

Pitcher's and Fletcher's Castoria

An Uncommon Study of Common Bottles

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When Samuel Pitcher invented Castoria about 1867, he set in motion a series of events that would lead to several variations in bottle embossing, a series of lawsuits, and an incredibly popular remedy. The remedy was so widely accepted that embossed bottles for the product are almost ubiquitous in many historical/archaeological contexts. Long-time bottle diggers report finding so many of both Pitcher's and Fletcher's Castoria bottles that they threw them back in the holes or just left them piled on the ground.

Because these bottles are so common, little research has been conducted into either the history or the use chronology of the containers. In reality, both are rich, fertile areas for research. This study reveals how easy it is to be misled by appearances.

History

Dr. Samuel Pitcher, Boston (1868-1872)

Born at Hyannis, Massachusetts, on October 23, 1824, Samuel Pitcher, Jr., attended the Philadelphia College of Medicine (1847-1848) and Harvard Medical School (1850). He began his general practice at Cape Cod (Rogers 1982:323). As discussed below, he is best known for his patented medicine – which became known as Castoria. Rogers (1982:323) quoted James W. Gould as claiming that Pitcher “made [his new medicine] in the barn behind his house on ‘Poverty Row,’ as West Main Street was then called.”

Although we have not discovered the actual date of the invention, Samuel Pitcher received Patent No. 77,758 for a “Medicine” on May 12, 1868. Pitcher described his mixture as “a cathartic.” The formula was composed of senna leaves, bicarbonate of soda, essence of wintergreen, extract of taraxacum, sugar, and water (Figure 1). Holcombe (1979:163-164) noted that other ingredients, such as “pumpkin, anise and worm seed, Rochelle salts, peppermint, and

3 per cent alcohol” were added to the mix. Many of these ingredients are known laxatives and would likely act as cathartics, although some could be affected by synergism or antagonism. Senna is a classical cathartic (Tyler 1993:297-298).

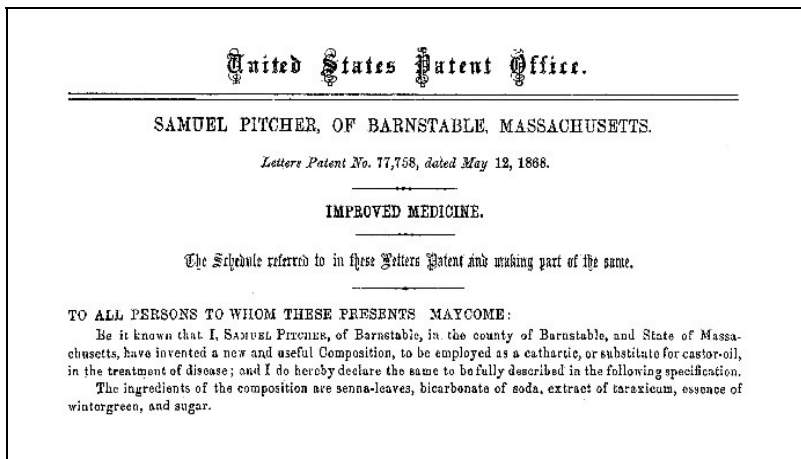


Figure 1 – Samuel Pitcher’s 1868 patent

A group called Samuel Pitcher & Co. formed the Pitcher’s Castoria Mfg. Co. and built the Picher’s Castoria Manufactory at Boston in 1869. The firm apparently transferred the rights to the Pitcher’s Castoria name to J.B. Rose & Co. of New York City in 1872 (*Pharmaceutical Era* 1897:20; Richardson & Richardson 1992:157). With the transfer, the Pitcher group seems to have disbanded.

After the sale of the patent, Pitcher returned to his practice at Cape Cod. He was apparently well loved and continued to serve his patients until he retired in 1900 at the age of 75. Although generally in excellent health, Pitcher died of a heart attack at Ormond, Florida, on February 22, 1907 (Rogers 1982324-325).

The Barnes Companies and Charles H. Fletcher

J.B. Rose & Co., New York (1872-1877)

Meanwhile, Demas S. Barnes was the owner and manufacturer of several patent medicines. Barnes set up several corporations, including J.B. Rose & Co. in 1872. J.B. Rose & Co. was organized to manufacture and sell “Centaur Liniment and Castoria.” As noted above, Pitcher & Co. transferred the rights for Pitcher’s Castoria to J.B. Rose & Co. shortly after the business was formed. Rose & Co. advertised Castoria as being “prepared with great care after the recipe of Dr. Samuel Pitcher” (Holcombe 1979:164).

Centaur Co., New York – Demas Barnes Dewey (1877-1888)

Another Barnes firm was the Centaur Co., opened in 1877.¹ Formed as a New York corporation, Demas Barnes Dewey – a nephew of Demas S. Barnes – was the president of Centaur, with Charles Henry Fletcher as secretary. Following a series of transfers, the rights to Pitcher’s formula culminated with Cora F. Barnes, acting for the Centaur Co. in 1878. On July 10, 1883, Cora F. Barnes received Trademark No. 10,414 for the word “Castoria” in the name of Centaur (Holcombe 1979:164).

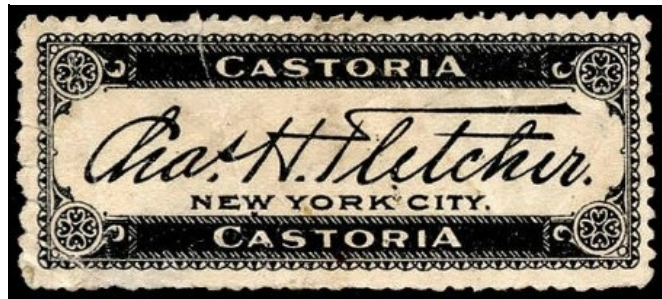


Figure 2 – Revenue stamp with Fletcher’s facsimile signature (Courtesy of Bob Hohertz)

Centaur Co., New York – Charles H. Fletcher (1888-1925?)

When Demas Barnes died at the age of 61, on May 1, 1888, Fletcher became president of the corporation. Ironically, Pitcher’s patent expired on May 12, 1888, setting the stage for Fletcher’s biggest headaches – at the same time that he moved fully into power. Fletcher soon discontinued the Centaur Liniment and other products to concentrate on Pitcher’s Castoria (Holcombe 1979:164; *Pharmaceutical Era* 1897:20). Although not officially registered until May 17, 1905, Fletcher claimed the first use of his facsimile signature (Figure 2) as an unofficial trademark on June 18, 1890 (Trademarkia.com 2011). Surviving tax stamps, however, had the “The / Centaur / Co. / Chas. H. Fletcher (facsimile signature) / Pres. / 7-1-’98” stamped on them (Figure 3). It is likely that the 1890 date is correct for the first use of the signature.



Figure 3 – Revenue stamp with Fletcher’s signature and date of 7-1-’98 (Courtesy of Bob Hohertz)

¹ Griffenhagen and Bogard (1999:81) noted that the Centaur Co., operated by Charles H. Fletcher, acquired Castoria in 1877 and changed the name to Fletcher’s Castoria. Literally dozens of websites have copied this information, but it can probably be traced back to a single source. The information is much too simplified and, therefore, slightly inaccurate.

The Competition – and Lawsuits

A number of competitors took advantage of the expiration of the original Dr. Pitcher's patent. Frequently, these firms used bottles, labels, and/or boxes that were very similar to those used by Fletcher and the Centaur Co. This, of course, led to law suits.

Heinsfurter & Daggett – The Castoria Co.

Taking advantage of the expired patent, Jacob Heinsfurter and William S. Daggett of Fargo, North Dakota, joined together to manufacture Pitcher's Castoria in 1896. The *St. Paul Globe* noted on September 24, 1896, that Heinsfurter & Daggett had incorporated with a capital of \$50,000 and planned to build a plant at Fargo. The pair soon had their factory operational and called themselves the Castoria Co. (Wild-Roots 2011).

By January 1897, the Centaur Co. sued Heinsfurter & Daggett in North Dakota for the use of the word "Castoria." Fletcher complained that the Castoria Co. had written him on March 28, 1896, asking about "prices . . . for bottles, labels, etc, complete in quantities of ten thousand each, F.O.B. at New York" in order to make and sell Castoria. Obviously irritated, Fletcher said that he "declined to countenance any such proposed fraud upon the public" (Wild-Roots 2011).

Fletcher noted that Heinsfurter & Daggett used bottles "with labels materially differing from our own," noting the word "Castoria" and stating that the product was made at Fargo. The North Dakota firm primarily rested its case on the fact that the patent had expired and that the word "Castoria" was not included in the patent. The judge found in favor of Heinsfurter & Daggett, noting that the Fargo product was "clearly

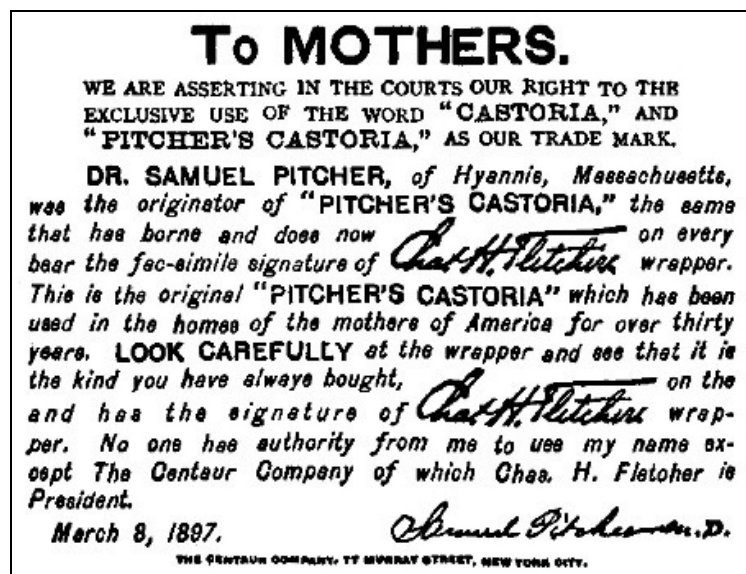


Figure 4 – Fletcher's Open Letter to Druggists (Fletcher 1897)

distinguished” with “conspicuous dissimilarity in form, in print, in naming the place of manufacture, and the firm’s name” and that the Castoria Co. did not infringe on the rights of the Centaur Co. The word “Castoria” had become a generic term (not the words used by the court) for the medicine (*Pharmaceutical Era* 1897a:20; *Printer’s Ink* 1898:19; Wild-Roots 2011).

