

On the evening of August 5th, 1992, after months of anticipation, we finally arrived in Toledo, Ohio for Expo '92 a bottle show put on every four years by the Federation of Historical Bottle Collectors. This show featured a bottle auction and a two day show, with over 60 displays and 650 sales tables of bottles and other related collectible items from all over the world. Expo '92 was the biggest bottle show ever held in North America.

Hotels in the Toledo core were booked well in advance by dealers and collectors from all parts of the U.S., Canada, from places as far away as England, France, Germany, New Zealand and Guyana.

That evening, even before the show officially opened, the rooms in the hotels adjoining the convention centre had been transformed into showrooms with dealers and collectors eagerly going from room to room to buy, sell or trade bottles.

On Friday morning, the auction was held in the main ballroom of the Radisson Hotel. Two hundred people were expected to attend the auction, but to everyone's surprise, over 600 showed up. Long lineups of interested spectators waited to view the impressive display of bitters, poisons, flasks, inks and sodas. Everyone was waiting for the last bottle to be auctioned off. Three hours later, the auctioneer finally introduced the Harrison's Columbian Ink in sapphire blue with a wide mouth. The audience was told that it was originally found in a flea market and that it had changed hands several times before. The bidding started at \$5,000 and when the bidding war was over, the prize of the auction went to a gentleman from San Antonio, Texas for the price of \$30,000!

At 4:00, dealers were allowed into the convention centre to begin setting up their sales tables. Finally the months of anticipation were to be rewarded with the biggest bottle show we had ever seen and one we certainly would never forget.

That evening, the meeting rooms in the hotel were reserved for specialty groups such as collectors of inks, nursers, whimsies, poisons, and painted label sodas. At the PSBCA (Painted Soda Bottle Collectors' Association) meeting, the club members were treated to a video showing how painted labels were applied to pop bottles. A speaker from the Owen-Illinois Glass Company explained the process and fielded many questions from the audience. After that, there was a 'bottle swap' where top quality soda bottles were traded in a controlled and somewhat lengthy process. Although there were no Canadian bottles on the trade table, it was fascinating to see the soda bottles you only hear about being traded in real life. The meeting was a success for it was both very informative and it also gave people an opportunity to meet the other club members.

The APBCA (Antique Poison Bottle Collectors' Association) meeting was also very interesting because it gave poison bottle collectors the opportunity to meet other collectors from around the world. It gave members a chance to share information about their collections, exchange stories about interesting digs and discuss other upcoming shows and events.

On Saturday morning, we arrived at the convention centre at 7:00 a.m. so that we could get a full day of looking at the incredible displays set up by various clubs and collectors, meet other bottle collectors (there were hundreds of us!) and of course, look for bottles to add to our collections.

By the time the show closed on Sunday, our feet were very sore, our wallets were very empty, but we still managed to walk away with some wonderful memories, many new friends and of course, one or two new bottles. Although prices at this show were rather high, the quality and the quantity of bottles at Expo '92 and the fantastic opportunity to meet other bottle collectors made it a show that we will never forget. The next show will be held in 1996 at a location that has not yet been announced. We highly recommend that bottle collectors everywhere attend this future event.