

MIDWEST
GLASS CHATTER
MIDWEST ANTIQUE FRUIT JAR & BOTTLE CLUB

Since 1972

Midwest Glass Chatter
November 2009

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Membership

The Midwest Glass Chatter is a monthly publication and is a forum through which collectors can share information.

Membership cost is \$15.00 per year, per family, due each December 31. All jar/bottle related collectors are welcome. Send to MAFJBC, Attn: Joe Coulson, 10515 Collingswood Ln, Fishers, IN 46037

Meeting Minutes, November 1st, 2009

The November club meeting was held at Minnetrista in Muncie, Indiana. Club President Dave Rittenhouse opened the meeting and welcomed 16 members.

Anne Szopa gave the Treasurer's report. She said that there was a math error in the report last month and that we actually had \$100 more.

Dick Cole mentioned that there was a Pittsburgh glass research that we should consider purchasing for the club Library. A motion was made by those in attendance for Dick to buy books as needed for the club Library. The motion was seconded and passed. Dick will give us a report at each meeting on the status of the club Library if there are any changes.

Dave told us that he has been busy mailing show contracts for our January 10th, 2010 Winter Show and Sale. He encouraged us to take advantage of any free local advertising that is available.

Dave also mentioned that he would be setting up at the Terre Haute bottle show on November 21st.

Anne said that she attended the Findlay, Ohio show in October and that it was real fun. Joe Coulson said that it was a good show too—it was his first time to attend and set up as a dealer. Joe said that he was glad to meet Al Vignon too. There were many fruit jar dealers.

The club officer nominating committee reported their

results. The same officers will run for the next term, with the exception of the position of Vice President—Dick Cole was nominated for that position. The slate of club officers were voted upon and approved. The new term starts with the month of December.

See you all at the next meeting.

Joe Coulson, Secretary



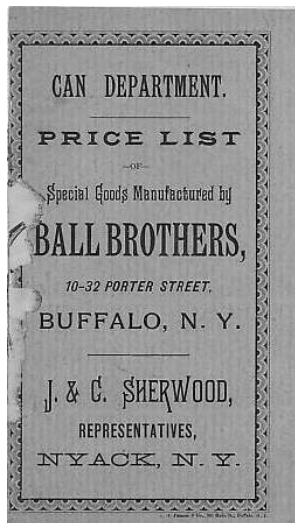
The Findlay, Ohio show was well-attended; Many jars for sale!

Program: Ball “Buffalo” Jars

Joe Coulson gave a Program this month on the earliest Ball jars—the ones made in Buffalo, New York.

George Ball (the Uncle of the Ball brothers) was a Baptist preacher in Buffalo, New York. He placed Ed Ball as an apprentice with A.W. Aldrich. Mr. Aldrich was a member of George’s church, and he owned a company that manufactured copper tea kettles and wood-jacketed oil cans. After a few weeks Mr. Aldrich offered the oil can division to Ed for \$200. Uncle George loaned them the money. Ed brought Frank in to help. Frank turned out to be a master salesman. After a month, the Hanover Street factory caught fire. They were insured. They rebuilt at 55 Main Street.

The brothers improved on the wood-jacketed oil can patents and no longer had to pay any royalties to Mr. Aldrich. They expanded into tin cans and then glass-bodied oil cans. The tin cans corroded and glass-bodied oil cans would be better.



Joe displayed an early Ball Brothers Price Booklet from his collection. The booklet showed the items that were for sale at this time in history.

According to F.C. Ball’s Memoirs, the story is told that a group of Canadian glassblowers talked the brothers into setting up a small glass furnace with the idea of blowing the bodies for their glass oil cans. Initially they contracted for the glass bodies. This became a very successful product.

Joe shared a copy of the patent (#D13806) for the Diamond Oil Can (1883). This was a glass-bodied oil can. Joe displayed a 1 gallon Diamond Oil Can from his collection.

They started work in 1885 on a new glass works on Porter Street in eastern Buffalo. They knew that it would be more profitable to make their own (and no shipping breakage).

At this point they decided to expand into making fruit jars, since they had excess capacity of glass at their new glass works. In the late 1870s, John. L. Mason’s patents fell under the control of the Consolidated Fruit Jar Company. With the expiration of Mason’s patent in 1879, other competitors quickly joined in, adding their own logos and marks. You might say that the brothers were “at the right place at the right time”.