Meanwhile, Fletcher posted “An open letter to druggists” in pharmaceutical journals and similar notices in newspapers. Mincing no words, Fletcher claimed the “EXCLUSIVE USE of the word CASTORIA and PITCHER’S CASTORIA as OUR TRADE MARK” (Figure 4). He also noted that his facsimile signature was present on all wrappers and labels (Fletcher 1897).

After its success in court, Heinsfurter & Daggett changed the label on its Castoria to be a closer match to that of Fletcher’s, and Centaur again sued the Dakota firm in the circuit court of appeals on September 22, 1897 (*Spatula* 1897:278). Later discussions (e.g., *Canadian Pharmaceutical Journal*, in February 1899:290) indicate that the Dakota firm was allowed to continue making and selling Castoria. However, the *Bismarck Daily Tribune* (May 20, 1897) announced that “Jake Heinsfurter and W.S. Daggett of Fargo will move their Castoria plant from Fargo to Chicago.”

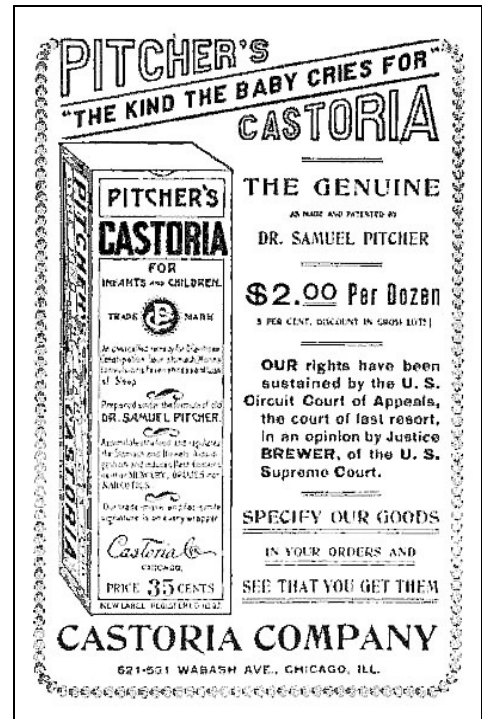


Figure 5 – Advertisement by the Castoria Co. (*Current Advertising* 1901:25)

Once in Chicago, the firm apparently even stole Fletcher’s slogan “The Kind the Baby Cries For.” A 1901 ad bragged that “our rights have been sustained by the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, the court of last resort, in an opinion by Justice Brewer of the U.S. Supreme Court” (Figure 5). *Current Advertising* (1901:25) displayed the ad along with a satirical comment:

Here is an advertisement which gives us pause. This it appears is the real genuine old original Castoria that the baby has always cried for. We have been laboring under the supposition that the kind the baby cried for was the kind that we have

always bought, identifiable only by the signature of Mr. Charles H. Fletcher.
Now we are up against a very annoying situation. . . . between two Castorias. . . .

We have discovered little about the firm after the move to Chicago, although a Castoria Co. was still listed in the 1904 Chicago City Directory. Nor have we discovered any further legal action taken by Fletcher, although it is certain that *something* happened to the Castoria Co.. We have found no trace of the firm after the 1904 listing.

Dr. Pitcher Medicine Co.

Another competitor, the Dr. Pitcher Medicine Co., incorporated on December 9, 1897, with a capitalization of \$10,000, in Duluth, Minnesota. The purpose of the firm was “making and selling proprietary medicines,” and the stockholders were Daniel Waite, E.M. Gaylord, J.L. Owen. A.C. Le Richeux. W.H. Burries, G.C. Howe, Malcolm Macaulay, and W.A. Abbett (Koerner 1898:68; *Pharmaceutical Era* 1898a:276). The name makes it obvious that the new firm was riding on the Pitcher’s reputation.

In addition, the company seems to have tread on other toes. On May 19, 1898, the *Pharmaceutical Era* (1898b:758) reported that the California Fig Syrup Co. had “just obtained in the United States Court a permanent injunction, with costs, against the Pitcher Medicine Company. . . enjoining them from using the name Syrup of Figs or Fig Syrup on any laxative medicine.” The injunction almost certainly forced Pitcher Medicine out of business – saving Fletcher the cost of another suit.

Other Late 19th Century Firms

Other new firms began to make Castoria, and Fletcher continued to fight. Almost immediately after Heinsfurter & Daggett ceased operations, the Centaur Co. sued Killenberger in 1898, the Hughes Bros, Manufacturing Co. on December 13, 1898, the Castoria Mfg. Co. – also called the Texas Chemical Co. and the Phenix Medicine Concern – on December 13, 1898, and Robinson on February 10, 1899. In every case, Fletcher took the stand that the encroaching firms were using bottles and labels that were similar to those used by Centaur (Dixon 1902:147-153; Editorial Staff 1899:118-131; National Reporter System 1899:901-905).

Even a glance at most of the labels showed that the newer firms were, indeed, attempting to copy the Centaur labels in order to take unfair advantage of company's success (Figures 6-9). In the decision against the Hughes Bros. Mfg. Co., the court noted that "an examination of the label and wrapper used by appellee shows a studied effort to comply with the letter of the law and at the same time avoid the spirit thereof" (Editorial Staff 1899:128). District Judge Wayne (Editorial Staff 1899:130) further stated that:

while the respondents have placed the words Dr Hughes at the top of the label instead of 900 Drops as used by the complainant, they have printed it in white letters on a black ground with exactly the same size, position and shading as used by complainant. Then respondents have replaced the signature of Chas. H. Fletcher, New York, used by complainant with that of John V. Hughes, Dallas, Texas, in similar script on the lower part of the label, but again the change is of such a size and nature as not to attract the attention of the general purchaser.

In this as in the other late 1890s cases, the imitators were clearly intending to defraud the public. Each defendant was required to withdraw its version of Pitcher's Castoria along with paying a fine and court costs.



Figure 6 – Fletcher's 1897 box label (Editorial Staff 1899:119)



Figure 7 – Castoria Mfg. Co. 1897 box label (Editorial Staff 1899:120)



Figure 8 – Phenix Medicine Concern 1897 box label (Editorial Staff 1899:121)

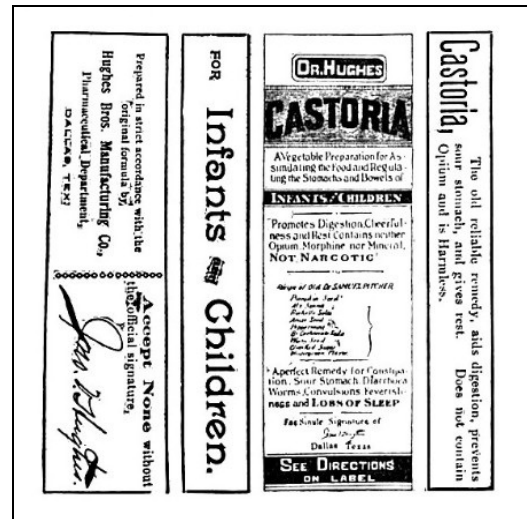


Figure 9 – Dr. Hughes 1897 box label (Editorial Staff 1899:129)

C.W. Link Drug Co.

On July 15, 1901, Fletcher filed suit against the C.W. Link Drug Co. in the Court of Chancery at Trenton, New Jersey. The complaint remained the same – Link was defrauding the public by copying the labels – the case was again settled in favor of the Centaur Co. The decision noted that “every one of the packages . . . show a persistent adoption of the size of the bottle and the label of the complainant” – distinct copies of the Centaur Co. bottles of Castoria. The court granted an injunction against Link (*Pharmaceutical Era* 1901:135).²

Turner Medicine Co. and Stewart & Holmes Drug Co.

The Turner Medicine Co. of Boston was the next target. Fletcher sued the firm as another imitator of Fletcher’s Castoria. By the end of August 1901, Judge Francis C. Lowell had found in favor of the Centaur Co. (*Pharmaceutical Era* 1901:434). In 1914, Centaur sued the Stewart & Holmes Drug Co., Seattle, Washington, for infringement. The first bottle was discovered at Honolulu and traced back to Seattle. Stewart & Holmes was required to recall its products (*Canadian Druggist* 1914:10). Although Fletcher died on April 9, 1922, suits continued until at least 1929, when Centaur took action against D.J. Rex & Co. (Leagle 2011).

² Link must have changed the label. Despite the injunction, the firm continued to advertise Castoria at least as late as 1915 (*Drug & Chemical Markets* 1915:14).

The judge concluded that

a plainer case of intentional and wrongful invasion of the plaintiff's rights could hardly be conceived. The changes made by the defendant were so insignificant, and the appearance between defendants' and plaintiff's carton so similar, that the public would unquestionably be deceived.³

Pfeiffer Chemical Co.

Other Castoria manufacturers apparently escaped the wrath of the Centaur Co. At some point, the Pfeiffer Chemical Co., Philadelphia and St. Louis, made and bottled Pitcher's Castoria. However, the bottle was embossed "PFEIFFER CHEMICAL Co. / PHILADELPHIA / & ST. LOUIS" on the front sunken panel of the bottle, and the paper label had virtually no resemblance to the one used by Centaur. The Pfeiffer Chemical Co. was open between ca. 1902 and 1942. The firm merged with W.R. Warner & Co. in 1907. Warner was located at Philadelphia, so the Pfeiffer listed both locations at that point. By 1914, the plants remained at the two locations, but the firm moved its headquarters to New York soon after (*Fairland News-Herald* 2/13/1914; Fike 1987:73; Leonard 1906:459). Thus, our example was likely made between 1907 and ca. 1915. Similarly, at some point between 1939 and 1945, the Royal Mfg. Co of Duquesne, Pennsylvania, offered Pitcher's Castoria in generic, screw-cap bottles that bore little resemblance to the Centaur item. A Royal Mfg. Co. Castoria bottle with paper labels was offered for sale on "Ruby Lane," and Rigo's Castoria, by the Rigo Mfg. Co., Nashville, Tennessee, was offered on eBay.

