in the *New York Tribune* on April 3, 1851:

**NOTICE.** – The undersigned being engaged in the manufacture, bottling and selling of Soda and Mineral waters, Porter, Ale and Cider in bottles with our names and other marks stamped hereon, do hereby publish the following descriptions of the names and other marks so used by us upon our three styles of bottles, viz.:

- 1 **R. C & T NEW-YORK**  
Stamped in raised capital block letters on one side thereof.
- 2 **R. C. & T. NEW-YORK**  
**BROWN STOUT.** (On the reverse side.)  
Stamped as above described.
- 3 **R. C. & T. NEW-YORK**  
**X X** (On the reverse side.)  
Stamped as above described.

As our bottles are never sold by us, we hereby caution all persons against selling, and all bottle dealers or keepers of junk shops against purchasing any of our bottles so marked or stamped. Such offenders will thereby become liable to the penalties of law of this State, passed May, 7, 1847, for which penalties they will certainly be prosecuted by us.-New-York. April, 1851:

ROBINSON, CHARLESWORTH & TYNER  
376 Bowery

Note that the first bottle listed in the above advertisement does not have embossing on the reverse and the exact three bottles listed in these advertisement are pictured below:



Bottle 1 from advertisement above R. C & T. NEW YORK



Bottle 2 obverse and reverse from advertisement above R. C. & T. NEW YORK – BROWN STOUT



Bottle 3 obverse and reverse from advertisement above R. C. & T. NEW YORK – X X



**A**nother example of this notification, by A. P. Smith of Charleston, South Carolina, which appeared in the *Charleston Daily Courier* on April 29, 1850:

*NOTICE.* – The undersigned hereby warns all persons from purchasing empty Soda Water Bottles bearing his stamp as follows: SMITH & CO., PREMIUM SODA WATERS, CHARLESTON, as these bottles are never sold by him; and all persons buying or offering them for sale, will be prosecuted according to law.

A. P. SMITH

Ads like the example noted on the left can provide valuable information to the sharp collector. A. P. Smith, the Englishman, who bottled in Charleston, has several bottles marked with his name and that of Smith & Company, but only the sided soda bottles are listed in this advertisement and dates their manufacture prior to 1850, whereas the mug-based bottles, the plate mold soda bottles and the oversized soda bottles date after 1850.



Sided SMITH & Co. PREMIUM SODA WATER CHARLESTON bottle dating 1850 and before.



Mug-based SMITH & CO. CHARLESTON S.C. UNION GLASS WORKS PHILA SUPERIOR MINERAL WATER bottle dating after 1850.



Plate mold A. P. SMITH CHARLESTON bottle dating after 1850.



Oversized A. P. SMITH CHARLESTON S C bottle dating after 1850.

**A**nother interesting ad is from George W. Brandt of Carlisle, Pennsylvania that also gives useful information as to who manufactured his bottles as documented in the *Carlisle Weekly Herald* on August 3, 1853:

**NOTICE**

THE subscriber having complied with the requirements of the act of the Legislature of Pennsylvania, on the 20th day of April, 1853, cautions all persons against buying, selling or filling his bottles, under the penalty of fifty cents, for each bottle bought, sold, or filled, for the first offence; and \$5.00 for each bottle bought, sold (sic), or filled, for the 2d offence. I hereby announce my determination to enforce the penalty of the aforesaid acts, in all cases of its infringement. I find my bottles are becoming public property, greatly to the disadvantage of my business.

Description-Nos. 1, 2, and 3. Two hundred Gross Mineral and Ale bottles, green shade, **Dyotville** (sic) make, with the name of G. W. Brandt, Carlisle, thereon.

G. W. BRANDT.

The bold highlighting is mine to point out all his bottles were manufactured by the Dyotville Glass Works.



G. W. BRANDT CARLISLE



G. W. BRANDT CARLISLE DYOTVILLE GLASS WORKS PHILA.D.

Another source of information available to researchers of these bottles is the chain of lineage of bottling firms. When one firm bought out another, they typically acquired and registered the predecessor's bottles. When several changes in ownership took place over several years, these ads will list bottles of all the preceding firms. An example of this is the following ad from Morton & Richardson in the *Trenton State Gazette* on March 7, 1854:

**NOTICE**

*Is hereby given that the undersigned has this third day of March, 1854, filed in the Clerk's Office of the county of Mercer, and State of New Jersey, a description of the bottles owned and used by them in the manufacture of Mineral Waters, Spruce Beer, Mead and Bottling of Porter, in said county of Mercer, viz our bottles are of the form, size and kind commonly used in the manufacture of these beverages. Mineral Water Bottles marked **W. Morton**, Trenton, N. J., Porter bottles marked on one side **N. Richardson**, Trenton, on the other "this bottle is never sold. Also Porter Bot-*