It is possible that their first fruit jar was the BALL



BBGMCo (monogram) FRUIT JAR. In 1975 there was only one example of this jar known (there are maybe 10 or so now). The first reported example of this jar was donated to the Ball Museum by Mrs. Dorothy Powers.

Joe displayed his examples of this rare Ball jar.



During the years of approximately 1885–1886 they produced the BBGMCo (monogram) jars. Joe read the story from F.C. Ball’s Memoirs about how they discovered what was causing the

amber color in some of their glass batches (a very humorous story based on the personalities of the glass workers of the time). Only 4 examples of the BBGMCo jars are known in an amber color. Two are half gallons and two are quarts. One of the quarts is in the Minnetrista museum, and the other examples are privately held. Joe displayed his example of the rare amber half gallon BBGMCo.

Joe pointed out that there are several different BBGMCo monogram variations. There are also many different variations of the glass top seal lids for these jars. Joe showed examples of the lid in milkglass in regular mouth and midget size. He also showed many of the variations

Program: Ball “Buffalo” Jars, cont’d

in aqua. He knows that there are more examples out there that he hasn’t been able to find yet.



Up until this point in history all of the jar lids were the “Mason’s Improved” style (glass top seal lids with a metal screw band). During the early 1880s only the Consolidated Fruit Jar Co. and Hero Glass Works were allowed to manufacture lined metal screw caps, because they owned the patents. Other companies, in-

cluding Ball Brothers, had to wait until the Boyd patent expired in 1886.

At this point in time, the Porcelain BBGMCo Lined jars would have appeared on the scene. The embossing on the jar indicated that the jar closure was a lined metal screw cap. The porcelain or



milkglass lining would help protect the food contents from coming in contact with the metal lid. These jars were

made for a short time after the Boyd patent expiration and before the plant fire of 1886 (although it is not fully known the extent of damage that the 1886 fire caused). This also possibly explains why the original metal screw caps for this jar are so hard to find.

Joe displayed an aqua set of the Porcelain BBGMCo Lined jars (midget pint, quart, half gallon) as well as a clear half gallon (previously from Phil Robinson’s museum). Joe also displayed an original midget screw cap for these jars. He has not been able to acquire a regular mouth example, but he knows of others who have them. The lining says “Ball Bros. Glass Mfg. Co. Buffalo, NY”.

The plant fire of 1886 and the subsequent discovery of an abundance of natural gas in the Midwest marked the end of the Buffalo jar era.

In 1884 natural gas was discovered in Findlay, Ohio. In Muncie, Indiana in September 1886 natural gas fuel was discovered at a depth of only 922 feet. The Ball Brothers began their move to Muncie, Indiana in 1887.



Show and Tell

Club members were asked to bring one or two Ball-related items for show and tell.

Anne Szopa shared a “straw yellow” QT (RB #291-5) Ball Perfect Mason (6 ribs); a straw yellow-tinted HP (RB #291-5) Ball Perfect Mason (6 ribs); and a yellow green QT (RB #240) Ball Mason (reworked Root mold).

Sue Wilson displayed a Ball blue PT (RB #2757) Strittmatter’s Pure Honey.

Jeff Denney brought a Ball blue PT Ball 3L Special; an aqua PT The Ball PAT APLD FOR; and an olive green with amber QT Ball 3L Standard (crude lettering).

Jean Harbron displayed an aqua QT (RB #253) Ball Mason’s Patent 1858; and an aqua (RB #1843) Mason’s Patent Nov 30 1858 (reverse: BALL).

Dave Rittenhouse shared an aqua QT (RB #194-1) BBGMCo; and aqua QT (RB #194-6) BBGMCo (in slug pate circle); a rare aqua QT (RB #195-1) Ball BBGMCo Fruit Jar; and an aqua QT (RB #264-7) The Ball Masons Patent Nov 30th 1858 (base: shield emblem). Note: Dave had the same jar with the shield emblem on the base, but without “The Ball”.

Dave also told us the story of when he found the

amber HG Ball Mason’s Patent Nov 30th 1858 jar (now in Mason Bright’s collection). This was one of those surprise jars that was for sale at a bottle show.

Lou Ebert displayed an aqua QT (RB #3017-5) Alex. Wills & Co. Globe Mills Montreal; and an aqua QT (RB #262) Ball (script) Mason’s Patent Nov (no period) 30th 1858.