Later Changes

Although we have not discovered when Fletcher retired from the firm (if he did), he died in 1922. In 1923 Sterling Products (Inc.) purchased a quarter interest in the Centaur Co.⁴ At

³ From the standpoint of bottle enthusiasts, it is unfortunate that courts repeatedly concentrated *only* on the outer label of the package, the paper wrapper – the first words the public was able to see.

⁴ The timing seems too close for coincidence. Possibly, Fletcher's estate sold his share of the firm to Sterling.

some point, Sterling acquired the rest of the firm's assets, and it became the Centaur Co., Division of Sterling Products. The name became Sterling Drug, Inc., in 1938, and the group sold Fletcher's Castoria to the Mentholatum Co., Inc., in 1984.

The Rohto Pharmaceutical Co., Osaka, Japan, purchased Mentholatum in 1988 and continued to make Fletcher's Castoria. The same children's laxative remains available in 2012 (Anonymous 2012; Golden Map 2011; Thomas J. Long Business and Economics Library 2011; Wikipedia 2011). For a chronology of the Pitcher-Fletcher companies, see Table 1.

Bottles and Labels

Both collectors and archaeologists have discovered various types of bottles and labels for both Pitcher's and Fletcher's Castoria. Certainly, the earliest bottles and labels were for Pitcher's Castoria. At some point, Fletcher's name was used, but imitators continued to use the term "Pitcher's" on bottles and labels. Based on the history of the various firms involved and actual bottles we have been able to discover, we can divide the bottles and labels into two types: 1) the containers used by the Centaur Co. (including its predecessors and successors); and 2) the containers used by the imitators and later legitimate competitors. Our study begins with the original bottles.

The Early Firms and the Centaur Co.

These bottles *should* neatly separate into another dichotomy: 1) Pitcher's; and 2) Fletcher's – but, as we shall demonstrate, the evidence does not divide that cleanly. In addition – as with virtually all bottle research – we have gaps in our current knowledge. We will thus approach all the non-imitator bottles and labels chronologically. We can form a list of the intuitive changes in the firms, bottles, and/or labels, when changes *should* have happened, and we can match existing bottles and some labels to these changes.

We have dated these changes based on several factors. First, we have used evidence based on the historical records noted in the history section. These are particularly useful for dating changes in the firms making and bottling the product, Castoria. It is also useful for dating some label changes, notably the labels with the Fletcher's facsimile signature.

Table 1 – Pitcher-Fletcher Company Chronology

Date	Event
1868	May 12 – Dr. Samuel Pitcher patent for a “Medicine” “a cathartic”
1869	Samuel Pitcher & Co. formed the Pitcher’s Castoria Mfg. Co., Boston
1872	J.B. Rose & Co. formed in New York – rights to Castoria
1877	Centaur Co. formed – Demas S. Barnes, president
1878	Cora F. Barnes acquires Castoria rights for Centaur Co.
1883	Cora F. Barnes acquires trademark for “Castoria” for Centaur Co.
1888	Barnes dies; Charles H. Fletcher becomes president of Centaur Co.
1888	May 12 – Pitcher’s patent expires
1890	June 18 – Fletcher begins use of his facsimile signature as an unofficial trademark
1896	September – Jacob Heinsfurter and William S. Daggett of Fargo, North Dakota, joined together to manufacture Pitcher’s Castoria
1897	January 1897 – Centaur Co. sued Heinsfurter & Daggett in North Dakota for the use of the word “Castoria”
1897	September 4 – ad in <i>Pullman Herald</i> placed by Fletcher specifically stated that the name “Pitcher’s Castoria” was only legally used by the Centaur Co.
1897	Castoria Co. won in North Dakota – labels clearly different
1897	late 1897 – Castoria Co. changed labels to mimic Centaur labels and moved to Chicago – Fletcher sued again on September 22
1901	July – Fletcher sued C.W. Link Drug Co. in New Jersey – and won
1901	August – Fletcher sued Turner Medicine Co. of Boston
1904	Last listing for Castoria Co. in Chicago
1905	May 17 – facsimile signature “Chas. H. Fletcher” filed as trademark (reg. date 11/14/1905)
1914	Centaur sued the Stewart & Holmes Drug Co., Seattle
1923	Sterling Drug purchased a 1/4 interest in The Centaur Company; purchased the entire company by 1934
1984	Sterling Drug sold Castoria, to Mentholatum Co., Inc.

Second, the bottles, themselves, have a story to tell. There are several manufacturing techniques disclosed by certain attributes of many bottles that indicate fairly precise dates or at least place the bottles in a specific order. These technical changes are especially helpful in assessing changes in later bottles (see the section on Bottle Characteristics for details of each bottle type).

Samuel Pitcher & Co./Pitcher's Castoria Mfg. Co., Boston (1869-1872)

The original bottle used by Samuel Pitcher & Co. is quite scarce, possibly rare. The only example we have discovered appeared in response to Joe Widman's article (Widman 2012:34-35), when a collector contacted Widman, saying that he had another variation. Widman bought the bottle, photographed it, and sent us electronic copies. This was almost certainly the bottle that started it all.

The bottle was aqua, mouth blown, with a tooled, patent finish – with recessed panels on all four faces. The front (read with the finish facing left) was embossed “DR. S. PITCHER / & CO. / BOSTON,

MASS” (Figure 10). Although capitalized, the “R” in “DR” was slightly smaller than the other letters on that line. The second line “& CO.” was wedged in as if it were added as an afterthought.⁵ Both the “R” in “PITCHER” and the “S” in “MASS” crowded the edge of the panel so that there was insufficient room for a period after “MASS.”



Figure 10 – Original Dr. Pitcher & Co. Bottle (Courtesy of Joe Widman)



Figure 11 – Dr. Pitcher & Co. Bottle – back (Courtesy of Joe Widman)

⁵ This *could* mean that there is a still earlier variation without “& CO.” It is also possible that “& CO.” appeared on all bottles.



Figure 12 – Dr. Pitcher & Co. Bottle – left side (Courtesy of Joe Widman)



Figure 13 – Dr. Pitcher & Co. Bottle – right side (Courtesy of Joe Widman)

The back panel was embossed “A SUBSTITUTE / FOR CASTOR OIL” (with no period). The left side panel was embossed “PAT’D MAY 12 - 1868” with “CASTORIA” on the right panel (Figures 11, 12, & 13). The embossing suggests that Pitcher chose the term “Castoria” in competition with castor oil. The base of the bottle had an off-center, slightly canted post bottom (Figure 14). There were no vent marks.

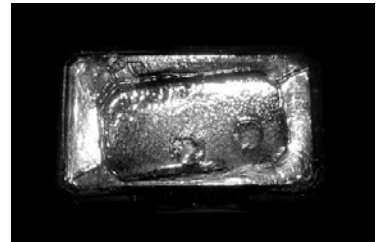


Figure 14 – Dr. Pitcher & Co. Bottle – base (Courtesy of Joe Widman)

Quite a few of the next generation of Pitcher’s bottles remain available on eBay and in antique stores, although they are not common. These aqua bottles were mouth blown with tooled, patent finishes and recessed panels on all four sides. The front panel was embossed “CASTORIA / BOSTON Mass” with “PAT^D MAY 12 . 68” (or “PAT^D MAY 12 ’68”) on one side panel and “DR. S. PITCHER’S” on the other (Figures 15 & 16). It is unlikely that the bottles were used by any later companies. Wilson and Wilson (1971:72) dated the bottle “ca 1869.”



Figure 15 – Boston Castoria bottle – front view



Figure 16 – Boston Castoria bottle – side panels

As noted in the previous paragraph, there were at least two sub-variations on the date side panel. There are also differences in the font type (especially in the numbers – 2 and 6), font size, and spacing (Figure 17). These are probably merely changes caused by the hand engraving of the period. Each mold was very likely made by a different mold maker – possibly a different glass house. The necks on our two bottles are also different lengths – a common occurrence in



Figure 17 – Boston Castoria bottles – comparison of patent date panels



Figure 18 – Boston Castoria bottles – comparison of sizes



Figure 19 – Boston Castoria bottles – comparison of bases

mouth-blown bottles (Figure

18). However, the bases are also different; one has a concave center (Figure 19). It is very possible that there are other minor variations of this bottle type.

One of the two key items for placing this bottle as the one used by

the original company is the name “Boston” embossed on the front face. Only the original firm was located in that city. The second helpful characteristic is the complete lack of vent marks on the bottle. Charles D. Fox first patented the use of air venting of glass container molds on April 7, 1874 (Patent No. 149,461), although the process did not become popular until the early 1880s (Figure 20). Air venting was the drilling of holes in through the sides of the molds to allow air to escape as the bottle was blown into the molds (Lindsey 2012).

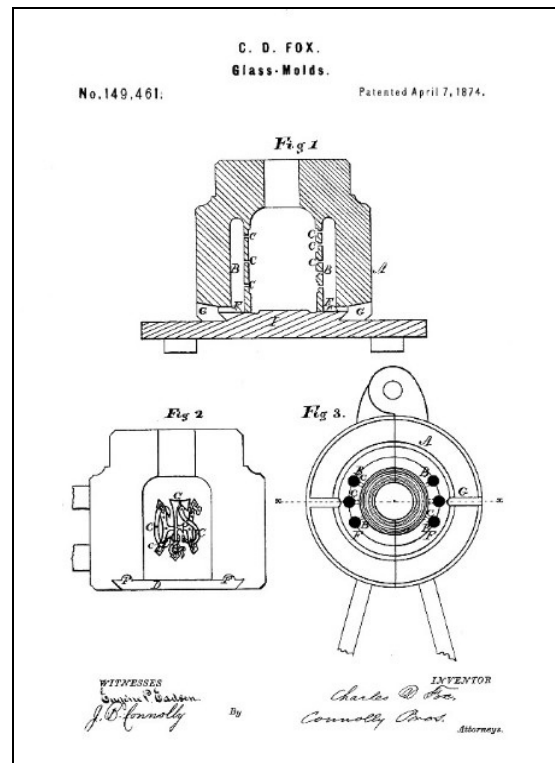


Figure 20 – Fox’s 1874 air vent patent



Figure 21 – J.B. Rose & Co. revenue stamp (Courtesy Bob Hohertz)

J.B. Rose & Co., New York (1872-1878)

It is highly likely that J.B. Rose & Co. used generic bottles with some form of paper label to bottle Castoria. We have not discovered any embossed bottles or paper labels with the Rose name, although the tax stamps used by the firm contain both the names “CENTAUR LINIMENT” and “CASTORIA” along with “J.B. ROSE & CO.” (Figure 21). This *may* indicate that Rose had dropped the term “Pitcher’s.”

