

Let's Talk About Ink

with Ed & Lucy Faulkner



Figure 9

Ephemera, Labeled Inks and More...

I started this article twice and nothing was working, so I put it aside and we headed for the Mansfield Bottle Show. The show and the trip home provided the inspiration for this article. (Another good reason to go to bottle shows!)

Finding old ink ads, trade cards, and letterheads is hard. Most are sold as soon as they come on the market. But one dealer at the 2005 Mansfield show had some ink company letterheads he was selling. These letterheads often provide information on companies when no other information is available. The first one [Figure 1] is from the Stafford Company. Other than one paragraph in the book, FORTY CENTURIES OF INK, I haven't found any other information on Stafford. But the letterhead to the right shows the date of establishment, 1858, address in 1883, and a list of products which includes Stickwell Glue. These bottles are common, but I had never connected them to Stafford until finding a Stafford letterhead. Also note that this one was a receipt for a demijohn of Stickwell glue. It hadn't occurred to me that glue was sold in demijohns until I saw this.

The second letterhead (or billhead) [Figure 2] is from Law's Bluing and Superior Ink Company. A lot of ink companies made bluing, and a lot of bluing companies advertised using their bluing full strength for ink. (For you young people reading this, bluing was added to the rinse water when washing white clothes. Old cotton turned yellow or dull with repeated washings. Blue is on the opposite end of the color wheel from yellow and adding blue to the water gave the appearance of a whiter color to the clothes.) This was probably a cheap ink for many people to use. On the same note, many dye companies, such as Diamond Dye, advertised the use of their dye as ink for school children. One ten cent package made a pint of ink.

The third letterhead [Figure 3] I did not get at Mansfield, but am including it because of a question a club member asked at our last meeting. He wondered if Bixby actually made ink, as most bottles he had seen were for blacking or shoe polish. This billhead not only shows ink as a product, but also shows they had a warehouse in Cincinnati in 1879. Their labels show New York as the main address. Pictured [Figure 4] is an umbrella ink with Bixby label.

We had not intended to go to the Mansfield auction (held after a wonderful meal, free to dealers and early admissions), but decided to just check out the items in case something of interest to us might be there. A Carter's bottle listed as "Carter's Ink with label" turned out to be for Carter Bros. & Co. This name dates the bottle to the period of 1867-1872, according to Carter Company history. Also listed was the address for the Boston company as well as J. P.

Dinsmore's address in New York. Most early Carter's labels just show Boston and New York. This had 27 Milk St., Boston for Carter's, an address previously unknown to us, and 36 Dey St., New York for Dinsmore. But it gets more interesting. Deciding to take a long way home, we went to Gettysburg and New Oxford, Pennsylvania, to visit the antique malls there. I always check out old almanacs and magazines for ads, and imagine my surprise when I opened one and there was an ad for Carter Bros. & Co. at the Milk

Street address. The magazine was from February 6, 1869. So we determined that they were at this address sometime before then. Pictured here is the bottle, a green pint, vertically embossed with pour spout. Also pictured is the ad we found. [Figures 5 and 6] As of this writing, we can find no reference to this address in Carter literature, so possibly it was an office address. The label is similar to later ones except for the version of the Carter name and address.

In New Oxford we found an ad by the Stephens Company of London, advertising its ink for shipment to the US. This ad is from 1847. [Figure 7] There are many bottles found, in both pottery and glass, with the Stephens name. Stephens and Arnold's Ink companies both had a large share of the US market in the mid-19th century.

Next [Figure 8] is a bottle with a label, found in Gettysburg, that has nothing to do with ink. It is included, not only because it is interesting, but for informational purposes. In auctions, ebay, and at shows, a pottery bottle with pour spout is nearly always identified as "probably an ink bottle". This is not always true. This large 10 3/4" bottle with pour spout and a Bourne & Denby

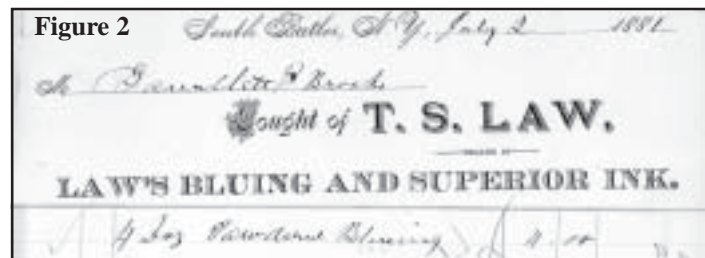
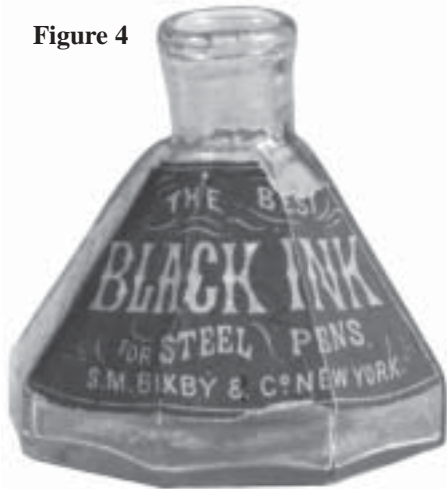


