

## Unexpected Collector Connections

from Steve Ketcham

It was the perfect combination. The bottle show would be held in Kentucky on June 28-29. Our trip would begin on June 23. We would follow the river south and hit the shops on the way. We allowed three days to shop and sightsee along the beautiful Mississippi, then we would turn east to Kentucky and the Ohio River town of Louisville.

Our first night on the road was spent in Galena, Illinois. To know this town is to love it. Nine Civil War generals, including U.S. Grant, grew up here. Block after block of proud, old brick commercial buildings line the narrow main street. To peer down the line at these grand old structures is to look back into the 1800s. Twenty years ago, this historic town was a Mecca for antiques hunters. While the charm of the town endures, only a couple of true antiques shops remain. Today the grand old buildings house gift shops and decorator stores which are so much easier to stock. One clerk admitted that most tourists aren't looking for antiques. It is easier for proprietors to order cookie-cutter souvenirs and gifts from a catalog than it is to find unique, genuine antiques with which to stock the shelves. One true antiques shop remains downtown, and one mall can be found a couple of miles south of town, but we could find nothing to buy in this wonderful old village except dinner at a nice downtown pub.



This sultry lass was employed by the Drummond Tobacco Company to sell its wares. In small letters at the bottom of the 24 X 18 inch poster the ad reads: Compliments of Drummond Tobacco Company, St. Louis, Mo. Manufacturers of "Horse Shoe" "J.T" and "Drummond Natural Leaf" Chewing Tobaccos. Copyright 1894 by Drummond Tobacco Company St. Louis."

Our next two nights were in Alton, Illinois, across the river and about a half-hour north of St. Louis. We were here two years ago, and we knew that the shops were plentiful. Based on promotional literature which promised numerous antiques shops, we planned a trip to the river town of Grafton, Illinois, on our first morning in Alton. The tourist literature made the town, just 15 miles north of Alton, look like a good place to begin. But appearance and reality can often differ. It was a late-June, tourist-season Wednesday, and we arrived at about 10:30. By 11:30, only one mall was open. A peek through darkened windows made it clear that to describe some of the other establishments as antiques shops was a generous choice of words. Three of the shops never did open while we were in town. Instead, the owners had posted those supposedly-clever window signs which suggest that their shop hours were less than regular, dependent upon the random whims of the owners. Cute signs to some, perhaps, but quite irritating to those traveling hundreds of miles to do some serious shopping.

Alton itself was another story. The shops on Broadway, just a block or two from the river, were nearly all open. Friendly shop keepers were the rule, though one small dog took exception to our presence. It is clear that the owners of these shops work hard to keep interesting merchandise on hand. We found several good buys and felt our time here was well spent.

Our stay in Alton was punctuated by more than good antiques hunting. Here we were reminded that almost any time we travel, we can find interesting and stimulating connections to the pieces of history we so love to collect. Two such experiences awaited us in Alton.

We stayed at the Beall Mansion Bed and Breakfast, a late-Victorian mansion built in 1903. Upon arrival, owners Jim and Sandy Belote gave us a tour of the premises and narrated a brief history of the magnificent old dwelling. They pointed out that the first floor features four kinds of woodwork. The entry is oak, the parlor shines with cherry wood, the dining room features walnut woodwork, and the butler's pantry is done in cypress. Curious, but altogether understandable once it is known that the man who built the home was once in the lumber business.

We spent two wonderful nights at the Beall Mansion, enjoying the friendly hospitality of the Belotes, the comfortable front porch, and the history behind the house as our hosts shared it with us. The Beall mansion was built by Z.B. Job as a wedding present for his son, Z.B. Job Junior and his bride, Mary Drummond. Job Senior was a crafty fellow who built a fortune through his holdings in real estate, steam boats, rail roads, mining, and lumber. He managed to do this while serving as Alton's sheriff, earning a paltry 50 cents a day. The first connection to our collecting interests lay not with old Z.B. Job, but with his daughter -in-law, Mary Drummond. Miss Drummond was heiress to the fortune of James T. Drummond, who founded the Drummond Tobacco Company of St. Louis. James Drummond was also Alton's mayor from 1868 to 1871. Is it any wonder that the children of a former mayor and the sheriff might marry?