Centaur Co., New York; Demas Barnes Dewey, president (1877-1888)

It is once again virtually certain that the Centaur Co. used a generic bottle,

although the firm assuredly altered the paper label to reflect the change in name. We have not discovered either a paper label or an embossed bottle. Extant tax stamps, however, are identical to those of J.B. Rose & Co. – except for the company name change (Figure 22). Again, the term “Pitcher’s” is missing from the stamp.



Figure 22 – Centaur Co. revenue stamp (Courtesy of Bob Hohertz)

In 1883, Cora F. Barnes, certainly a relative of corporate president Demas Barnes Dewey, registered “Castoria” as a trademark. The labels may have changed at this point to include the words “Trade Mark.”

Centaur Co., New York; Charles H. Fletcher, president (1888-ca. 1900)

During this early period of Fletcher’s tenure as president of the Centaur Co., we have again discovered no embossed bottles with characteristics that suggest they were used at this time. It is thus highly probable that generic bottles remained in use. A major change, however, was almost certainly the addition of Fletcher’s facsimile signature to the labels.

Centaur Co., New York; Charles H. Fletcher, president (ca. 1900-ca. 1910)

To briefly reiterate the history of the lawsuits (discussed more thoroughly above), once the patent for Castoria expired, imitators appeared on the scene, beginning with Heinsfurter & Daggett in 1896. This was followed by numerous other imitators, especially during the 1898-1900 period. Fletcher used two major lines of evidence in his suits. One, of course, was that the other firms were directly copying the bottles and labels used for Castoria by the Centaur Co.

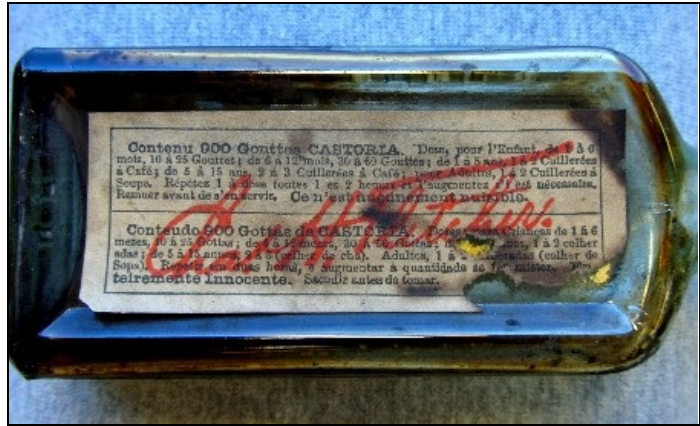


Figure 23 – Back Fletcher’s label – on DR. S. PITCHER’S bottle



Figure 24 – DR. S. PITCHER’S bottle

Second was that only the Centaur Co. had any legal right to both the names “Pitcher’s” and “Castoria” – citing the ownership of “Castoria” as a trademark and the use of “Pitcher’s” by the Centaur Co. For example, in a September 4, 1897, ad in the *Pullman Herald* (Pullman, Washington), Fletcher specifically stated that the name “Pitcher’s Castoria” was only legally used by the Centaur Co. (Wild-Roots 2011).

Fletcher was clever. He already had his facsimile signature stamped across the Castoria paper labels (Figure 23) that were printed in four languages (English, German, Spanish, and French). He now found a way to help defend his right to the “Pitcher’s” name. Probably in response to the repeated use of “Pitcher’s” (easily confused with “Fletcher’s” on labels), he began using aqua-colored bottles embossed “DR. S. PITCHER’S” on



Figure 25 – Closeup of tooled finish on PITCHER’S bottle

one side panel and “CASTORIA” on the other (Figure 24).⁶ The bottles had tooled “double-ring” finishes with a rounded upper ring and a tapered collar for the lower one (Figure 25). Figure 26 shows a bottle with the “DR. S. PITCHER’S” side embossing and a “Chas. H. Fletcher” paper label.



Figure 26 – DR. S. PITCHER’S bottle with Fletcher label

All of these bottles that we have seen had multiple vent marks. Probably the earliest ones were made by a currently



Figure 27 – Crude bottle

unknown glass house and were crudely made for the time period (Figure 27). Our only example had a sans serif “1” or “I” embossed on the base but no other identifying markings. The bottle had a single vent mark on each shoulder and multiple vent marks that were (mostly) concealed in the embossed words on both side panels (Figure 28).

These bottles were likely made during the 1900-1904 period. Lowe (2012:11) may have given us the answer. She stated that “in 1902, the [Cohansey Glass Co.] accepted an order for “Castoria” manufacturers for three million bottles, to be



Figure 28 – Vent marks concealed in embossed letters

delivered in a month.” This likely means that all of this batch of bottles were made at once.

⁶ There are also very slight differences in font, letter size, and spacing on various DR. S. PITCHER’S bottles. We have also recorded a single DR. S. PITCHER’S bottle offered on eBay that was solarized amethyst in color – with “A.72.” embossed on its base. We have not discovered any other bottles of this type that were colorless or any shade of purple.

The remaining “DR. S. PITCHER’S” bottles we have found had base embossings in a “letter . number .” pattern. However, we have discovered only three letters: A, B, and S (Figure 29). The “A” probably indicates a bottle made by the American Bottle Co. during 1905-1906. Bottles with a “B” logo were probably made by the Belleville, Illinois, plant of American Bottle. The Belleville plant was only open from 1905 to 1909, and the factory apparently made the bulk of the “DR. S. PITCHER’S” bottles. Some, however, had an “S” basemark, probably indicating the Streator, Illinois, plant of American Bottle. This plant remained operational throughout the life of the American Bottle Co. and continued to produce for the Owens Bottle Machine Co. and Owens Bottle Co. after that. It is likely that these were replaced by the Fletcher’s bottles ca. 1910. See the section on Hypotheses for more details.



Figure 29 – Basemarks on Pitcher’s bottles (eBay)

However, Lowe (2012:12) again provided an interesting alternative. While discussing the closing of the Cohanse Glass Co. factory, she noted that “One of the biggest bottle contracts by a patent medicine firm, which for nine years were made at the Downingtown plant, had been transferred to Salem, New Jersey, and the men who worked on the medicine bottles had left Downingtown and others followed.” Nine years would have been 1901 – close enough to her 1902 claim for a “three million” order of Castoria bottles to be reasonable. It may well be that Cohanse Glass Co. made the Castoria bottles embossed with “A,” “B,” or “S” on their bases – indicating each of the three continuous tanks in used during the period.

A small change in 1907

At some point, Fletcher made a small change in the paper label. The firm added the phrase “ALCOHOL 3%” at the bottom of one label, as if it had been added as an afterthought (Figure 30). This

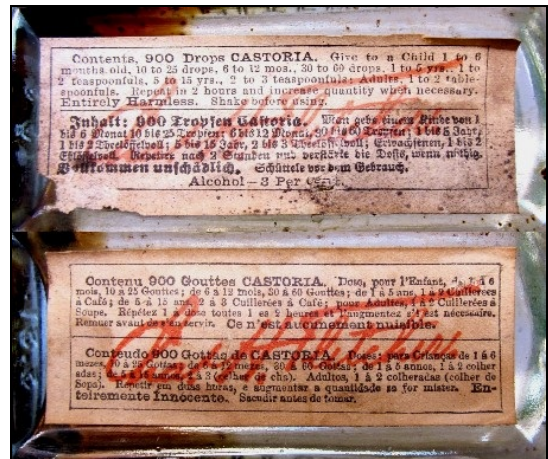


Figure 30 – Fletcher’s label with “3% ALCOHOL” on bottom – DR. S. PITCHER’S bottle

was almost certainly in response to the Pure Food & Drug Act of 1906. It is thus likely that labels without the alcohol volume (e.g., Figure 23) were printed prior to the Act and those with the percentage were made after the law went into effect on January 1, 1907. These were affixed to bottles with the “DR. S. PITCHER’S” side embossing. At some point (still undetermined but certainly by the 1920s), the label was revised to put “ALCOHOL 3%” at the top in each of the four languages. (Figure 31), but we have only found those labels on bottles embossed with Fletcher’s signature.

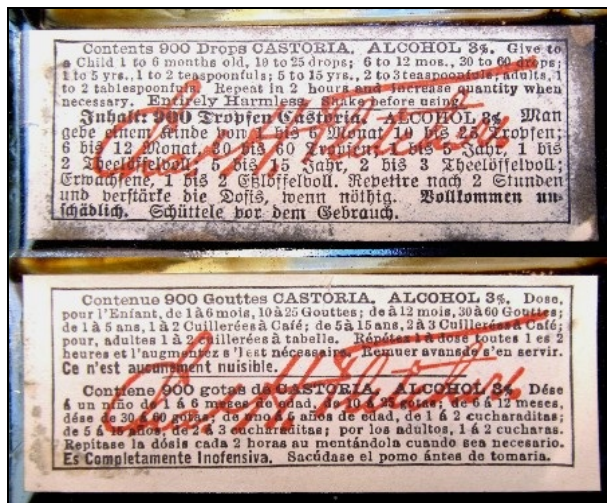


Figure 31 – Fletcher’s label with “3% ALCOHOL” on top of each language section

Centaur Co., New York; Charles H. Fletcher, president (ca. 1910-ca. 1914)

At some point, probably ca. 1910, Fletcher dropped the “DR. S. PITCHER’S” embossing on the side panel and replaced it with his facsimile signature (Figure 32). All other characteristics of the bottles remained the same, including the aqua color, the exact placement of vent marks, bottle shape, and the style of basemarks. Aside from “Chas. H. Fletcher” in script on the side, the main difference was that the only letter embossed on the base was “S” – and some of the numbers matched those found on “DR. S. PITCHER’S” bottles. These may have been made in the same molds with only a change in the Fletcher’s side plate. The bottles were probably made at the Streator plant of the American Bottle Co. until ca. 1914, when the plants likely abandoned hand



Figure 32 – “Chas. H. Fletcher’s” embossed side panel

production.⁷ As with the Pitcher’s bottles, there are probably numerous slight variations in font style, size, and spacing (Figure 33).



