

SECOND DRAFT

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Essay

GIN BOTTLES

– A HISTORICAL & PICTORIAL ESSAY

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by

Cecil Munsey

INTRODUCTION: In the late 1960s, while under contract to Hawthorn Books, Inc, Publishers of New York, to write a comprehensive 100,000 word book-length manuscript on bottles and their history, I became fascinated with Case (gin) bottles. The resulting book is entitled, *The Illustrated Guide to COLLECTING BOTTLES* (Fig. 78). It was first published in 1970 and subsequently sold more than 50,000 copies in both hardbound and paperback editions; it was a Book-of-the-Month selection and became a best-selling hobby publication and what many claim to be the textbook on bottle collecting. As the standard work for the study of old and new bottles, every chapter – over the years – has been the inspiration for at least several books; and some of the chapters provided inspiration for other books in the most popular bottle collecting

specialties. While currently out of print, the “coffee-table” book is almost always offered for sale in used condition on the Internet at such auction sites such as eBay.

[From the book, reprinted here is Chapter 18, “Case Bottles,” pp. 84 & 85]:

Case Bottles

Gin and its glass containers are not as aged as many collectors think. This is not to say that gin bottles are not old but rather that they are not as ancient as they might appear.

A study of the history of gin will serve as a basis for dating the earliest gin bottles. Gin was first discovered by accident in the mid-1600s by Francisco de la Boe (1614-1672), a professor of medicine at the University of Leyden in Holland. Gin is liquor distilled from malt, barley, or rye and flavored with juniper berries or coriander seeds or angelica root. It was with the above ingredients that Professor de la Boe was experimenting, trying to perfect a diuretic to promote kidney function, when he unknowingly created what is known today as gin.

At first gin was dispensed as a medicine in apothecary shops but soon became so popular that many apothecaries switched to distilling it full time. They were, of course, soon joined by other distillers as gin gained in popularity. Gin is very inexpensive to make, and therefore it can be sold cheaply; this fact made gin a favorite drink of the lower classes, including the common soldier. It was the soldier returning from the wars on the continent who introduced gin to England. The English people readily accepted the new beverage and within a short time it had become almost the national drink. William of Orange (William III of England – 1650-1702) introduced gin to the English nobility and it was immediately accepted at court.

By the mid-1700s Englishmen, especially the lower classes, were consuming so much gin that King George II became worried about his people; in order to reduce its use he imposed a heavy tax on the liquor. Instead of reducing consumption King George merely forced the people to find a way of avoiding the tax. Gin went back to the apothecary shops where it was originally dispensed. Gin with bitter flavoring added took on the guise of a medicine called “bitters.”

By the end of the eighteenth century gin had become a popular drink in most of Europe; the Dutch alone were producing an estimated fourteen million gallons annually.

The first names given to gin were *Geneva* or *genever* which were Dutch alterations of *genievre*, a French word for juniper. It was the English who shortened the word to “gin.”

Containers for gin have been many and varied over the centuries. A variety of stoneware bottles were used as were many cylindrical glass

bottles, but most predominant of all gin containers has been square-bodied “case” bottles. They were designed to fit in wooden cases (boxes or chests) to facilitate shipping and easy removal from those boxes (**Figs. 75; 76; 77**). The term “case bottle” originally referred to an octagonal (eight-sided) bottle, not the tapered Dutch gin bottle we know today.



During the seventeenth (1600s) and eighteenth (1700s) centuries case bottles were used extensively by chemists and apothecaries; since gin was originally dispensed as a medicine it is safe to assume that from its inception it was distributed in case bottles. Case bottles of the seventeenth century differ little from those of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but the earlier examples were almost straight-sided, whereas the later type were more tapered.

It is difficult to differentiate between Dutch, English, and American specimens because English and American glasshouses made use of Dutch craftsmen, and vice versa. There are similar problems when dating is attempted. Unlike wine bottles the glass seals found on case bottles are seldom dated, since the gin does not need aging. Very general dating can be accomplished, however, by noting crudeness, color, and deterioration of the glass. At best these methods are approximate, for flaws were quite common; colors were generally light olive-amber, green, or black; and impurities in the basic glass mixture varied, causing deterioration at different rates, so that precise dating is impossible by these means.

Perhaps a better dating method is to study construction. From around the beginning of the seventeenth century the flared mouth was predominant on case bottles. Severing the neck from the blowpipe and widening it at the top with the aid of an appropriate tool created the flare; the lip was then fire polished.