Figure 4



< Figure 6 ^

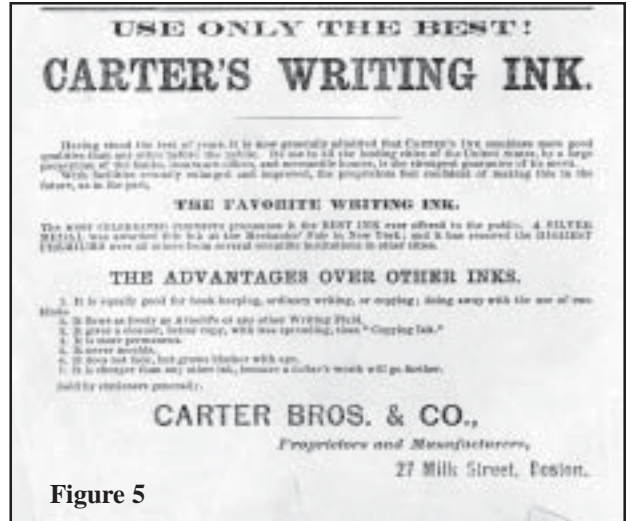


Figure 5

pottery mark, has a label for a product that cleans the scarlet hunting coats of the English fox hunters. On the sides are testimonials from individuals who say it is wonderful for cleaning the coats when they fall from their horses into the mud. Who would have thought a product just for fox hunters would have been created and found a niche in the market place. One testimonial is from 1888, the other 1910, so this dates the bottle to the early 20th century.

Lastly, a note about some bottles we had wondered about for years. There are a number of small bottles embossed with only A & F. No one seemed to know for sure what A & F stood for. We found two with an exact patent date which we looked up. These A & F bottles were for the Adams and Fay Company of Cleveland, Ohio. The small bottle pictured here was designed not to need a label and it was used for both glue and ink. [Figures 9 and 10] Adams and Fay also secured a trademark for Young America School Ink in 1872, so it seems they patented their bottles to be unique to their ink company.

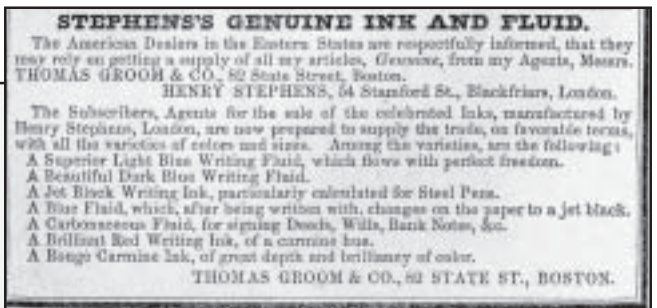
Many bottle collectors don't seek out information relating to their area of interest, but these labels and other scraps of paper illustrate what interesting bits of history are available if you look carefully. Information on companies can be helpful in determining if a bottle is a replica or has an incorrect label. Another benefit is that ephemera is often inexpensive or free from internet sites such as the patent office. Some ephemera can be framed and mounted on the wall next to your bottles, an attractive addition to your display.

References:

- Boston Farmer's Almanac, 1847 (Stephen's)
- Littell's Living Age, Feb. 6, 1869 (Carter Bros. & Co.)
- US Patent Office (A & F)



Fig. 8



^ Figure 7

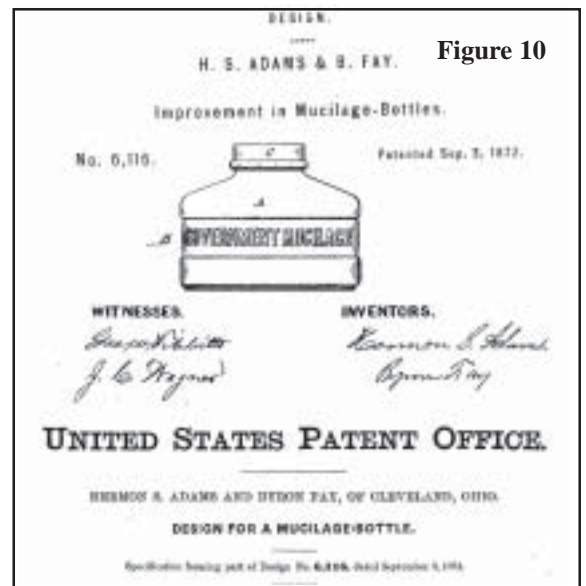


Figure 10

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Ink Bottle Collectors (& glass works bottles)

<http://home.comcast.net/~edandlucy1/>