Figure 33 – Slight differences in font between mouth-blown and machine-made Fletcher bottles

Again, we need to explore a competing explanation. As noted above, when the Cohansey Glass Co. ceased operations in 1909, a Salem, New Jersey, glass house received “one of the biggest bottle contracts by a patent medicine firm” that had formerly belonged to Cohansey (Lowe 2012:12). We also noted above that Dr. S. Pitcher bottles made between ca. 1900 and ca. 1910 had basemarks of “A,” “B,” or “S” along with a one- or two-digit number and speculated that these could indicate the three continuous tanks at Cohansey.

Alternatively, “A” and “B” could have indicated the Cohansey tanks. The third tank was not in operation until near the end of production at the Cohansey plant. Assuming that the patent medicine contract really *was* for Castoria, the most likely Salem glass plant was the factory of the Salem Glass Works. The only other major plant in town, the Gayner Glass Works, certainly *could* have made the Castoria containers, but Gayner specialized in soda bottles. The other deciding factor was the name – Salem begins with the same letter – “S” – that was embossed on the bases of the bottles.

This would suggest that Dr. S. Pitchers bottles with the “S” basemarks – continued to be produced until at least 1910, possibly a year or so later. The first bottles embossed “Chas. H. Fletcher” would therefore have been instituted ca. 1911. The new chronology would be:

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| ca. 1900-1909 | Dr. S. Pitchers bottles with A or B basemarks (Cohansey Glass Co.) |
| 1909-ca. 1910 | Dr. S. Pitchers bottles with S basemarks (Salem Glass Co.) |
| ca. 1910-ca. 1914 | Chas H. Fletcher bottles with S basemarks (Salem Glass Co.) |

⁷ The date is only certain for the cessation of hand production at the flagship factory in Newark, Ohio. It is possible that the Streator plant continued to make Fletcher bottles for another year or so. However, we have found no Streator beer or soda bottles with date code later than 1914.

Machine-Made “Chas. H. Fletcher” Bottles – Cork Finishes (ca. 1914-?)



Figure 34 – Machine-made Fletcher’s bottle

The bottles in this section were all made by machines (Figure 34). Each had the same type of two-part “double-ring” finish that was found on the mouth-blown bottles – a rounded upper ring and a tapered collar for the lower one (Figure 35).

Owens Bottle Machine Co. (ca. 1914-1919)

Prior to the reorganization that created the Owens Bottle Co., the Owens Bottle Machine Co. used single-letter basemarks to identify the individual factories where the bottles were made. Some of these used a series of date codes, but others did not. Buchner and his associates (2007:348) recorded basemarks of “9C,” “C,” and “2C” on bases of machine-made Fletcher’s bottles. We have in our possession an example with a “7” plus twelve dots around “C.” The “7” indicates the year 1917, and the twelve dots show that the bottle was made in December. The “C” represents the plant at Charleston, West Virginia (Figure 36). Buchner’s “9C” was almost certainly made in 1919, although the “2C” is probably a misreading of “8” or “9”; the system was not in use prior to 1917 or after 1919, and most of the basal embossing was somewhat ephemeral. All of these bases also show the distinctive Owens scar, caused by the manufacturing process of the Owens Automatic Bottle Machine (Lockhart et al. 2010).



Figure 35 – Machine-made finish; note parting line (horizontal seam) at neck



Figure 36 – Base with C and dots

We also have an example that is embossed with a “C” or “G” on the base but no number or dots. This almost certainly corresponds to Buchner’s “C” base. The Charleston plant opened in 1912, so this bottle was almost certainly made during the period before Owens adopted the

dot system ca. August 1917. If the mark was actually a “G,” it was used by the Greenfield, Indiana, plant. Greenfield opened in November 1916. Fletcher’s bottles with single-letter Owens basemarks and no numbers or dots were therefore likely made between ca. 1914 and 1917, while the ones *with* both single-digit numbers and dots were made from 1917 to 1919.

Owens Bottle Co. (1919-1929)

The Owens Bottle Machine Co. adopted a new name – the Owens Bottle Co. – on May 1, 1919. Along with the new name, the firm also adopted a new logo: the now well-known Box-O (O inside a box or square). The Box-O mark was always embossed on bottle bases (Figure 37). On Fletcher’s bottles, it was sometimes faint, and the accompanying numbers were occasionally indistinct.



Figure 37 – Owens Box-O logo
– *not* a Fletcher’s bottle

As noted in Lockhart et al. (2010), the two-digit numerical codes on these bottles usually correspond to both the factory producing the bottles and the date. Occasionally, only a single-digit number accompanied the Box-O mark, and that may be a date code, plant code, or even a mold number. We simply cannot tell, if only one number appears.

Although Buchner et al. (2007:348) only recorded a single instance of a Box-O mark on a Fletcher’s bottle, numerous examples have appeared on eBay, and we have three such bottles in our possession. On one of our bottles, the Box-O is only accompanied with a numeral “3”; the others are embossed “80 Box-O” and “8 Box-O 6.” These numbers require a bit of explanation.

Owens codes associated with Box-O logos followed two basic patterns (although there were occasional exceptions). The earliest style consisted of a two-digit number that could be embossed on either the left side of the Box-O logo or on the right. The second style placed the Box-O logo between the two numbers (e.g., 8 Box-O 6). In either style, the first numeral (on the left) indicated the factory where the bottle was made. Our examples were manufactured at Plant No. 8 – located at Glassboro, New Jersey. This plant was built in 1918, and the major emphasis on medicinal bottles apparently shifted from the Charleston factory to Glassboro – including Fletcher’s Castoria bottles.

The second digit (to the right in either style) was the date code. Since the Owens Bottle Co. was only in business from 1919 to 1929, these numbers, ranging from 0 to 8, indicate 1920 to 1928. We have never recorded a “9” date code on a Box-O bottle. It is very likely that bottles made by the firm in the second half of 1919 were only marked with the Box-O logo – with no plant or date codes. The Owens Bottle Co. merged with the Illinois Glass Co. in 1929 to form the Owens-Illinois Glass Co.

The first code on one of our bottles – 80 Box-O – therefore indicates a bottle made at the Glassboro plant in 1920. The other example in our possession – with a base code of 8 Box-O 6 – indicates that the bottle was made at Glassboro in 1926. Since there was no Plant No. 9 at Owens, the second code could not have been inverted – 9 Box-O 8



Figure 38 – Owens Box-O logo on Fletchers base

(Figure 38). It is likely that Fletcher exclusively ordered Castoria bottles from the Owens Bottle Co. from 1919 to 1929.

Other Manufacturers of Cork-Stopped Fletcher’s Castoria Bottles

Fletcher used at least two later glass houses to supply cork-stoppered Castoria bottles (with two-part “double-ring” finishes). There were possibly other manufacturers, but the identity of those – if valid – is unclear.

We have seen a bottle embossed on the base with the I-in-an-oval-superimposed-on-an-elongated-diamond logo used by the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. from 1929 to ca. 1960. The logo was not placed in the usual position, so the codes do not match the sequence revealed by Jones (1965) and Toulouse (1971:406). With the base held with the long axis vertical, the logo would appear at the top. An “8” – turned sideways – would be on the bottom, and “1-1” (very faint) was embossed in the center (Figure 39). The right “1” is probably a date code for 1931, but it is impossible to decode the other numbers. The Castoria bottles were probably made by Owens-Illinois (successor to the Owens Bottle Co.) during the firms first few years – 1929-ca. 1932.

In addition to the bottles noted above, Buchner et al. (2007:348) noted basemarks on machine-made, cork-finished Fletcher's bottles of "G followed by G over C" and "M." The first of these may refer to one of the Owens variations described above, but we cannot fully decipher the meaning without actually seeing the base. The "M" was not one of the letters used by the Owens Bottle Machine Co. The Maryland Glass Corp. used an "M-in-a-circle" logo from 1921 to 1971. The firm also used an "M" with no circle on machine-made bottles as early as ca. 1913 but discontinued that logo with the adoption of the Circle-M. Again, we really need to see a bottle to make an accurate determination.



Figure 39 – Owens-Illinois logo on Fletcher's base

Still other machine-made bottles had a two-digit number in comparatively large numerals embossed on each base along with a machine scar. The scar was *not* the distinctive feathered scar caused by the Owens Automatic Bottle Machine. We currently have no idea which glass house made these bottles – or for how long. Our current sample (mostly from eBay) is very small – only "9," "28," and "43" (Figure 40).



Figure 40 – Fletcher base with machine scar and "43" (eBay)

What was almost certainly the last logo used on cork-stoppered Fletcher's Castoria bottles was the Circle-P logo of the Pierce Glass Co. Pierce Glass used the Circle-P mark from 1905 to 1987. Unfortunately, the firm did not use date codes, so the only way we can tell when Pierce bottles were made is by manufacturing techniques or product characteristics. The single- or double-digit numbers usually found on Pierce bottles are mold codes and are not useful for dating. Cork-finished bottles with the Circle-P logo were probably made during the ca. 1932-1935 period. The Pierce Glass Co. bottles all had one other trait: The "s" at the end of the "Fletcher's" facsimile signature was deleted – and continued to be removed until the end of the embossed bottle period.

Fletcher's Bottles with Continuous-Thread Finishes

At some point, probably ca. 1935 – either concurrent with the 1934 purchase of Centaur Co. by Sterling Drug or shortly thereafter – the firm dropped the old two-part cork finish in favor of the more recent continuous-thread finish for screw caps. Continuous-thread finishes had been in use on wide-mouth jars since the Mason jar was patented in 1858, but they were not adopted to narrow-mouth bottles until the mid-1920s. On May 20, 1925, Albertis E. Wright of Chicago applied for a patent for a “Design for a Bottle” and received Design Patent No. 68,229 on September 15 of that year (Figure 41). The design included a continuous-thread finish with a screw cap.