Walter Gausmann brought a clear HG (RB #214) Ball Ideal (reverse: Property of Southern Methodist Orphans Home Waco, Texas); a deep amethyst (color-enhanced) HG (RB #239) Ball Mason; a smoky (color-enhanced) HG

(RB #309-5) Ball Special Wide Mouth Made In U.S.A.; a light purple (color-enhanced) (RB #297) Ball Refrigerator and Freezer Jar (some stippled lettering).

Walter also brought an amethyst QT (RB #315) Ball Standard. This jar was given to him and his wife, Ann, by Phil Robinson back in 1988. Phil told them that the deep rough purple color was because the jar was found in a stream and had been exposed to the sun’s ultra violet rays for a number of years.

Dick Cole shared a 1980 paperweight from Ball Corp. Dick also brought several Ball “special occasion” jars.

Show and Tell Pictures



Colleen, Jean, Gusty & Jeff discussing the ghosted embossing on Jeff's Ball Special



Ball Special with ghosted lettering? under Ball; not sure what it might have been



Ball Widemouth threadless sipper finish; spout; James K. Tucker 1984 Dolton



Alex. Wills & Co.



"straw yellow" Ball Perfect Mason



Strittmatter's Pure Honey



Ball 3L Standard, olive green /amber



BBGMCo in slug plate circle

LEGENDS OF THE JAR!

[Editor's Note: This article is a result of long time collector and author Bruce W. Schank reaching out to long time collector Jeff Harper]

I became familiar with Jeff soon after I became a member of the Fruit-Jar discussion Group on Yahoo in Feb 2003. Eventually I realized that he was quite the serious collector and had already amassed a considerable Ball Jar collection. We interacted via email and eventually I ended up selling and trading with him. Finally in Jan 2008 I met both him and his lovely wife Mary at the Muncie show.

Jeff was born in 1952 in Muncie Indiana and was raised there also. He went to Brown University in Providence Rhode Island. Jeff is a Senior Implementation Specialist for a company based out of Pittsburgh, PA which is a subsidiary of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center that writes software for community mental health centers. His main duties are to help new customers get



up and running, do data-base conversions and any customization that might be required.

After college Jeff went around to antique stores and by the time he and Mary wed he already had about 12 jars. He was also getting samples because he was



a Ball share holder and he received the stock as a gift from his mother who had received the stock from her father, all Ball family related. So Jeff is a Ball Corp shareholder.

While growing up and when he was about 8 or 9 years old, Jeff was responsible for watching over and watering the cucumber patch. The family would make pickles and can them and in Ball fruit jars of course. Yes, Jeff sure enjoyed eating those bread & butter pickles made from

the cucumbers he had grown and nurtured and best of all lovingly canned in plain ordinary Ball fruit jars.

Jeff's Great-Grandfather incredibly just happened to be F.C. Ball. You know, one of the founding Ball Brothers of the Ball Corp famous for fruit jars around the world. F.C. Ball served

as the first company president, and remained in that capacity for 63 years. F.C. Ball had five children one of whom was Margaret which was Jeff's Grandmother and whom was his mother's mother. So F.C. Ball was actually his maternal, maternal great-grandfather. Neither Jeff nor his parents ever worked for Ball Corp but his grandparents did. His grandfather, Fred Petty was in charge of all of Ball "packer" jar product line and later became the comptroller of the company until he died



of a heart attack at age 51. His grandmother was a Director for 30 – 40 years for Ball Brothers later Ball Corp. and eventually retired when she turned 70.

Mary claims credit for actually applying the spark in order to get Jeff into collecting and

then trying to get one of every Ball jar made (not a simple feat mind you.) She used the logic of his incredible lineage as a contributing factor as well as the fact he already had some pretty ball jars in his possession. Jeff thought that made good enough sense and pursued it. About 20 years ago Mary found a flyer from Dick Roller advertising the Standard Fruit Jar Reference. So for Christmas that year she bought it as a gift for him. Jeff's copy just happens to be exactly as





mine; one of six copies made from what was left over bug infested material and not a hard cover original. So upon getting it Jeff noticed how many Ball jars there were and so he started looking in earnest for them.

