

Let's Talk About Ink

with Ed & Lucy Faulkner



Inks on the Web

Most bottle collectors are always eager to learn a bit of history about their bottles. We ink bottle collectors are no exception. Living in Virginia, it is difficult to find information on ink companies, as most large 19th century ones were in the Northeast or Midwest. So we search out old bottle magazines at shows and, of course, the internet. For this article, we would like

to recommend two web sites we have found. (See references.) One has some information on the Bonney Ink Company and the other on Signet Ink and LePage's Glue. Both are interesting and informative.

The first is from Emmett Baker's website. Emmett is a long time ink collector and has a number of good pictures on his site as well as other information.

For this article, we want to use information (with his permission) on the Bonney Ink Company. More information can also be found in an article in the July, 1987 ABGC bottle magazine.

The William E. Bonney Ink Company was started in 1865 in South Hanover, Massachusetts. The factory was a modest two story building where he had mixing vats, dyes and other equipment necessary for manufacture of ink. He did a lot of experimenting to come up with a good quality ink and operated from just after the Civil War until 1910. Bonney was nearly blinded in an accident and his daughter tried to run the factory in the last few years, but finally gave up in 1910. The dyes and formulas were sold to the Carter Ink Company. When the factory was remodeled for a private residence in 1969, many old bottle pieces were found in the trenches that were dug nearby. Workmen at the time said they hauled all the records to the town dump, thus losing all the information on the factory.

The Bonney bottles are very collectible today. The aqua barrels are probably the most collectible and come in small and master sizes and are generally easy to find, especially the smooth bottom small ones. The small barrel is also known in a pontiled version, but is harder to find. The odd shaped one in the advertising picture above is considered rare, but is known to have existed as many shards were found when the factory was renovated into a residence. There is also a master and small round in cobalt, but again these are considered rare. The Bonney cone is known in two shapes. The more common one is



Original factory is now a residence. (EB)



Illustration from 1868 catalogue. (EB)



Uncommon Bonney cone.

the “regular” cone shape, but there is also a smaller version with a vertical grooved bottom panel and Bonney on shoulder. This one is very hard to find. In all our years of collecting, we still only have it in a repaired condition. Perhaps the easiest one to find today is the square version as pictured above.

The second website (mentioned with permission) is by Vanessa LePage, great great granddaughter of William Nelson LePage (1849-1919), who founded the Russian Cement Company. This company manufactured glues and paste under the LePage name. They also manufactured inks and other products under the Signet name. It was started over 125 years ago in Rockport, Massachusetts, moving to

Gloucester in 1887 where one of the plants remains today. There have been many changes of ownership since then. In 1949, the name Russian Cement Company was dropped in favor of just LePage’s, Inc. I always wondered about the name Russian Cement Company. According to Ms. LePage, it was named after their first product, Russian Belting Cement, an adhesive used in the manufacture of leather belts used in industrial machinery.

Because of its long history, there are many Signet and LePage’s bottles available at very reasonable prices and easy to find with labels. They also made many advertising ink blotters and comic trade cards to be given away. These show up with great frequency on ebay and can add interest to your bottle collection.

If you don't have internet access, Ms. LePage also wrote an article for *Bottles and Extras* which was published in March, 2001. Both the article and website are very interesting.

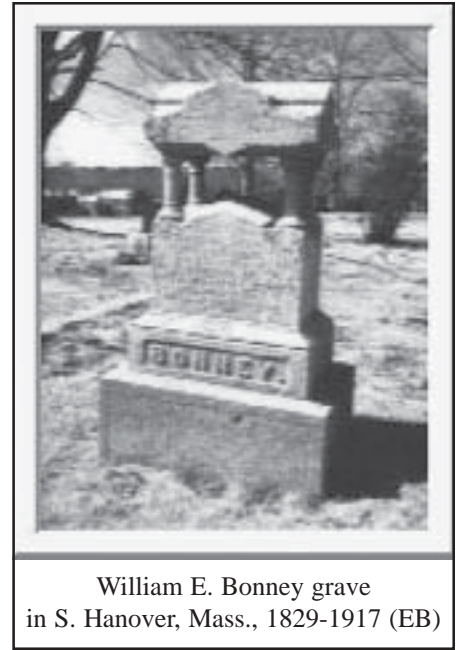
References:

<http://community-2.webtv.net/inkwells/EmmettandMarjorie/>

<http://www.lepagesglue.bravepages.com/>

Bottles and Extras, March 2001

Antique Bottle and Glass Collector, July 1987



William E. Bonney grave in S. Hanover, Mass., 1829-1917 (EB)

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Comic advertising trade card for LePage’s Glue.