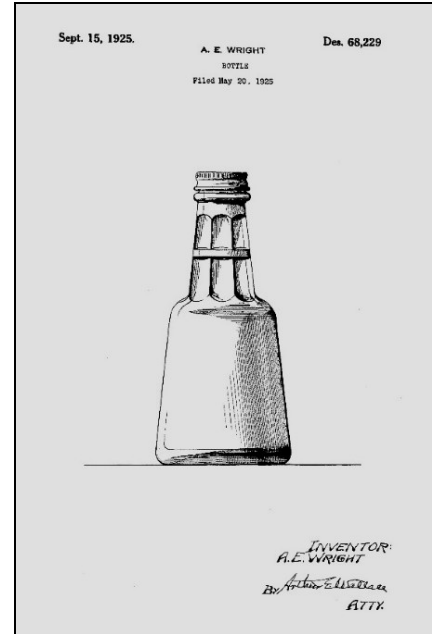


Figure 41 – Wright’s 1925 patent



Figure 42 – Fletcher’s bottle with continuous-thread finish

The new Fletcher (no apostrophe “s”) bottle was a very light aqua color and had a continuous-thread finish but was otherwise virtually identical to the older, cork-finished bottles. Both facing panels continued to be unembossed – for paper labels, while one side panel was embossed

“CASTORIA” with the “Chas. H. Fletcher” facsimile signature on the other side panel (Figure 42). The bottles continued to be made by the



Figure 43 – Base of first continuous-thread bottle

Pierce Glass Co., with the Circle-P logo on the bases (Figure 43). Although the beginning for these bottles was probably ca. 1936, the transition to the next style is much more difficult to assess, although we can guess that the new ones began use ca. 1940.



Figure 44 – Second bottle with continuous-thread finish

The final style of embossed bottle with the Fletcher name was similar in size, still very light aqua in color, but had no sunken panels. The bottle was rectangular in cross-section, with very rounded shoulders and a continuous-thread finish (Figure 44). These bottles were also made by Pierce and had the Circle-P logo, but these were embossed with a model code (258) as well (Figure 45). Both the Fletcher signature (now with a period after the “r.”) and



Figure 45 – Base of second bottle

the name “CASTORIA” were embossed on the side panels in much larger fonts than any of the earlier bottles, and the neck was significantly shorter (Figure 46). We have seen only a few of these, and they may have just been made for a short time during the early 1940s.

At this point, Sterling Drug chose a generic bottle, probably very similar to the last embossed container. However, this bottle can only be identified if the paper label remains intact. The era of the embossed Fletcher’s bottle was at an end.



Figure 46 – Comparison of first and second bottle with continuous-thread finishes

Bottles of the Imitators

It is virtually certain that most of the imitators, beginning with Heinsfurter & Dagget in 1896, used generic bottles with paper labels. It is unfortunate that the court transcripts from 1899 (see history section above) only showed the labeling of the outer box – instead of the label that was pasted on the bottle. However, only a few imitators appear to have used embossed bottles.

Castoria Co.

Joe Widman

(2012:34-35) now has what is almost certainly the most complete collection of Pitcher's Castoria bottles in the U.S. (Figure 47). One of those bottles was embossed



Figure 47 – Widman's collection in 2012 (Widman 2012:34)

“PITCHER'S (outlined letters decreasing in size) / THE

KIND THE BABY CRIES FOR (upwardly slanted between two lines) / CASTORIA (outlined letters increasing in size)” read with the finish to the left. The mouth-blown, aqua bottle was topped by a two-part finish that is similar to the ones found on the Dr. S. Pitcher's and Chas. H. Fletcher bottles used by the Centaur Co., except that the lower ring was wedge-shaped instead of downwardly tapered (Figure 48). The finish was tooled, and the bottle had three vent marks along each side and a single one at the top of the shoulder on each face. The base was unembossed.

The bottle was almost certainly used by the Castoria Co. after the firm moved to Chicago. As noted in the history section, the Castoria Co. won the suit by Fletcher, then, in 1897, moved to Chicago and began copying Fletcher's labels – including the use of the slogan “the Kind the Baby Cries For.” Since so few bottles have survived (we know of only two), the bottles were probably only made once or twice – likely in the early years at Chicago – and were followed by generic bottles. As noted above, the Castoria Co. moved to Chicago in 1897 and remained in business until ca. 1904.



Figure 48 – The Kind the Baby Cries For – Castoria Co. (Widman 2012:35)

Dr. Pitcher Medicine Co.

Another Castoria container discovered by Widman (2012:34-35) was a mouth-blown, aqua bottle with a single-part, tooled finish and four sunken panels. The front of the bottle was embossed “— Dr. Pitcher’s — / ORIGINAL / CASTORIA” The top line “Dr. Pitcher’s” used mixed-case, stylized letters, but the next two lines had all-capital, outlined letters. Both fonts were back-slanted, and the embossing was somewhat crude (Figure 49).



Figure 49 – Dr. Pitcher’s Original Castoria (Widman 2012:35)

Both side panels were embossed “The Pitcher’s Medicine Co.” in cursive, and the back was bare (see bottle on left in Figure 47). The bottle had no visible vent marks on the sides, shoulders, base or in the embossing. The base was embossed with the letter “V” in the center. This is the only example of this style of Castoria bottle that we have discovered. The bottle may be dated between December 1897 and May 1898 – with reasonable accuracy – based on the history of the firm (see above).

Picture of a Pitcher

Another Widman (2012:35) bottle was embossed “PITCHER’S / CASTORIA” with a line drawing of a pitcher in between. Unlike the imitators’ bottles described above, this embossing was read with the bottle standing (finish pointing up). Also in contrast, the bottle was made of colorless glass, although the one-part packer finish was tooled. The bottle had a recessed panel on the front and both sides but not the back. The base was unembossed and had no vent marks.

As with most of these bottles, this one had four vent marks along each side seam and a single one at the shoulder. However, this bottle had numerous vent marks in the letters and along the drawing of

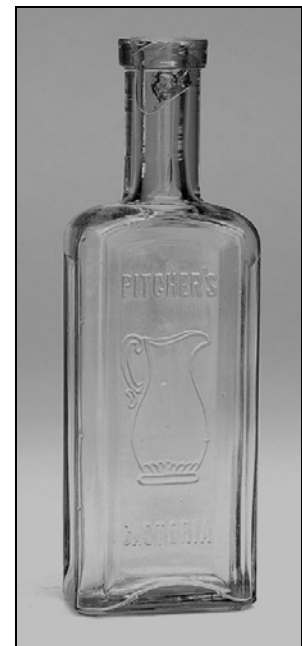


Figure 50 – Bottle with a drawing of a pitcher

the pitcher, one of which shows clearly on the right curved side of the pitcher in Figure 50. Unfortunately, the bottle gives us no clue as to the user. It could have been made anytime during the late 1890s or very early 1900s.

Castoria – Kent Drug Co.

A turn-of-the-century Castoria bottle was offered at an eBay auction. The bottle was colorless and was blown into a two-leaf mold. It had a tooled, one-part packer finish and was embossed on one face with “CASTORIA / KENT DRUG CO. / BALTO, MD.” The photos from the eBay auction were not taken at an angle where we could determine vent marks (Figure 51). However, the bottle appears to have been made very late in the 19th century or during the first decade or so of the 20th century.



Figure 51 – Castoria from Kent Drug Co. (eBay)

We have also discovered very little reference to the Kent Drug Co. The firm opened its third store at Baltimore in 1907, so it was probably in business by 1901 – and it used a few other embossed bottles for proprietary products. Kent Drug may have concocted its own formula and packaged it in this bottle during the ca. 1901-1907 (or later) period. These bottles are apparently rare. We have found no evidence that Fletcher ever sought legal action against Kent Drug.

Pitcher’s Castoria

We have in our possession a mouth-blown, aqua bottle that has the same general appearance of the classic Pitcher’s/Fletcher’s bottles – including a virtually identical two-part finish. This bottle, however, was just slightly larger and was embossed “PITCHER’S / CASTORIA” on the front inset panel with noticeable vent marks concealed in the letters (Figure 52). The bottle also had vent marks on shoulder, side panel, and base (Figure 53). Our



Figure 52 – Pitcher’s Castoria imitator bottle

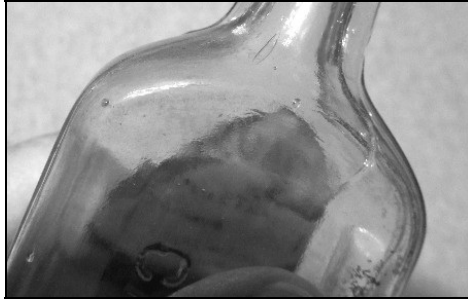


Figure 53 – Details of vent marks on shoulder and side

example had a partial paper label on the opposite face with directions for Castoria in both English and German (Figure 54). Unfortunately, the label had no firm name.

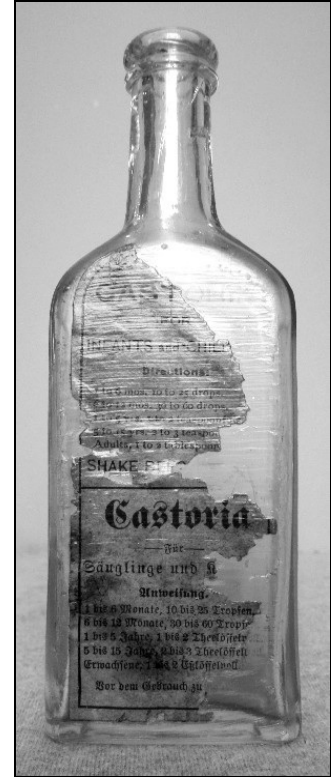


Figure 54 – Paper label on Pitcher’s imitator bottle

Although Wilson and Wilson (1971:72) dated the bottle “ca. 1888,” the bottle had four vent marks on each side seam, one in the center of each shoulder, and four on the base. Even though our example is crude enough to have a distinct list to one side (Figure 55), it almost certainly had a manufacture contemporary with the “DR. S. PITCHER” bottles (or even the Fletcher ones) produced during the first two decades of the 20th century. Excavations in 2002 discovered one of these bottles at the Oliver Lee House at Oliver Lee

State Park, near Alamogordo, New Mexico (Figure 56). Lockhart (2012:62) was able to correctly identify the bottle but could only date it between 1896 and ca. 1914.