At around that same time he began going to Shows and attended one of the last Indy Shows in which he claims the weather was pretty darn bad. When Jeff's daughter Katie was graduating High School and looking for a college he ingeniously combined weekends in which they visited colleges she was interested in on weekends in which bottle shows were going on at the same time. When they went to Bucknell University he went to the York Show which just so happened to be the first time he spent more than \$250 for a single jar (a PAT' APLD' FOR quart with rusty but original lid and metal closure.) When they went to Vanderbilt he was able to attend the National in Nashville, TN. He remembers how fortunate it turned out that he was able to do both at the same time and how it all worked out so perfectly. It was at this 1996 National when he acquired



the first of his Porcelain Lined BBGMCo jars.

One of Mary's best jar finds was when she went into her favorite resale consignment shop called the Guild Shop. About 20 years ago while visiting there she found a nice little blue ½ pint teen series BPM for the sweet little price of \$4.50 which even back then was dirt cheap. :0)



Jeff remembers finding a very scarce desirable Ball jar once through an ad he placed in the Antique Bottle & Glass Collector. According to him, your dues to the FOHBC covered a couple of 50/60 word free ads and he always put in an ad for rare Ball Jars. Approximately 8 or 9 years ago he received a response to his ad by someone from Buffalo. The guy told Jeff that he had this jar that said Ball Fruit Jar on it and he also knew the jar listed at 3k in the RB which was #7 at the time. He had a daughter who lived in Katy, TX which was 40 miles away and mentioned if Jeff was interested he would send it to her and he could take a look at it. The guy wanted 3.3k for it which was a strong price and Jeff remembers someone at a Muncie show at that time telling him he should be able



to find an example for 2.5k which of course never happened. So Jeff and Mary went and looked at it, liked what they saw and bought it.

At another time in response to his ad he was approached by someone who had a clear Qt La Abeja (which translates to "The Bee") which Jeff bought and is now extremely happy to own that jar. Two examples of this jar are known to exist. It seems Jeff's ad brought him more than a few good jars because he was able to acquire a yellow green pint bead seal Ball THE Mason from his ad too. Looks like these finds are proof positive that advertising pays off and in a big way sometimes.



For people who enjoy collecting Ball jars no matter what type inexpensive to the most expensive they may be, Jeff has a very nice thorough collection that only a relatively few people can rival. He has some of the rarest Ball jars known in the hobby as well as many "seemingly" common jars that just can't be found or seen in the aver-

age person's collection. He enjoys collecting certain genre's and goes to extremes such as having a seven (7) jar Ball Standard set in which the embossing progressively goes from higher to lower on the jar all the way towards the heel. Although his ultimate goal is to have an example of every known ball jar listed in the Red Book or for that matter not listed as well, he doesn't necessarily want nor desire complete sets of the same jar. Jeff has approximately 600-650 jars on display in his home in just about every room and wherever you can put a shelf or set a jar. He also has an extensive and wonderful box collection as well as a phenomenal amount of go-withs of many hard to find and highly sought after ball related items including oodles of Ball paper stuffs such as Blue Books, Posters, photos and more. His lid collection is possibly the largest I have ever seen and superb in every respect. And what he has in a special display that he built himself are only part of them because he has many more on jars scattered throughout his home that are in the collection.





He has over 700+ jars in boxes in his garage and with the completion of their fantastic, absolutely beautiful and massive log cabin lake home they now have plenty of room to eventually display their entire collection. Jeff told me doesn't personally put a premium on color thus he doesn't have a tremendous amount of color in the collection overall but what he does have is extremely nice indeed.

On day two of my visit with Jeff and Mary they drove me to their lake home and I must say I was floored to say the least. What a spectacular vacation home it is and I just loved it. A contractor showed up to give a quote for some work. Before long he was also quoting new shelving for the walls so I piped in about how nice it would be for them to have shelves built into the casing of some really large extra long front windows on the second floor. I mentioned something of the nature of a "stained" glass look with all of

the jars being there. Well before you know it that was a done deal and Jeff jokingly told me he would possibly now have to go after more colored jars considering he'll have so much more room to display them properly. Oops as I swallowed hard, I have a big mouth... :0)

My weekend visit with Jeff and Mary was a dual

purpose because I not only wanted to get this story but I also did a cash trade with Jeff. I'm not sure how it came about but Jeff knew I owned an RB #195. That is a jar quite literally at the top of his most wanted list and he has been pursuing it for quite some time now. So I flew to Houston with jar in hand. Normally I wouldn't have let go of a jar of that magnitude but tough economic times dictated other-wise and I was glad that the jar went to a very good new home and a real ancestor of the family who made it approximately 125 years ago in Buffalo, NY.