*tlles marked **McFarland & Simpson**, Philadelphia, Spruce Beer and Mead Bottles **W. Morton**, others **Morton & Richardson**.*

*All persons are hereby notified not to destroy, secreted, use, sell, or traffic in any of our bottles, under the penalty of the law, in such case made and provided.*

*MORTON & RICHARDSON*

The bold highlighting is mine to reflect the current firm of Morton & Richardson and predecessor firms of Nathan Richardson and William Morton. This ad also mentions porter bottles marked McFarland & Simpson of Philadelphia. Many times firms would legally buy excess supplies of bottles or bottles of firms that were going out of business. The firm of McFarland & Simpson was short-lived and the predecessor and successor, Andrew McFarland, appears to have sold off the porter bottles of this firm, but retained the mineral water bottles. These types of advertisements can be found throughout the country.



**W. MORTON TRENTON N. J. "W"** (Script)  
soda water bottle pre-partnership



**N. RICHARDSON TRENTON N. J. "N" THIS BOTTLE NEVER SOLD** porter bottle pre-partnership



**MORTON & RICHARDSON**  
Mead bottle dated 1854

Perhaps the most extensive list of bottles from predecessor firms and those bottles purchased, possibly legally and/or perhaps illegally, was that of Edmund S. Clark as documented in this ad in the *Mobile Daily Times* on May 12, 1867:

**NOTICE.**

*I do hereby give notice that I will institute criminal proceedings against any and all parties, purchasing or selling, for any use*

*whatever, any of the SODA WATER BOTTLES and BOXES, branded with the following trade marks, to-wit:*

*CLARK & WELLS,  
CLARK & MUNN*

*And I do further give notice that all parties who, have received from me plain Soda bottles and boxes, or of any brand whatever, and more especially those branded-*

*J. H. Kump,*

*B. E. Dye,*

*Antique Bottle & Glass Collector*

Martin & Winter,  
Dearborn,  
H. Battlemann,  
Honesdale Glass Works,  
A. Lohn,

J. Schweinhart,  
Daniel Kaiser,  
Dewell Bros.,  
M. L. Nashville, Tenn.,  
J. Karns,

*Plain Bottles.*

*have disposed or will hereafter dispose of them, that I will institute against criminal proceedings for theft, and against those purchasing the same, for receiving stolen goods knowing them to be stolen. I having brought on the whole stock of the above named firms, and being the only one in possession of it.*

*E. S. CLARK.*

*Soda Water Manufactory,  
corner Dauphin and Franklin sts.*

It is interesting that Clark does not mention bottles with his own name on them at this time. Clark & Wells and Clark & Munn were two of the partnerships that E. S. Clark was previously a part of in Mobile, Alabama. It is likely that bottles with his name were produced soon after this ad was published. The J. H. Kump bottles were likely those marked Memphis. Clark was a partner with Kump in Vicksburg and Natchez, Mississippi in the firm of Kump & Co. No bottles are known from this partnership. Bryon E. Dye worked for Philo M. Clark in Indianapolis and briefly

took ownership of the plant when Clark moved on. Philo M. Clark was somehow related to E. S. Clark and later they were partners in Mobile. Dye later partnered with J. F. Kump as J. F. Kump & Company in Kansas City. How J. H. Kump & Company and J. F. Kump & Company in Kansas City are related is yet to be unraveled. Several of the firms listed were from the New York City area. These include Martens & Winter of Brooklyn (misspelled Martins), Dearborn of New York City, Henry Battermann of New York City (misspelled Battlemann) and Deuell Brothers (misspelled Dewell) of Williamsburg. The Honesdale Glass Works bottles were also likely from the New York City area. The Honesdale Glass Works were located in Northeastern Pennsylvania, but much of its product was sent via canal to Newark, New Jersey and then a short hop to the New York metro area. The J. Schweinhart bottles were from Pittsburgh. The Daniel Kaiser bottles are likely from his Keokuk, Iowa operation and not his earlier Quincy, Illinois operations. The J. Cairns (misspelled Karns) were likely also from the operations in Keokuk, but could have been from the Cairns operation in Saint Louis. The M. L. bottles are from Nashville as stated from a still unknown bottler. The A. Lohr bottles (misspelled Lohn) are from Cairo, Illinois. It would be interesting if the bottles listed in Clark's advertisement from these firms are dug in the Mobile area.