Figure 56 – Imitator bottle found at an Oliver Lee Ranch site

Figure 55 – Lean Lee Ranch site of imitator bottle (Lockhart 2012:61)

A variation of the bottle had “PITCHER’S” in a slight backslanted font, with “CASTORIA” in slight italics – along with a single-part “oil” finish (Figures 57 & 58). Our example has a flaw on one side that may be distorting the word “PITCHER’S.” The letters may actually be in block form rather than backslanted. The letters and the bottle, itself, were crude. Each side of the bottle had four vent marks, although these were on the corner opposite the side seam. While not unusual in itself, this is the only Pitcher’s bottle (except for the Baby Brand described below) with side

vent marks that were *not* on the seam. The base had four vent marks but was otherwise bare (Figure 59). Again, the information provides insufficient data to identify the maker. However, the crudity of the bottle and the oil finish suggests that this was the earlier of the two with this embossing.



Figure 57 – Variation of imitator bottle



Figure 58 – “Oil” finish of imitator bottle

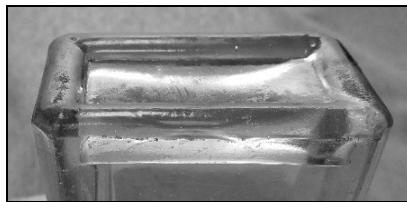


Figure 59 – Base of imitator bottle

Original Dr. Samuel Pitcher’s Castoria

A recent (October 2015) eBay auction brought to our attention another imitator variation. This one was similar in size and shape to the others, with what was probably a tooled, two-part finish. The front panel of the bottle was sunken along with the two side panels (Figures 60 & 61). The front was embossed “ORIGINAL / DR. SAMUEL PITCHER’S / CASTORIA,” but the bottle had no other embossing. The seller did not show a photo of the back or base. The shoulder had a single vent mark, with three along the side seam. Oddly,



Figure 60 – Quarter view of Original bottle (eBay)

the shoulder vent mark and the one at the top of the side seam were less than a centimeter apart. The bottle was light aqua in color and could have been used by almost any of the very late 19th century or early 20th century imitators.

Baby Brand Castoria



Figure 62 – Baby Brand Castoria (eBay)

Another less blatant imitator used the term “Baby Brand” – an obvious play on Fletcher’s “The Kind the Baby Cries For” slogan. These aqua bottles were also mouth blown with tooled, two-part finishes and sunken panels on at least the front and both sides. The front was embossed “BABY BRAND / (TRADE MARK) / CASTORIA” with “BABY BRAND” on both side panels (Figures 62 & 63). Each side (opposite the seam) had at least three (probably five) vent marks, with four more on the shoulders. As noted above, the placement of the vent marks on the side opposite the seam is unusual – only found on one other bottle in this study. The base had five vent marks, one on



Figure 64 – Baby Brand base (eBay)

each corner and one near the center (Figure 64). These were very likely made during the early 20th century.



Figure 61 – Original Dr. Samuel Pitchers bottle (eBay)



Figure 63 – Baby Brand side panel (eBay)

C.W. Link Drug Co.

Although our example is not embossed with the Castoria name, we have an aqua bottle that is very similar in shape to the Pitcher's/Fletcher's containers. Our example had the typical two-part finish, along with sunken panels on both faces and sides (Figure 65). Unlike the Pitcher's/Fletcher's bottles, this one was a ball-neck panel bottle (i.e., an embossed ring around the neck). The bottle was embossed "C.W. LINK DRUG CO." on one face and "NEW YORK" on the other (Figure 66). The bottle was machine-made, with an Owens scar on the base. The base was also embossed with the Diamond-I logo of the Illinois Glass Co. Illinois Glass captured the Owens license to make medicinal bottles in 1912 (Lockhart et al. 2005).



Figure 65 – Bottle from the C.W. Link Drug Co.

Fletcher had filed suit against the C.W. Link Drug Co. on July 15, 1901 – with the usual charge that Link was copying the labels. As



Figure 66 – C.W. Link side panel

usual Fletcher

won because “every one of the packages . . . show a persistent adoption of the size of the bottle and the label of the complainant (*Pharmaceutical Era* 1901:135) – a good description of the bottle described above. Despite the

injunction, Link was noted as carrying Pitcher's Castoria at least as late as January 1916 (*Pharmaceutical Era* 1916:8) – again, a good match for the date of our bottle.

Pfeiffer Chemical Co.

With its main office in Philadelphia, the Pfeiffer Chemical Co. apparently bottled Castoria for some time. The firm began as the Allan-Pfeiffer Chemical Co., in business at St. Louis from 1891 until at least 1904. The firm had dropped the “Allan” by 1906 to become the Pfeiffer Chemical Co. Eventually the company opened offices at Philadelphia by at least 1912 and New York and remained in business to at least 1942 (Fike 1988:73).



Figure 67 – Castoria bottle from the Pfeiffer Chemical Co.

Older bottles had one-part tapered “oil” finishes, although most were patterned after the typical Pitcher’s/Fletcher’s containers with the

two-part finishes – eventually evolving into continuous-thread finishes with screw caps. Our example was mouth-blown into a two-leaf mold and had a tooled finish. A sunken face panel was embossed “PFEIFFER CHEMICAL Co / PHILADELPHIA / & ST LOUIS” (Figure 67). The only basemark was the number “1423.” Our example had numerous vent marks on the side panels, shoulders, base, and concealed in the embossing. The paper label noted: “PITCHER’S / Castoria / The Babies (*sic*) Friend / A valuable remedy for the ordinary Diseases of Children” (Figure 68). We have found no record of any lawsuits by Fletcher against Pfeiffer Chemical.

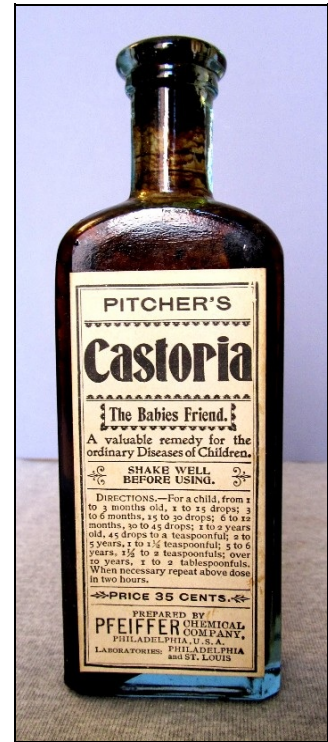


Figure 68 – Pfeiffer’s paper label

Other Imitators

As noted in the history section, Heinsfurter & Daggett began bottling and selling Pitcher’s Castoria in 1896, followed by at least eight other firms who were sued by the Centaur Co. In addition, others – e.g., the Central Remedy Co. – appear to have made brands of Castoria where the labels and/or bottles were sufficiently dissimilar to those used by Fletcher to have completely avoided legal action. We may never know the full range of imitators and competitors.

Explanations of Hypotheses

We began this study with several hypotheses that we were able to test remarkably well.

Hypothesis 1 – DR. S. PITCHER’S Bottle used by Fletcher

This is actually more of a story about the process of discovery. Generally, readers are only exposed to the final product of research – rather than seeing the process that happens. Most research unfolds over months or years of collecting data (including bottles, themselves) and thinking about them.

In this case, the bottles – especially the ubiquitous ones with “CASTORIA” embossed on one side panel and either “DR. S. PITCHER’S” or “Chas. H. Fletcher’s” on the other – were already well known, as was the sequence of their use. What was *not* known was the correct date ranges.

Wilson and Wilson (1971:72) discovered the main style changes – including one that was almost certainly an imitator bottle – correctly dating the first one. However, they dated variations of the bottles with the “DR. S. PITCHER’S” side panel at 1878, 1882, and 1890. The latter bottle had a reversed “D” in “Dr.” (Figure 69). This engraver apparently had a really bad day. The “R” in “DR” was engraved over another letter – possibly a reversed “R” – and the first “S” appears to have been engraved over an “F.” Our example of the reverse-D error bottle was embossed A5 (without the typical periods following the letter and number) on the base. It was otherwise identical with typical DR. S. PITCHER’S bottles.



Figure 69 – “DR. S. PITCHER’S” side panel with reverse “D”

We originally hypothesized that the side-panel bottles were made very early – during the 1800s. However, the manufacturing characteristics simply did not fit the time period – no matter how hard we tried to justify those dates. Most of these bottles had two vent marks on each shoulder, five down each side panel, and four on the base – one on each corner (Figures 70 & 71 – also see Figure 53).



Figure 70 – Vent marks on a side panel of Dr. Pitcher’s bottle

We also examined one that only had a single vent mark on each shoulder, and none on the base, but it had 18 vent marks concealed in the letters on the two side panels (see Figure 28). Thus, the most common variation had 18 vent marks, total, and the other one had a total of 20.

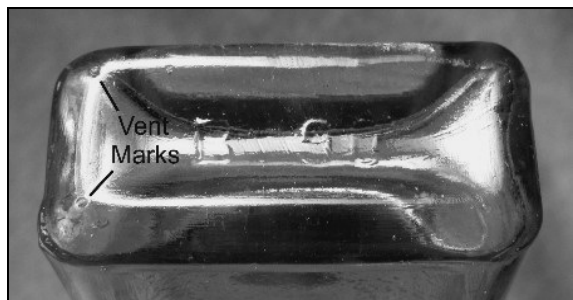


Figure 71 – Vent marks on a Dr. Pitcher’s bottle base

We really wanted the Pitcher’s bottles to fit into that 1870-1890 gap, but evidence strongly suggests that the use of multiple vent marks – especially several on the side, four on the base, and vent marks concealed in the embossed letters – were not used until the early 20th century.

These *might* have been used in the very late 1890s – but certainly not sooner.

We needed a different approach – we had to think outside the bottle. One major hurdle to overcome was that the bottles embossed “DR. S. PITCHER’S” and those with the “Chas. H. Fletcher’s” signature in the same location had identical manufacturing characteristics. Even the vent marks were identical, and the basemarks followed the same pattern.

We obviously needed a new hypothesis to fit the evidence. It still made sense that bottles marked “PITCHER’S” preceded those embossed “Fletcher’s.” We reasoned that Fletcher, in attempting to protect the “PITCHER’S” trademark – which he claimed was only legally used by the Centaur Co. – had it embossed on Castoria bottles. This almost certainly occurred as a result of the litigation against Heinsfurter & Dagget, which culminated in 1898.