Jeff would say to new collectors to buy what you like which is what a lot of long time collectors would say as well but he would also add to that don't regret it if your tastes change. You bought what you liked at the time and if you're not interested in it now you can always sell it or store it. When you

buy certain jars and the book says \$5, \$10, \$20 but all you can get them for is double then that's what they're worth no matter what the book quotes. Jeff has over the years acquired a



goodly portion of his jars from eBay but he says you have to make a decision based on what you're paying for the jar including shipping which adds a considerable amount of money to a cheaper jar. EBay obviously is a good place to find jars if you can't travel but there in many instances you will pay more for a jar on that forum then if you found it

on a shelf or at a show. But for those who only have that option then that is the way to go.

Jeff's biggest surprise is the sky rocketing upward value of colored jars in general. Colored jars that sold nine or ten years ago are probably 4 or 5 times the value now and rising. Other

jars have not risen to those levels. Of course rare jars are a totally different animal and they rise in value due to their rarity and desirability period. He doesn't understand why but the number revamping and additions

Doug accomplished from RB7 to RB8 changed things on the Ball front. Jeff credits Doug with making Ball Jars more interesting to many people because they perceived the amount of time he spent on the revamp as proof Ball jars were worth collecting. Ball jars are currently highly sought after by many newer collectors.



If Jeff has any regrets it would be that he hasn't bid high enough on many items he really wanted over the years. He's lost out on a lot of good pieces because someone else put a higher value on them than he did but in recent years that has changed dramatically. He has really jumped head long into the bidding wars with the goal to win on good stuff and whoever



bids against him has real competition to deal with indeed.

As a Ball jar collector myself, I was quite pleased to be with Jeff and share stories and see all of the incredible items he has amassed over the years. I personally do not have the room, means or desire to collect the amount of items Jeff has amassed already. His eventual pursuit will put him most likely in the 1600+ category not including go-

withs. It's a safe bet with the collections and collectors currently opting out that it won't be long till Jeff is "The Premier Ball Jar Collector" in the country and deservedly so. Suffice it to say, it would take a lot longer than a weekend visit to get a better grasp of everything in Jeff's collection. I really got a kick out of the cobalt Ball Perfake Mason made by Jim Del Grado.



God has truly blessed both Jeff and Mary and rightly so. It's evident in everything they have, do, think and project about their lives. They are without a doubt very warm, friendly and extremely giving people. The kind of people that anyone would be honored to associate with and have as friends. They are fantastic hosts and are reaping the hard work they have accomplished all of their lives and living life to its fullest. I was treated so well by them that I actually felt a bit guilty about it all. I didn't expect it and I tried to refuse it but they insisted on giving me a large dose of warm Texas hospitality and they succeeded in the biggest way. And isn't everything about Texas supposed to be larger than life anyway?

Jeff and Mary have given me an open invitation to come back again and next time with my better half. I will most undoubtedly take them up on their offer.



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A jarrific place to share and learn

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

WWW.FRUITJAR.ORG



Dave's pair of jars with the shield emblem on the base. One jar has the "THE BALL" and the other does not. This shows the progression of Ball acquiring a mold and re-using it.

Announcements

- The inventory of the Lending Library is viewable on the club's website. Get in touch with Dick Cole (contact details on first page) if you would like to borrow an item. Dick is also seeking book donations from our club members. Please consider donating your old bottle and glass books. Dick's contact information is on the front page of this newsletter.
- The Ball Jar Collectors Community Center (BJCCC) is located at this site:
<http://balljarcollectorscommunitycenter.yuku.com/>
- The Federation of Historical Bottle Collectors (the national bottle club) will have their National Show in Wilmington, Ohio on August 6th & 7th, 2010. For more information, contact show chairman: Jamie Houdeshell, P.O. Box 57, Haskins, Ohio 43525, phone: 419-722-3184, email: JHBotle@hotmail.com
- Reminder: you can see COLOR photos in the electronic version of the Glass Chatter. Send your email address to Joe Coulson to get notifications when the electronic editions become available.