Later types featured an applied collar; after severing from the blowpipe a separate piece of glass was added around the neck of the bottle and developed into a finished lip. There is little difference in the two collars except that one was developed from the neck while the other one was developed from additional glass added to the neck. The neck lengths seem to be associated with manufacturing dates; the earliest case bottles have short necks while the later types have extended necks.

A third type of gin bottle which closely resembles the two flared mouth containers of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries is the sloping collared case bottles which are mostly from the nineteenth century.

Except for the slight variation of mouth formation most case bottles have the same basic shape already discussed. Case bottles blown before the mid-1800s approximately have scars on their base left by breaking off of the pontil rod.

The earliest specimens of case bottles were obviously free-blown and squared by pressing a wooden paddle, while later types (eighteenth and nineteenth century) were blown in dip molds. As two- and three-part molds became popular case bottles became less individualistic and more uniform in construction. Also during the latter part of the nineteenth century plate molds were used in manufacturing of case bottles. With this improvement came a variety of embossments.

Another unusual case bottle is the expanded mouth or *wide mouth rum*. It is doubtful if this container was really used for rum, it seems more likely that it would have been utilized for things requiring a wide mouth container such as pickles, snuff, or powdered jalap (used as a purgative). The mouths of these containers range from two to three inches in diameter.

Some distillers adhering to tradition still sell gin today in case type bottles but these are of little interest to collectors of antique bottles. Some of these newer bottles have screw cap closures but some still romantically cling to the cork closure. Careful examination of such bottles will reveal their age; they are usually made by the automatic blowing machine and can be identified by the resulting mold markings. The most outstanding feature of early case bottles is their traditional shape and crudeness. While there is little variation in shape, these bottles were made in a variety of sizes from less than a half pint to several gallons; the half-gallon size was usually about ten inches in height.

Although case bottles were made in dark colors (olive-amber) for the most part, they are occasionally located in light amber, light olive-amber, clear glass (**Fig. 42**), and some even in milk glass (**Fig. 66**). Unusual colors, age, and crudeness all affect the prices of these containers.

Embossments were numerous on the late nineteenth-century bottles. In addition to a range of lettering usually identifying the company whose product the bottle contained there were many figures and designs such as people, animals, birds, stars, and crests. These embossments affect the pricing, and highly embossed case bottles, are, of course, considered more valuable.



(Fig.42)

Comprehensive Photograph Collection (Figs. 1 through 78)
of Antique Gin (Case) Bottles courtesy and credit to:

