

Decorating on the tins we collect

There are many claims with regard to tin decoration — who did what first and when. The calendar below is a compilation of some of these dates with an indication of what was done or at least what was claimed to have been accomplished. Initially three different techniques (*1; *2; *3) were used to decorate on tin with seemingly an overlapping of processes.

1810 *Use of Containers for Packing/Preserving of Food:* A British patent was given in this year for preserving foods in glass, pottery, tin, and other metal containers.

1812 *U.S. Manufacturing:* Thomas Kennett established a plant in New York where he hermetically sealed seafood, vegetables, fruits, and meats in glass containers.

1825 *Use of Tin Containers:* In this year Mr. Kennett applied for a patent for the use of tin containers for the preservation of food.

1825 *Patent for the Tin Can:* In this year the first tin can patent was granted in the United States. It was issued to Allen Taylor for a machine-stamped tin with extension edges. Obviously there was no tin decoration at this time.

1856 *1. *Transfer Printing Patent:* The first transfer printing patent was granted in England though its use was not primarily on metals. Transfer printing was really the first successful technique for printing in color on tin.

1862 *Use of Transfer Printing:* At the Great Exhibition in 1862 F. A. Appel was awarded a medal for varnished metal plates decorated through a transfer printing process.

1864 *2. *Direct Tin Printing:* In this year a patent was granted in England to W. E. Gedge which was assigned by Mr. Gedge to the Neath Tin Plate Decorating Co. The patent encompassed a method of direct tin printing. There were difficulties in printing more than one color under the direct process as the metal blank had to match on

each pass on which another color was added (unless the first color was only a solid background).

1868 *Benjamin George Patent:* The first biscuit tin using the Benjamin George patent appeared in this year through a transfer method. The Benjamin George patent can be found on many early British biscuit and tea tins. The transfer process used a lithographic press. Two additional transfer patents were granted to Mr. George in the early 1870s.

During this period Benjamin George continually improved the transfer method of tin decorating — both in time and quality, but more importantly in cost. He was paid approximately three pounds for every 100 flat sheets which were then configured by another organization.

1868 *Norton Brothers:* Edward Norton began the manufacture of tin cans in this year. The Norton brothers were the motivating force in eventually consolidating many small tin makers into the American Can Co.

1869 *Somers Brothers:* This company began in metal decoration during this year.

1871 *Thomas Davidson & Company:* This Canadian company seems to have been formed in this year though Mr. Davidson was stamping tin ware in some form in the 1860s. It primarily produced stencil tins in its early years.

1875 *3. *Offset Lithography:* The first two offset lithography patents in England were granted in this year to Barclay & Fry in the name of the company and in Mr. Barclay's name. It was much better than transfer printing for tin decorating and soon became the preferred avenue. Evidently there had been prior use of offset lithography on metal in Europe. (There is literature which indicates that Barclay & Fry patented the offset press in 1870.)

1875 *Tapered Can:* In this year Arthur A. Libby and William J. Wilson created the tapered can which was used for canning of corned beef for Underwood.

1877 *Offset Lithography Sale:* The

process was sold in 1877 to Bryant & May by Barclay & Fry after Mr. Barclay's death. Most collectors are familiar primarily with the early Bryant & May match and vesta tins. Printing was normally done on a flat bed press.

1879 *Lithography and the Somers Brothers:* Probably the patent most seen on early tins is the 1879 Somers patent. It was granted in this year for a unique process for lithography on tin containers.

1880 *MacDonald Manufacturing Company:* This corporation was the other early major tin decorator in Canada. Mr. MacDonald seems to have been in a similar activity before the formation of this business.

1890 *Sprinkler Tins:* Somers Brothers created a tin container for Mennen for the delivery of powder in a misting manner.

1900 *Sanitary Can:* This can was produced for the first time in Europe.

1900 *Tindec:* This company was formed in Baltimore.