Drummond collectibles, in the form of tins, trade cards, and advertising posters, are somehow more interesting once one has spent time in the former home of Mary Drummond. The history



Small in comparison to the Drummond poster, this 5 X 3 inch trade card also promoted Drummond tobaccos using the theme of a different sport.

of the place becomes even more intriguing when it is learned that Mary Drummond sold it to the Beall family after she had Z.B. Job Junior declared legally insane in 1909.

As for the Bealls, well, they were friends of Theodore Roosevelt, and they happened to manufacture a good amount of the equipment used in the digging of the Panama Canal.

The Beall mansion was designed by architect Lucas Pfeifferberger. A walk around the neighborhood will bring visitors to another collector connection involving Pfeifferberger.

It seems the architect was hired to design a play house for on Lucy Haskell, a child of 5. Its main interior room measures 16 by 20 feet. Lucy's grandfather, John E. Hayner, had the Queen Anne style structure built for her in 1885. Sadly, Lucy died of diphtheria in 1909, but the diminutive house still stands aside her parent's home in Alton, all surrounded by a park dedicated to the young lady.

Grandfather Hayner is the second collector connection we found during our Alton visit. At first we wondered whether he was connected to the Hayner Distilling Company of Dayton, Ohio, and St. Louis, Missouri. We could not establish a connection between this Hayner and the distillery, but a little digging at

www.findagrave.com helped us learn that John E. Hayner was a banker, financier, and founder of the Alton Box Company. He purchased a bankrupt glass company in 1873 and sold it to Edward Levis and William Smith. This glassworks went on to become Owens-Illinois Glass Company, a name very familiar to glass and bottle collectors.

No article involving travel with my wife would be complete without at least one mention of a bakery. Our first morning, we walked the neighborhood and admired countless old homes. Just two or three blocks from the Beall mansion we found Dukes Bakery, an establishment which has served up tasty pastry and bread in Alton for 50 years. When we learned that the entire bakery would close for vacation just days after our visit, we knew this trip was meant to be.

The bottle show in Louisville was next. Over 200 tables were filled with an excellent assortment of antique bottles, advertising, and stoneware. Collectors and dealers from California to New York were in attendance, and sales were good. A fine group of displays was presented, including early root beer collectibles, Illinois bottles, bitters, rare western whiskey and beer bottles, Louisville mini jugs, rare cures, inks, and fruit jars. An antique bottle auction, organized by the Federation of Historical Bottle Collectors, saw spirited bidding on Saturday night.

It was in downtown Louisville that we found yet another curious collector connection. We took our lodging for this event at the Louisville downtown Hyatt, just a couple blocks from the Ohio River and directly across the street from the convention center. Our room was on the seventeenth floor, and it provided a splendid view of downtown Louisville and the river. As it happens, the first stages of construction for another hotel were taking place just one block away. As collectors gathered at the hotel, the speculation grew as to what early items might have been dug from such a site in this historic Ohio River town. Remarkably, our questions were answered when a group of local diggers presented a stunning display of artifacts dug earlier from the very site we had all been watching. Hundreds of pounds of broken bottles, jars, stoneware, mochoware, and lamp parts, most dating to before 1860, filled the floor in front of the display. A case behind it featured whole bottles dug in the Louisville area,

including bottles from the dig site a block away. It was thrilling to think that these shards were left behind by everyday folks like us who had walked these very streets over 150 years ago.

The presence of these wondrous, old Louisville artifacts reminded us all that a good amount of the past, whether under ground or in some forgotten attic, is yet to be uncovered. And as our Alton visit reminded us, the stories of the people behind the antiques are just as compelling as the pieces themselves. To truly appreciate what we collect, we must appreciate those who first left these pieces of history behind. To do that, it's sometimes just a matter of keeping an eye open for those unexpected collector connections.



The shards in the foreground of this display were all dug within one block of the Louisville bottle show site. Dating to about 1850, this pile of yesterday's debris held those who viewed it in awe.



All the show displays are featured, beginning on page 31.