Theo Hulst – Australia

Rick O'Driscoll – Australia

Peter Vermeulen – Netherlands

Bill Brown – Australia

James F. Shaefer, II – United States of America

Willy Van Den Bossche – Great Britain

Tom & Kathy Dywanski – Canada

PHOTOGRAPHS



1. VAN MEERTEN & ZONEN c.1850
™seal: Polar Bear



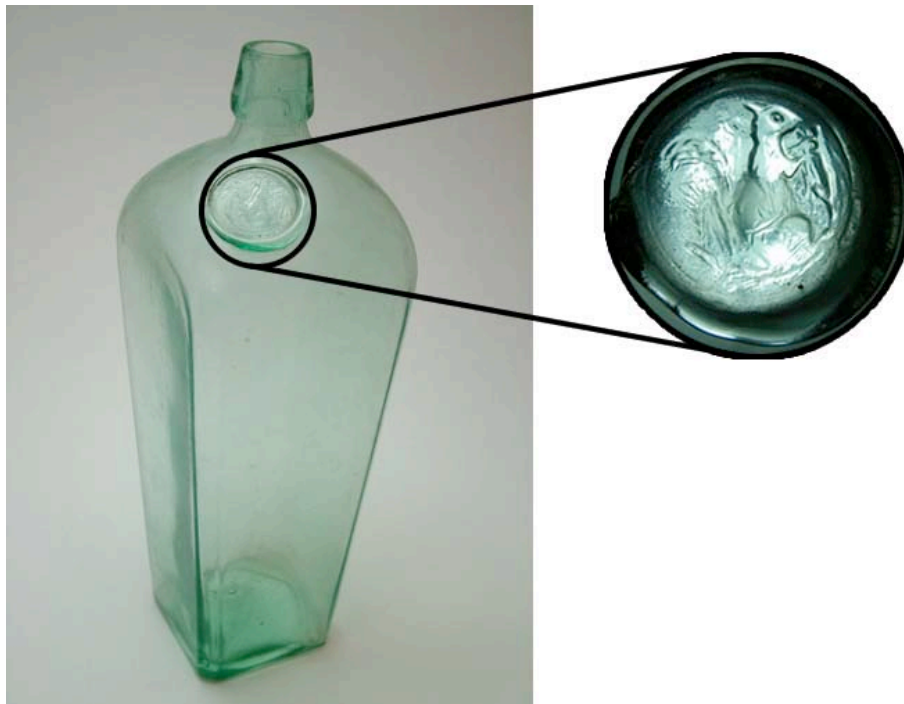
2. SEAHORSE
™ seal: Seahorse



3. LION-BRAND c.1880
™ seal: Royal Lion



4. RABBIT W. HASENKAMP c.1900 Schiedam
™ seal: Rabbit



5. SQUIRREL
™ seal: Squirrel



6. TIGER c.1870 P. MELCHERS
™ seal: Tiger



7. DRAGON c.1905 (Ghana) Lyall & Company
™ seal: Winged Dragon



8. HOLLANDER c.1880 Boll & Dunlop Sailing Ship
™seal: Sailing Ship "Hollander"



9. TJAP-PRAUW c.1880 (Indonesia) B. van Leeuwen
Sailing Boat
™seal: Sailing Ship



**10. ELAST – Palm Tree c.1880 Elast & Co.
™ seal: Palm Tree**



**11. GAYEN c.1870 Superior Palm Tree J. T. Gayen
™ seal: Palm Tree**



**12. MEYER c.1870 C. Meeyer & Co. – Schiedam Palmboom
™ seal: Palm Tree**



**13. VLIERBOOM c.1870 C. Vlierboom & Zonen
(Rotterdam) Elder Tree
™ seal: Elder Tree**



14. AI c.1870
™ seal: AI Anchor



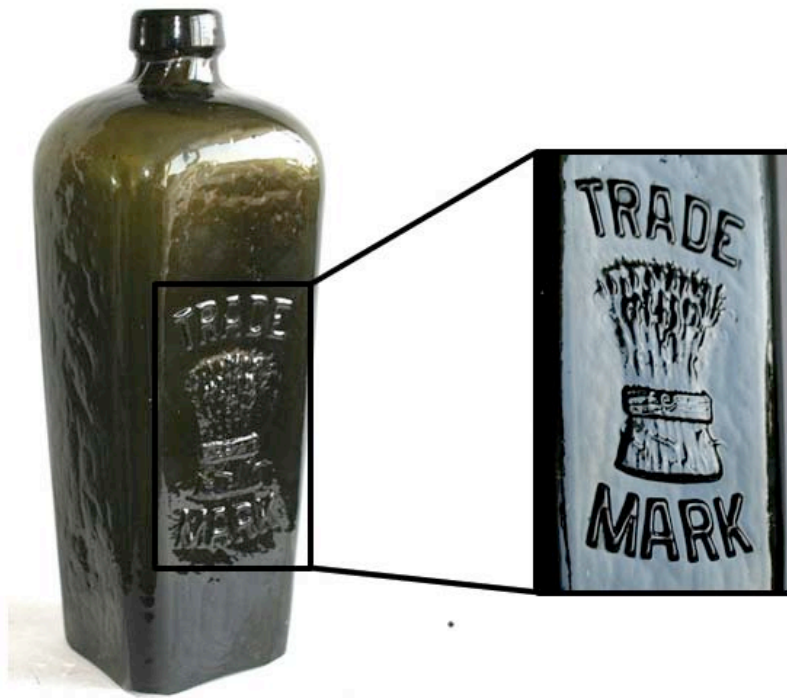
15. AH-ANCHOR c.1870
™ seal: AH Anchor



16. KIM HIN & Co. c.1890 – Singapore
™seal: K



17. THOMAS HEYLIGERSS c.1890
™seal: TH



18. SHEAF OF WHEAT c.1890 (Holland)
™ embossed: Sheaf of Wheat



19. LINNENBRINK – BIRD WI-OLIVE BRANCH AUSTRALIA