The new hypothesis was that Fletcher had “DR. S. PITCHER’S” embossed on Castoria bottles produced by the Centaur Co. during the period beginning ca. 1900. These were replaced at some point about 1910 or later. The next problem involved testing the hypothesis. What we needed was a bottle with the “PITCHER’S” embossing and a Fletcher’s label.

We had completed the other research but only lacked this single datum. It took months of internet searches and monitoring eBay. Then, one day, the bottle appeared on eBay. It was embossed “DR. S. PITCHER’S” on one side panel and had paper labels on both facings. The paper labels had the Castoria directions in four languages (English, German, French, and Spanish), all over stamped with the Chas. H. Fletcher signature in red. We had found the Rosetta Stone of Castoria bottles.

We should note that it is very unlikely that this bottle/label combination is a forgery. One label is coming loose at one end and is very worn at the other. These appear to have occurred in place and are unlikely on a bottle where someone has pasted on either a forged label or one soaked off of a different bottle. The bottle also has Castoria residue on the inside and what appears to be the original cork. Finally, these bottles are ubiquitous. It is highly unlikely that anyone would forge a label on such a common bottle. Forgeries are almost always created to enhance the value of a bottle. This one sold for about \$13. In addition, another bottle with identical embossing and the same two labels has since been offered on eBay.

After the first draft of this article was written, we discovered an archaeological report that listed seven Dr. Pitcher’s bottles (with either “A” or “B” basemarks – see Hypothesis 2) and one Fletcher’s Bottle in a context between 1895 and ca. 1910 (Carrico 2008:24, 46). This time frame fits almost perfectly into the hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2 – The American Bottle Co. as manufacturer of Pitcher’s and Fletcher’s bottles

Another hypothesis is that most of the mouth-blown Pitcher’s bottles and Fletcher’s bottles were made by the American Bottle Co. between 1905 and ca. 1914. While the American Bottle Co. was known for making soda and beer bottles, the firm originally (the Ohio Bottle Co.) made medicinal bottles, and some medicinal types have been reported with A.B.Co. logos.

In our sample, we currently have 20 mouth-blown bottles embossed “DR. S. PITCHER’S” on one side panel. One is very different from the others and was almost certainly made by a different (probably earlier) glass house (and has only a “1” or an “T” embossed on the base). All the others had identical patterns – a single letter, followed by a period, a one- or two-digit number, then another period. Oddly, only three letters appear: A, B, and S. The letter “A” appears seven times in our sample (A.23.-A.33.); B also has seven examples (B.19.-B.90.); and S shows up five times (S.1.-S.89.).

We have eleven examples of the mouth-blown “Chas. H. Fletcher’s” bottles (as well as others that are machine made). All of the mouth-blown bottles share all the manufacturing characteristics of the Pitcher’s bottles (except the substitution of the Fletcher’s side panel), and all are embossed with the “S . # .” pattern on the base – and *only* the letter S in the code. The range of these in our sample is from S.12. to S.88. (Figure 68). Interestingly, there is an “S.88.” mark on both Pitcher’s and Fletcher’s bottles.

The limit of these three letters cannot be an accident. Ignoring the “A” for a moment, the two main factories of the American Bottle Co. – that made mouth-blown beer and soda bottles – were Belleville and Streator, and they used “B” and “S” heelcodes, respectively, to identify each plant. Our previous dating of the Pitcher’s bottles – based entirely on manufacturing characteristics (notably vent mark patterns) – was ca. 1898-ca. 1905 or later. Lindsey, however, noted that the 1898 date was probably a bit early; most bottles with vent marks along the side panels and on the base were used *after* 1900. We had dated the Fletcher’s mouth-blown bottles from ca. 1905 to ca. 1916.

In 1904, a group of five factories (including the Belleville, Illinois, plant of the Adolphus Busch Glass Mfg. Co.) formed the Ohio Bottle Co. The Streator Bottle & Glass Co. joined the combine in 1905, creating the American Bottle Co. The Belleville factory closed in 1909, but the Streator plant continued to make mouth-blown bottles until ca. 1914 (Lockhart et al. 2007).

When Fletcher began using machine-made bottles, he chose the Owens Bottle Co., the firm that had purchased the American Bottle Co. in 1916. The earliest example of a machine-made Fletcher’s bottle in our collection was produced in 1917. This suggests a continuation of bottles from the same firm.

Returning to the “A” basemarks, the reason for these is not as intuitively obvious. The pattern is exactly the same as both the “B” and “S” logos (A.23. and A.33.), and the font style and size is identical. It is virtually certain that these bottles were made by the same mold shop – probably the same mold maker. It is possible that the “A” indicated “American” and that these bottles were made in 1905. The use of “B” and “S” heelcodes on beer and soda bottles did not begin until 1906, so that is the likely year that the use of those two letters also began on Castoria bases. Bases with the “A” mark may have continued until the molds wore out. See Table 2 for an entirely new chronology of the bottles.

Table 2 – Chronology for Pitcher’s and Fletcher’s Embossed Bottles

Date Range	Probable Bottle Manufacturer	Basemark
DR. S. PITCHER’S		
ca. 1900-1905	unknown glass house – poss. Ohio Bottle Co. in 1904	1 or I
1905-ca. 1906	unknown plant of the American Bottle Co.	A.{number}.
1906-1909	Belleville plant, American Bottle Co.	B.{number}.
ca. 1908-ca. 1910	Streator plant, American Bottle Co.	S.{number}.
Chas. H. Fletcher’s		
ca. 1910-ca. 1914	Streator plant, American Bottle Co.	S.{number}.
ca. 1917-1919	Charleston plant, Owens Bottle Machine Co.	C {number} + dots
1919-1929	Glassboro plant, Owens Bottle Co.	Box-O
1929-ca. 1932	Owens-Illinois Glass Co.	<0>
ca. 1932-ca. 1935	Pierce Glass Co.	Circle-P
Continuous-Thread Finishes		
ca. 1935-ca. 1938	Pierce Glass Co. (long-neck variation)	Circle-P
ca. 1938-ca. 1942	Pierce Glass Co. (short-neck variation)	Circle-P

The Lowe Complication

As noted in the text above, Lowe (2012:11) provided an interesting complication that must also be weighed. She stated that “in 1902, the [Cohansey Glass Co.] accepted an order for “Castoria” manufacturers for three million bottles, to be delivered in a month.” This likely means that all of this batch of bottles were made at once. Since our numbers for “A” bottles extends to 33, Cohansey may have used 33 molds to make this initial batch of bottles. A second massive order could have used “B” molds.

Alternatively, “A” and “B” could have indicated two Cohansey tanks. The third tank was not in operation until near the end of production at the Cohansey plant. Lowe (2012:12) add that “one of the biggest bottle contracts by a patent medicine firm, which for nine years were made at the Downingtown plant, had been transferred to Salem, New Jersey, and the men who worked on the medicine bottles had left Downingtown and others followed.” Nine years would have been 1901 – close enough to her 1902 claim for a “three million” order of Castoria bottles to be reasonable.

When the Cohansey Glass Co. ceased operations in 1909, the most likely Salem glass plant was the factory of the Salem Glass Works. The only other major plant in town, the Gayner Glass Works, certainly *could* have made the Castoria containers, but Gayner specialized in soda bottles. The other deciding factor was the name – Salem begins with the same letter – “S” – that was embossed on the bases of the bottles.

This would suggest that Dr. S. Pitchers bottles with the “A” and “B” basemarks would have been made between 1902 and 1909. Pitcher’s bottles with “S” basemarks would not have been made until 1909. The first bottles embossed “Chas. H. Fletcher” would therefore have been instituted ca. 1911. As noted in the text, the chronology based on Cohansey and Salem Glass would be:

ca. 1900-1909	Dr. S. Pitchers bottles with A or B basemarks (Cohansey Glass Co.)
1909-ca. 1910	Dr. S. Pitchers bottles with S basemarks (Salem Glass Co.)
ca. 1910-ca. 1914	Chas H. Fletcher bottles with S basemarks (Salem Glass Co.)

Unfortunately, neither of these hypotheses appears clearly superior or is significantly supported by evidence. Lowe provided documentary for Cohansey, but we have found no indication from any source that suggests the use of letters or numbers to designate different tanks or a specific order. We have no documentary evidence that American Glass made Castoria bottles or that the company ever used an “A” logo. However, the firm certainly used both “B” and “S” designations, and its successor made later Castoria bottles. The good news is that the date ranges for either scenario are very close.

Discussion and Conclusions

Using a combination of historical data, manufacturing characteristics, and manufacturer’s marks, we have been able to devise a chronology for the use of various types of bottles by the Centaur Co. and its predecessors for both Pitcher’s and Fletcher’s Castoria. In addition, we have identified bottles used by some of the imitators of the Centaur firm’s bottles and/or labels as well as some containers used by legitimate competitors.

There are some significant gaps in our research. Although we have identified the bottles used by the initial manufacturer – the Pitcher’s Castoria Mfg. Co. – the bottles used by J.B. Rose & Co. and the 19th century iterations of the Centaur Co. were apparently generic with paper labels. If any of those labeled bottles have survived, we have not discovered them, although they should be recognizable through the paper labels and /or tax stamps.

In addition, druggists’ journals and court transcripts have recorded numerous imitators – successfully sued by Charles H. Fletcher and later Centaur Co. presidents. Many of the bottles were described as being similar to Castoria containers made by the Centaur Co. and/or of having paper labels and boxes that were so similar to those used by Fletcher that they were fraudulently deceiving the public. Although we have represented several of those in this work, many others still await discovery.

Finally, a currently unknown number of legitimate competitors – firms that took advantage of the expired patent and used both bottle and labels that were distinctively different from those of the Centaur Co. – certainly existed. While we have noted a few of these, there were certainly others we have not identified.

This study has compiled a great deal of new data on the bottles and history of the firms that offered various forms of Castoria. We have devised useful information sets about the bottles and provided hypotheses to be further tested. We hope that this study will stimulate others to pursue the remaining details. Meanwhile, at least a few of these very common bottles will be better understood.

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