

His friends laughed but bottle collection is best

By CRAIG PIECHURA

They all laughed at Victor Steele, down at work when he knelt down to dig for old soda bottles in the parking lot.

"They were putting in an addition at the place (the Detroit Public Lighting Department at Jefferson and Junction)," Steele said. "The guys inside were earning time-and-a-half and couldn't understand why I'd come in for nothing on a Saturday and dig around in the ripped-up parking lot."

"Then I showed them the flask I found. I brought in an ad in a collector's magazine that showed the same bottle sold for \$1,100 somewhere. They stopped laughing after that."

AFTER ONLY five years of collecting antique bottles—most made before 1900—Steele has accumulated one of the finest arrays of antique Detroit soda and mineral water bottles in the country.

The pick of his collection is on display, for free, at Southfield's Burgh Museum, Berg and Civic Center Drive, through Oct. 29. The museum is open 2 1/2 p.m. to Saturday and Sunday or by special appointment during the week. Call Florence LaPonsa, president of the Southfield Historical Society, at 666-2845 for a weekday appointment.

Steele has bought bottles for as much as \$200 apiece but says he has found bottles worth more than \$1,000. His oldest bottle dates from 1837. It's a Detroit Mineral Water mold-blown bottle made by Teller's Bottling Co. of Detroit.

Steele found the portland bottle in a hole where the

Renaissance Center now stands. When excavation started there five years ago, Steele worked along side archeologists while looking for antique bottles. He found a slew of them on that spot.

"After four feet of dirt, you're right back in the 1800s," Steele said. "No trash was collected in Detroit until 1885. Until that time, they looked for low spots so all along the Detroit River it's a gold mine."

"I found several coins from 1830 to 1850 at the Renaissance Center site. You find doll heads, arms, and legs, and I try to put them together. I find old irons, old porcelain license plates and porcelain signs. Those are quite valuable."

The pride of Steele's collection is his 19th Century soda and mineral water bottles. He believes he has the most complete collection around.

But a favorite of the museum crowd is his historical collection of miniature novelty bottles. There are dogs dressed up in tuxedos that held perfume.

Another bottle is in the shape of a cat dancing in a ballet. A clear glass bottle comes in the shape of a cigar; another looks like an elephant; one looks like a Turkish prince, and a bottle of rum is in the shape of a little lamb.

Tiny bottles of Hires, Hi-Spot, Orange Crush line the shelves along with miniature replicas of Blatz, Koppitz, Edelweiss and High Life beers.

He's found old Scrub's bottles in his dig, but most of those are sold to Peter Eham, vice-president at the brewery and a fellow member of the Metropolitan Detroit Antique Bottle Club.

There are inkwells and dark blue cathedral-shaped bottles from the Stafford Co. of Detroit.

THERE ARE CROCK bottles for extract of Fielder's Ginger Beer and Matheson Ginger Beer, both of Detroit. Vernor is absent from the museum display, Steele explains, because the company didn't start bottling their soda until after the Owens Bottle Machine was invented in 1903. And Steele specializes in handmade bottles.

"I do have one Vernor's extract bottle at home, but it looks like a medicine bottle," he said. "Vernor's ginger ale wasn't put into bottles until well after 1900."

A Vernor's spokesman placed the date at 1915.

There are dark, brown bottles on display resembling log cabins. These held bitters and tonics. The alcohol-laden elixirs made people feel better and

some—like O-Jib-Wa Bitters—are still being sold today.

White Steele's collection will be taken out of the museum at the end of the month, it will be followed by his wife's entirely different collection. Mrs. Steele collects material and curios concerning the Dionne Quintuplets of Canada.

Other upcoming displays at the Burgh Museum include a Christmas program that will highlight antique toy trains and early American dolls.

Mrs. LaPonsa, president of the historical society, said it's a sad fact that many residents travel way up north to look at antiques when they could find excellent exhibits "right in their own backyard."

Few are audited

In the adjusted gross income range of \$10,000 to \$50,000, fewer than three per cent of personal income tax returns were audited last year, the IRS reports. Chances of an audit increased sharply if your adjusted gross was more than \$50,000, or if you took larger-than-average deductions, whatever your bracket.

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Dartmouth welcomes freshman

Brett A. Homovec, of Farmington Hills is among the 1,050 students entering the freshman class at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, this fall. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Roland Homovec of 25211 Skye Drive, Farmington Hills. Homovec was the valedictorian of his class at Harrison High School. He was a member of the National Honor Society and the Varsity Athletic Club. He was captain of the varsity football team, earned all-league honors as a quarterback and all state honors as a quarterback and all state honors as a kicker. He was the honorable mention candidate for all league honors as a pitcher on the varsity baseball team varsity baseball team.

Strike up the band That's what concerns these three Farmington area residents, who recently became members of the Michigan State University Marching Band. They are (from left) Pam Orcutt, Tom Ervin and Lynne Vickland.

Skillet Applesauce Rolls

Apples and bread have always been compatible. They combine well in coffeecakes, bread puddings, poultry stuffings and numerous casseroles and desserts. This recipe combines smooth, canned applesauce with hot roll mix to make sticky rolls that will be welcome for brunch, kaffee klatsch or dessert for dinner. It's a real quickie because packaged roll mix eliminates measuring ingredients. And by using canned applesauce you eliminate peeling, coring, slicing, cooking and sieving the apples. Canned applesauce is cooked; however, the recipe calls for ten minutes of additional cooking to concentrate the juice to achieve a more syrupy, sticky texture, characteristic of sticky rolls.



Most cooks don't use skillet as baking pans. Actually a heavy skillet makes a fine pan for baking bread as it heats evenly and in the case of applesauce rolls, it helps achieve a glossy, caramelized bottom on the rolls. Butter and brown sugar are melted in the skillet first and the rolls are arranged cut side up on that mixture. If the handle on the skillet is not ovenproof, cover it well with heavy aluminum foil.

SKILLET APPLESAUCE ROLLS 1 (13-3/4 ounce) package roll mix 2 tablespoons sugar 6 tablespoons butter 2 cups smooth applesauce 1/3 cup brown sugar, firmly packed 1/2 cup chopped pecans Cinnamon Prepare roll mix according to directions on package, adding 2 tablespoons sugar and the rolls are arranged cut side up on that mixture. If the handle on the skillet is not ovenproof, cover it well with heavy aluminum foil. Bake in 400°F oven for 20-25 minutes or until golden brown. Serve hot. Makes 16 rolls.

Canned applesauce comes in smooth and chunky styles. Be sure to use the smooth kind as it's been to dry ingredients. Cover; finely sieved which will give a more even distribution of flavor and sauce throughout the rolls. Bake 10 minutes

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