™ seal: Bird with branch in it beak



20. DANIEL VISSER & ZONEN c.1880 Holland
™side-embossed Stallion



21. TJAP ANANAS c. 1880 A.C.A. NOLET – SCHIEDAM
(NETHERLANDS)
™seal: Pineapple



22. P. MELCHERS c.1870
™ seal: Castle



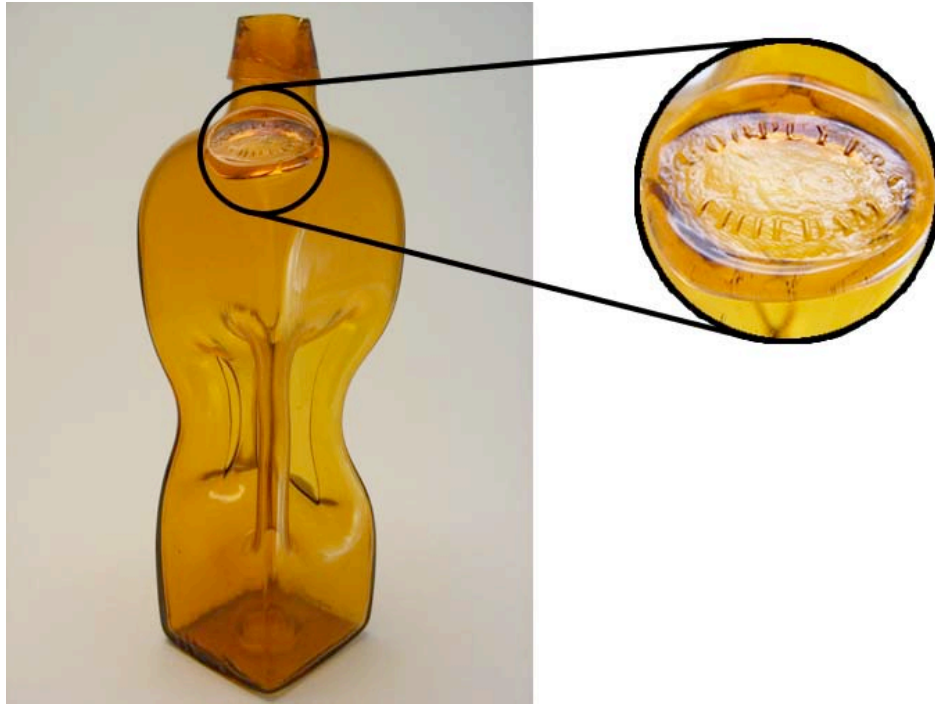
23. DUCK Daalmeyer, c.1880
™ seal: Duck



24. DE-WILDEMAN (The Wildman) c.1880 Indonesia
™ seal: Wildman



25. P. HOPPE W-2 SEALS
™ seal: Rooster



26. P. LOOPUYT & Co – Schiedam c. 1880
inch-waisted amber
™ seal: embossed lettering



27. Theod C Melchers – Schiedm – c.1850
™ seal: Man Holding Bottle



**28. Van Meerten & Zonen (Delft) – c.1850 HORSE-BELL
™ seal: Horse Bell**



**29. IMS– IMPORT MAATSCHPPIJ SEMAWIS c.1870
(Semarang – Indonesia)
™ seal: IMS (and) 4 barrels**



30. C. W. Jerwig (Schiedam) – c.1890. embossed trademark (no seal)
™side-embossed Ballerina



31. T. HARRISON & CO HOLLAND – c. 1880 embossed trademark ™anchor (no seal)
™side-embossed Anchor



32. HOBOKEN DE BIE & CO C.1895 LA-CATHEDRAL ST.
LAUENS CHURCH DATING FROM 1409 AD)
™side embossed Castle



33. C. F. FABRE & CO (embossing on 4 sides) – c 1880
™4-sides embossed symbols



34. J.J.Melchers (c.1870) Man holding a bottle
embossed trademark
™side-embossed Man Holding Bottle



35. DE OLIFBOOM embossment John L. Linnenbrink
(c.1870) Indonesia
™side-embossed Tree



36. VAN BOOKER d- HARBOR SEAL trademark embossed