1901 *New Companies:* The giant American Can Co. had its beginnings in this year. It was also the first year for Cincinnati based Heeking Can.

1914 *Continuous Ovens:* This year signified a major change in the manufacture of tin cans. This manner of using continuous ovens to dry the inked tin added significant speed to the lithographic process for decoration of flats used for both signs, tin cans and other metallic advertising.

This research is provided courtesy of "Past Times - a newsletter for collectors of antique advertising," Volume I, Number 6 (1992), American Antique Advertising Association.

Companies that specialized in Chromo-Lithographic printing on metal advertising items

1887-1901

The Tuscarora Advertising Company (Coshocton, Ohio)

1888-1901

The Standard Advertising Company (Coshocton, Ohio)

1901-1905

The Meek and Beach Company (Coshocton, Ohio). This firm, in 1901, purchased both the Tuscarora Advertising Company and the Standard Advertising Company.

1901-1909

The Meek Company (Coshocton, Ohio)

1901-present

The H. D. Beach Company (Coshocton, Ohio)

1909-1950

American Art Works (Coshocton, Ohio). This firm was formerly called the Meek Company.

1890-1935

Charles W. Shonk Manufacturing & Lithograph Company (Chicago, Illinois)

1890-1970

Kaufmann & Strauss (New York City)

1901-present

American Can Company

1930-1950

American Colortype Company (Newark, New Jersey). Advertising printed by this firm is marked "A.C.Co."

This research is provided courtesy of "The Illustrated Guide to the Collectibles of Coca-Cola" by Cecil Munsey, Hawthorn Books, Inc. - Publishers, New York, 1970.

Something for Nothing

by Cecil Munsey

As a boy living at York Beach, Maine I heard tales of people getting rich from finding a lump of ambergris – a natural digestive bile produced by sperm whales and occasionally vomited up by the creatures, usually out to sea. You see, ambergris was – and is – used in perfumes, medicines and flavorings (except in the United States, where it is banned under endangered species legislation).

Of course I daily walked the shore of York Beach dreaming that I would find a chunk of ambergris. And later I combed the beaches in Florida where we moved and lived for a year or so.

I studied and learned that ambergris, in fresh form, is soft and foul smelling, often studded with bits and pieces of beak from giant squid – a primary prey of sperm whales. But if it remains afloat and intact long enough, sun and salt water transform it into clean, waxy, compact substance with a sweet, alluring smell.

As one would expect, I never found any ambergris but I wallowed in the dreams of the riches I would have when I found my piece of whale vomit as I beach combed for those several years. I look back and recall the hundreds of pieces of beach glass (chunks broken glass that had been tumbled smooth by the ocean waves), seashells, and the occasional glass bottles that I found. Not knowing that there was value in old bottles, I focused on the sea glass and seashells. Today, all I have left from those youthful times is a conch shell

I took away from the creature living in it. I turned the shell into a horn by cutting off the tip, so that it could be played like a trumpet and as an adult I turned it into a lamp that is still shining here in my office as I write this.

Recently, in my seventh decade, I visited Australia on a vacation. Besides their summer being more hot and humid than I can ever remember (their summer is our winter), I experienced many interesting things. I came across some of those old bottles I have come to appreciate since those beachcombing days of my youth.

AND I finally came across a lump of ambergris. Yes, I did. On the local television news one evening there was a story about Leon Wright and his wife who recently were strolling along the beach around Streaky Bay in South Australia when they happened upon a large, strange lump of unidentifiable stuff. Being prudent folk, the couple poked the lump, frowned intently and left it right where it was. Two weeks later, while taking another walk along the same stretch of beach, they came upon the lump again. This time Mrs. Wright persuaded her husband to take it home. They showed it to a local marine ecologist named Ken Jury. Ken's verdict was swift and certain: The lump was a rare bit of recovered ambergris. The Wrights quickly cashed in upon their beach treasure, converting their 32 1/2-pound lump of ambergris into \$295,000.

