

Horse Shoe Forestry Company Bottles and Jars

One of the most iconic and popular items of Horse Shoe Forestry Company memorabilia are the many shapes and sizes of glass jars and bottles, all embossed with the Horse Shoe Forestry Company name and logos. Overall, it is believed that the majority of Horse Shoe Forestry Company glass containers were made to hold maple syrup and maple sugar products, although some of the jars and bottles may have been filled with jelly and preserves. In referring to a jar versus a bottle, the difference is a bottle has a narrow neck for pouring and was meant to hold liquids like maple syrup and it is usually taller than wider. Whereas the body of a jar is usually not taller than the body is wide and it has a wide mouth meant to hold solids or dry contents like granulated maple sugar, sugar cakes, or candy in the form of individually wrapped maple kisses.

A lot of what has been learned about Horse Shoe Forestry Company bottles and jars has come



Figure 5.16: A sample of small and medium sized Horse Shoe Forestry Company jars and bottles.
Photo by author.

from items salvaged and collected by bottle collectors and scuba divers who have been searching in and around Horseshoe Lake and the Horseshoe settlement for the last fifty years. It is not known when bottle collectors started to search for bottles in the remains of trash dumps around Horseshoe, but we do know that divers have been discovering intact bottles on the bottom of Horseshoe Lake since the mid-1970s. It needs to be pointed out, that despite many years and many different individuals diving for bottles in Horseshoe Lake, it has always been and continues to be a prohibited activity in violation of state environmental conservation law. Removing historic artifacts from state land, including diving for bottles in Horseshoe Lake, risks a ticket and fine from DEC officers and forfeiture of the bottles.ⁱ

Railroad historian and bottle collector John Taibi has established a detailed typology of the Horse Shoe Forestry Company bottles. This typology, illustrated in color with photos of all the known configurations of bottle and jars, can be found in Taibi's book *Silver Rails Through the Heart of the Park*. Figure 5.16 shows a representative sample of a few of the embossed bottles and jars made for the Horse Shoe Forestry Company.ⁱⁱ

In addition to a wide range of shapes and sizes of Horse Shoe Forestry bottles and jars, there are also many different variations in the embossed text and logos. In some cases, the bottles were designed and manufactured with narrow necks that facilitated pouring the liquids within. On some jars, an ingenious screw-on metal lid with a narrow spout-like neck, effectively converting a jar into a bottle (see



Figure 5.17: Two examples of Horse Shoe Forestry Company embossed glassed jars with intact metal lids. Private Collection.

Figures 5.2 and 5.3). Fortunately, we have surviving examples of bottles and jars where the metal lids are intact, showing how these containers were sealed (Figure 5.17).

Of course, the unique shapes and design features of these bottles were quite intentional and were among the many innovations and ideas patented by A.A. Low. The wide mouth jar was design patent USD31235, the bottle with the narrow opening was USD31179, and the two variations on the metal cap for bottles were patented as US652,793 and US658,382.

Most of the glass containers have embossed text that relates to the maple sugaring operation such as the text *Grass River Wake Robin Maple Valley Sugar Bushes* or *Extra Superior Maple Syrup* or the logo of the maple tree with a tap and bucket (Figure 5.18). However, there are some variations that do not include maple syrup or sugarbush related texts and may have held products other than maple syrup or maple sugar.

There is a widely repeated belief that after the operations and production ceased, that the remaining wooden crates of unused bottles and jars were set on the ice of Horseshoe Lake in the winter time until the melting ice sent the cases of glass to the their graves at the bottom of the lake. Research has yet to find a report confirming this method of disposal or an eyewitness account of such an occurrence. Rather it seems that scenario has been imagined, repeated, and accepted as fact, based on divers finding the bottles and jars still arranged in their wooden crates on the bottom of the lake. In some cases, divers have even retrieved sections of the wood from the crates holding the jars and bottles.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the elusive Horse Shoe Forestry Company Virgin Forest Springs Water bottles post-date the maple syrup and maple sugar bottles and jars both in the trademark of

the brand which was listed as in use since April 1903, and in the patent of the bottle design, which was applied for March 15, 1904 and awarded March 14, 1905.ⁱⁱⁱ



Figure 5.18: Examples of different embossed motifs on Horse Shoe Forestry Company bottles and jars. Photo by author.

All of the jars and bottles are square on their base and have at least one or more faces that are flat and not embossed, presenting the possibility that a paper label was once pasted on the flat face as is known to occur with other embossed glass bottles of that era. Advertisements for Horse Shoe Forestry Company maple sugar and maple syrup from 1900 show examples of a jar and bottle that both appear to have paper labels, but that may be a product of artistic license and the need to enhance the appearance of the glass for the advertisements, since illustrating embossed text on glass can be difficult (see Figure 5.2 and 5.3). To the best of my knowledge, even with many hundreds of Horse Shoe Forestry Company bottles and jars in collections, there are no known examples of Horse Shoe Forestry Company glass with intact paper labels, suggesting that the labels were only used as an illustration for the advertisements and were never actually present on Horse Shoe Forestry Company glass containers.

ⁱ Howard Dean, The Low Dynasty at Horseshoe, N.Y. *Antique Bottle & Glass Collector* 27 no. 4 (2010), 32-35; Howard Dean, New York Bottle History, *Bottles and Extra*, (January-February 2010), 30-33; Dan Weeden personal communication.

ⁱⁱ John Taibi, *Silver Rails Through the Heart of the Park*. (Gates Mills, OH: New York Central System Historical Society, 2019).

ⁱⁱⁱ Trademark no. 40545; patent no. 785012. For more information on the sale of bottled spring water from the Adirondacks at the turn of the century see Laura Rice, *Adirondack Almanac - Let's Eat: Adirondack Spring Water* (22 June 22 2010), <http://www.adirondackalmanac.com/2010/06/lets-eat-adirondack-spring-water.html>.