(c. 1910)
™side-embossed Harbor Seal



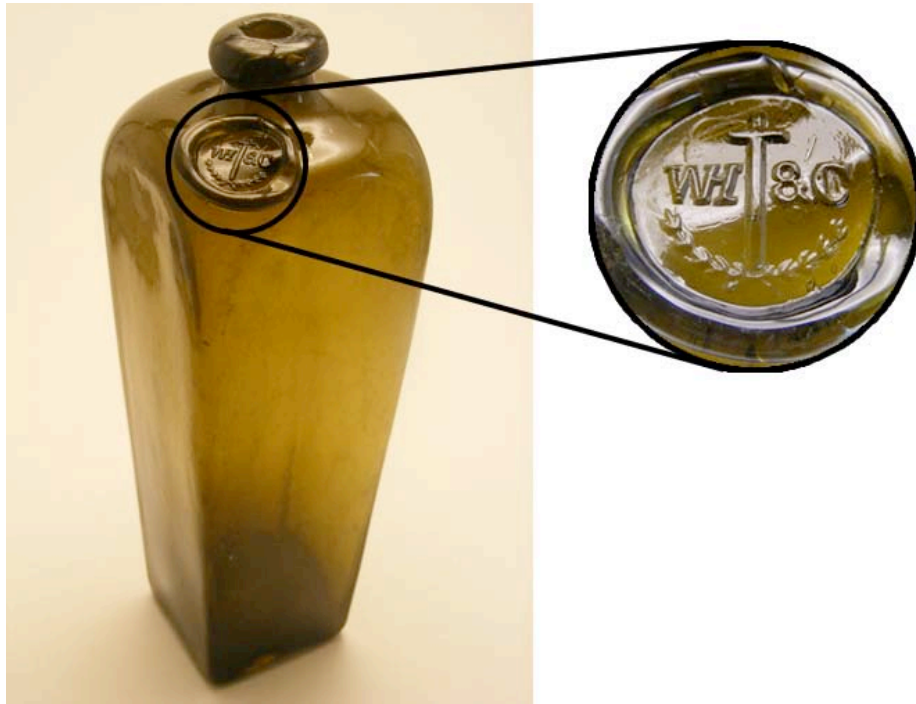
37. HENRI C. JANSEN – Schiedam (c.1880)
™side-embossed Swans



38. L MEEUS–Antwerp (c.1880) – Australia
™seal: Key



39. BLANKENHEYM & NOLET (c.1880– (GHANA)
™seal: Key



40. W. HASEKAMP & CO (c.1901) – (Ghana)
™ seal: Key & Wreath



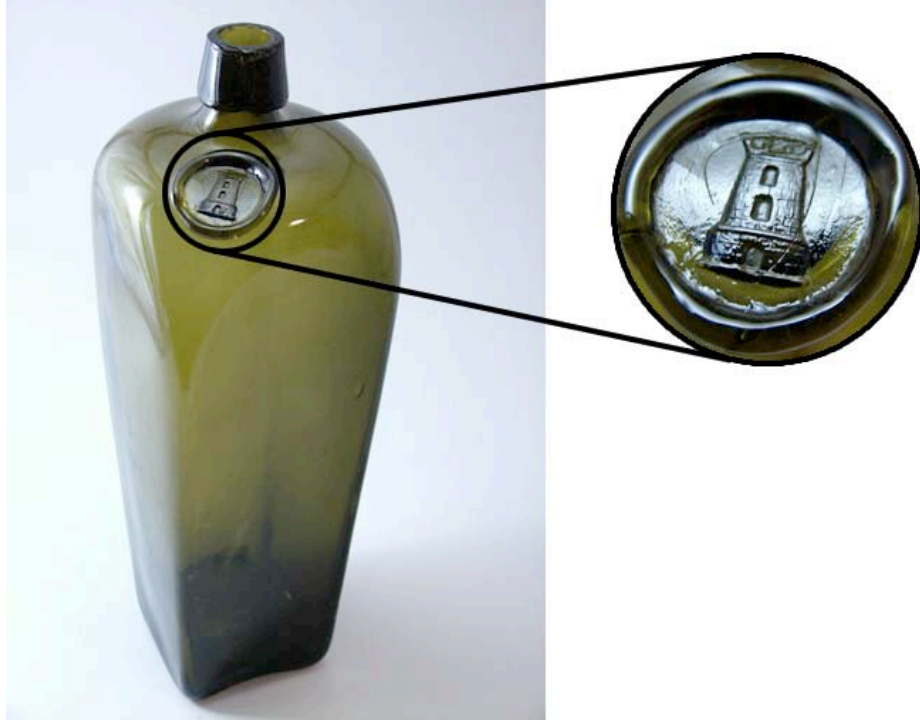
41. STAR OF DAVID (c. 1870)
™ seal: Star of David



**42. Case Gin bottle color variety examples
Un-embossed bottles**



**43. P. LOOPUYT & CO – SCHIEDAM (c.1880)
™ seal: Hour Glass**



44. P. MELCHERS (c.1870)
™ seal: Castle



45. S. VAN DIJK C.1880
™ seal: Broad Cross



46. RUTTEN & ZOON C.1910 KNIGHT ON HORSEBACK
™side-embossed Knight on Horseback



47. J.T. BEUKERS c.1890
™side-embossed Rooster



48. C.W. HERWIG – Schiedam c.1890
™side-embossed Corkscrew



49. C.W. HERWIG C.1890 (SCHIEDAM) CORKSCREW
™side-embossed Corkscrew



50. E. KIDERLEN (c.1910) TMBISON
TMside-embossed Bison



51. V. HOYTEMA & CO (c.1890) TMEYE
TMside-embossed Eye



52. E. KIDERLEN – ROTTERDAM (c.1910) TMFREEBOOTER
TMside-embossed Freebooter Holding a Glass



53. COSMOPOLIET J.J. MELCHERS(SCHIEDAM)
TMside-embossed Man Holding a Bottle



**54. (c.1880) SUN BURST
™side-embossed Sunburst**



**55. LUIGI PSAILA DEMERARA C1890 THE PHILANTROP
embossed man w-glass trademark
™side-embossed Crown and Man Holding a Glass**