**CLARK & WELLS MOBILE. ALA.**  
soda water bottle dating before  
the advertisement.



**CLARK & MUNN MOBILE**  
soda water bottle dating before  
the advertisement.



**HONESDALE GLASS WORKS –  
MINERAL WATER** bottle used by  
Clark at the time of advertisement.



**E. S. CLARK MOBILE ALA.**  
soda water bottle that appears were  
made after the advertisement.

I have no idea how Clark intended to prosecute holders of unembossed bottles, but Marsden & Denhalter, of Salt Lake City, Utah Territory, seem to have solved the problem of identifying unembossed bottles as their property. They simply claimed that “all” soda bottles not marked with the name of their only competitor, Thomas Parsons, in the Great Salt Lake Basin belonged to them! Their advertisement appeared in the *Salt Lake Herald Republican* newspaper for a number of issues, including the one below on May 10, 1878:

**SODA WATER BOTTLES.**

*Notice is hereby given that all soda bottles in the city and adjacent towns that have not Parsons’ name blown in them, belong to the firm of Marsden & Denhalter. Bottle and junk dealers are hereby notified that we shall prosecute persons buying, selling or filling them, as they are our private property.*

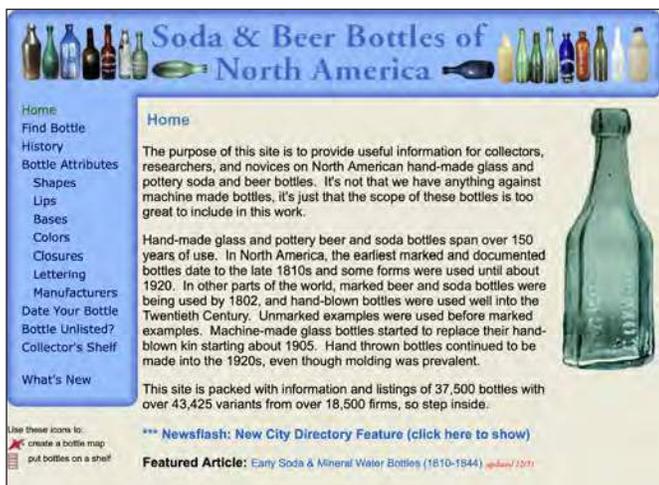
MARSDEN & DENHALTER

So no matter if bottles were embossed with the names of bottlers from San Francisco, California or New York City, New York, Marsden & Denhalter claimed all soda bottles were their property.

These types of advertisements continued through the end of the nineteenth century. Especially interesting to collectors are bottles that are listed but are not known to exist. I have seen several of these in ads from Philadelphia and hope to turn up actual examples. I call them phantom bottles as they haunt me! I know they exist, but cannot find them.

Photos courtesy of Larry Grotz and Glass Works Auctions.

Please visit my website Soda & Beer Bottles of North America for information: [www.sodasandbeers.com](http://www.sodasandbeers.com).



Comments can be directed to [todvon@verizon.net](mailto:todvon@verizon.net)



Again, I would like to encourage all Bottle Clubs to connect with the FOHBC to ensure that their Club’s show is promoted in the best possible way. If there are any questions you have about submitting a show report or other information you need for your club, please ask. All of our directors are here to help your club prosper! Until next issue, happy bottle hunting!

**Midwest Region [Henry Hecker, Director]**

The **Kansas Territorial Antique Bottle and Post Card Club** held their show on April 2nd at the fairgrounds in Hutchinson, Kansas. According to Mike McJunkin, one of the organizers, the show was a rousing success with 100 sales tables, many great displays of an eclectic assortment of inks, medicines, dairy, uranium glass, and insulators. The show was the club’s 16th annual, free to the public and well attended with brisk sales.



Meadow Gold Milk by Rick Knight, Topeka, Kansas



Labeled Medicines & Bitters, many with contents by Henry Tankersley, Tulsa, Oklahoma

The **North Star Historical Bottle Association** in Minneapolis, Minn. held its 51st show on April 16th. Steve Ketchum reports that while tables were down somewhat, attendance and buying were very strong.

Of special note, President Seeliger attended and “scored” a vivid aqua Warner’s Safe Rheumatic Remedy that may be unique. [See page 65 this issue for picture]

As a member of four history involved organizations, all requiring dedicated volunteers, several challenges strike me as paramount in maintaining the long-term viability of these bodies:

- a) Continuous recruitment of new members.
- b) Engagement with the public: other like organizations, schools, museums et al.
- c) Marketing our contributions using every media possible with special emphasis on youth.
- d) An executable strategic plan that includes formal fundraising and member cultivation at its core.

In my opinion, FOHBC is doing things right thanks to those dedicated volunteers!