

# WHY ANTIQUE BOTTLES

By William A. "Doc" Andersen

Antique bottles are bottles first, antiques second. Glass is a hard, smooth, usually transparent substance which at times can be very substantial, at others be very fragile, both with the threat of breakage. They have a certain feeling in the hands of smoothness and weight. Then there's color, color that can be enjoyed, color that can be used to decorate an area or a window or a room.

But antique bottles take on a whole new meaning unto themselves, as if you were holding history in your hand. Bottles from the past 150 years usually have indications of their age in the glass, either in the form of inadvertent irregularities or of inscriptions molded into the glass on purpose. The latter are especially intriguing. They are usually people's names and addresses, people who lived and worked perhaps their whole lives at that address, then passed on, leaving as a sole memorial that little bottle that you hold in your hand so lovingly (if you are a collector). Collections are built on these. In Baltimore they include well known names such as, Walters, Emerson, Hopkins, Baurernschmidt, Friedenwald, Goldsborough, Buck, McCormick, Bunting, Read, Dunning. Then there are well known companies: National Brewing Company, Gunther's Brewery, Carr-Lowrey Glass Company Swindell Brothers Thomas &

Thompson, Gosman's Ginger Ale, Hutzlers, Hochschild Kohn, Sharp & Dohme. They are all to be found embossed on old bottles.

Places embossed on bottles echo a time when there were many communities not yet swallowed up by the city: Highlandtown, Govanstown, Rognel Heights, Arlington, Hamilton, Roland Park. Bottles from 100 years ago are common until you go looking for one of these names for your collection; then you'll run into some of the rare ones.

Then there are the irregularities, bottles that don't quite sit up straight, little humps here and there. Bubbles are to be seen, sometimes hundreds in one bottle, sometimes only one, but that one goes up the whole neck. The mold marks on the sides in some older bottles are very rough and irregular. But some bottles don't even have mold marks; they are very shiny and smooth and

have a slight circular group of grooves where the bottle was turned inside the mold. The colors? Brown (called amber by aficionados) can be light, dark, yellow, some with streaks of different shades. Blue can be aquamarine, cobalt, teal, all of them beautiful with light shining through them. There are purples, "black," greens, ruby reds.

Only an old bottle? Look again.