56. E. KIDERLEN (c.1910) TMembossed TURKEY
56. TMside-embossed Turkey



57. LONDON JOCKEY CLUBHOUSE GIN c1890 embossed horse & jockey trademark
TMside-embossed Jockey



58. C. MEYER & CO (c. 1910) – CERAMIC –
™embossed palm tree
™side-embossed (ceramic bottle) Palm Tree



59. DE KORENAER (c. 1880) Schiedam
™side-embossed (ceramic bottle) Sailing Ship



60. BOLL & DUNLOP [ceramic] (c.1890) TMEMBOSSSED
MAN
TMseal: HS&C



61. A.VAN HOBOKEN & CO [CERAMIC] (c.1924)
[150th jubilee bottle]
TMside-embossed (ceramic bottle) w/baked-on-enamel AVH



62. **VISSER & CO (c.1880) OUDE GENEVER SCHIEDAM**
™ side-debossed (ceramic bottle) Visser & Co.



63. **N.V.M. VAN ZANTEN (c.1880) METHUSALEM**
™ side-painted (ceramic bottle) baked-on-enamel
METHUSALEM



**64. SIX MINIATURE GIN BOTTLES – (left to right)
UDOLPHO WOLF – BLANKENHEYN SPENGLER – AVH – IWL
– LEVERT & CO – HULSTKAMP & ZOON & MOLYN (glass &
ceramic)**



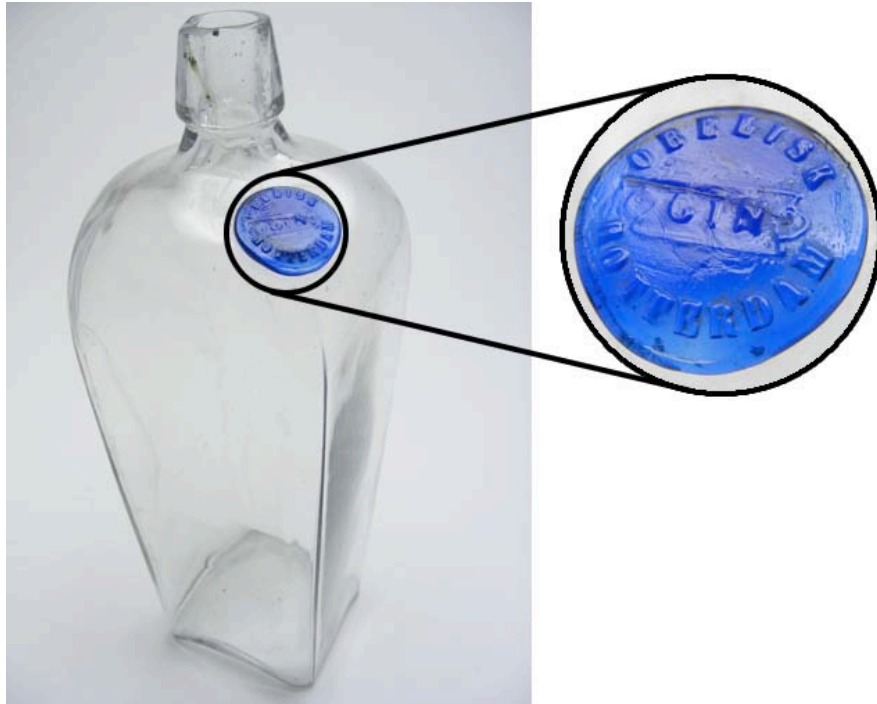
**65. Case gin bottles w-BLUE-SEALS
™seals: blue glass on clear glass bottles**



66. HARTWIG KANTO ROWIC milk glass
™side-embossed lettering (painted for display)



67. MEIJERS EAST INDIA SCHNAPPS (c.1880)
™blue glass seal for MEIJERS bottle



68. OBELISK GIN – ROTTERDAM (c.1910)
™seal: OBELISK blue glass on clear glass bottle



69. H S & C (c.1870)
™seal: HS&C



70. J. VAN DER VALK & CO (c.1910) [paper labelled]
™paper side-label with HOOPOO bird



71. DANIEL VISSER & ZONEN (™GREY STALLION) paper
labelled gin bottle (c.1890)
™paper side-label rearing Horse on hind legs



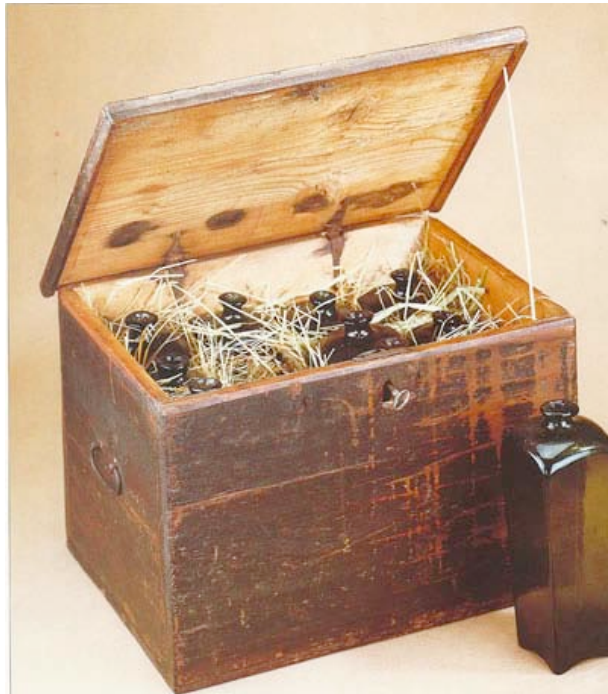
72. E. KIDERLEN (c.1910) paper labelled gin bottle
™ side-embossed E. KIDERLEN



73. (Atlas SHARD) J. F. NAGEL – HAMBURG
™ ATLAS (shard from broken bottle)



74. TMAtlas Holding Globe (c.1910) embossed
TMside-embossed ATLAS holding the world



75. Dutch case for storing or exporting case-gin
bottles packed with straw or buckwheat husks.
wood bottle case

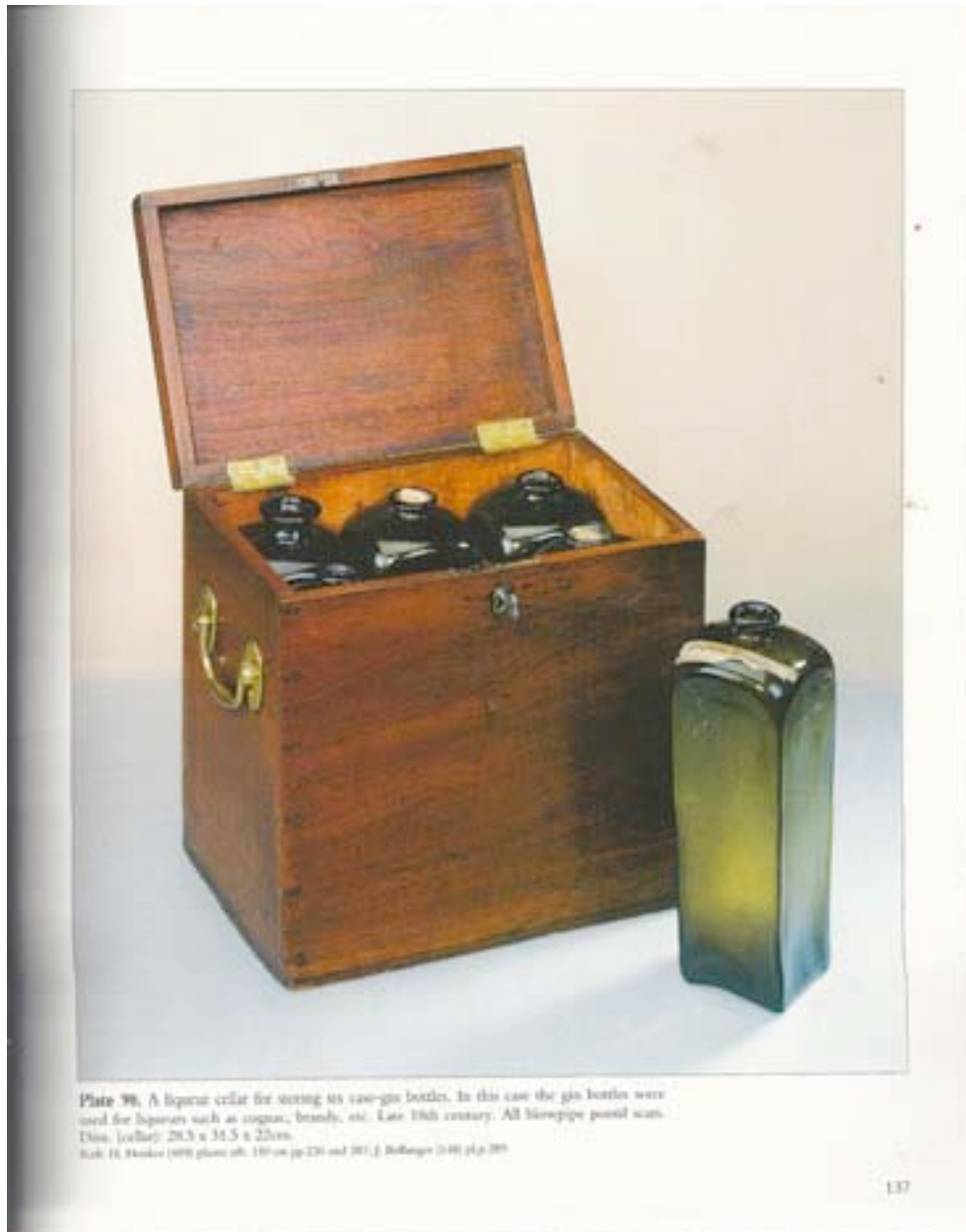


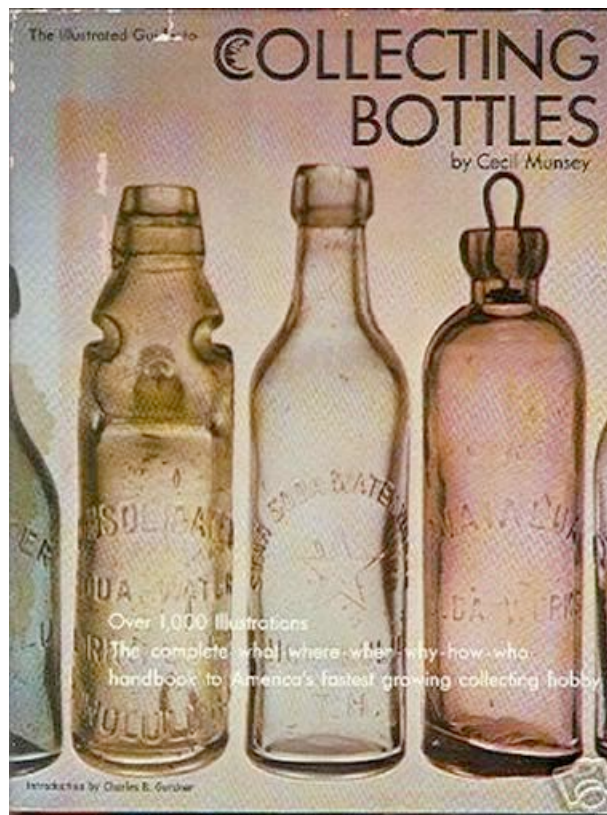
Plate 76. A liquor cellar for storing six case-gin bottles. In this case the gin bottles were used for liquors such as cognac, brandy, etc. Late 18th century. All dimensions possible.
Dim. (cellar): 28.5 x 34.5 x 22cm.
Note: H. Parker (1998) photo: off. 137 on pp.230 and 207; J. Bollinger (1998) p.10.

137

**76. Case for holding six case-gin, liqueur, cognac or brandy bottles
wood bottle case**



**77. Case for storing or exporting five gin bottles
(c.1770)
wood bottle case**



**78. Bottle book
1970 (book) The Illustrated Guide to Collecting Bottles by Cecil Munsey**

Postscript

I would like to acknowledge and thank **Seth Mallios**, PhD, Professor and Chair of Anthropology at San Diego State University for reminding me of a category of antique bottles I had neither thought nor written much about for four decades. His email question made me look backwards, as mentioned in the introduction and was the inspiration for this essay.

In his own words, *“Hi Cecil, we met sometime ago and you were very helpful with information on some bottles from the Nate Harrison site atop Palomar Mountain. I was hoping you would again share your wisdom. I have a friend who works in Benin (Africa). He found a shard from a late 19th-century case bottle with what looks to me like an embossed image of Atlas (Fig. 73).*



Many thanks, Seth

Mystery solved: Thanks to a casual but serious worldwide affinity group of case bottle collectors-historians-photographers, Dr. Mallios' friend in Benin, Africa got the answer and more to his query (Figs. 74).



... finis ...

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