



# Rare, vintage eastern and western soda bottles reign supreme at American Bottle Auctions' Auction #64 held October 13-22

*A beautiful Indian Queen bitters bottle patented in 1868 sold for \$14,375 and a Lafayette DeWitt Clinton half-pint lime green flask brought a record \$10,925.*

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SACRAMENTO, Calif. – A rare and beautiful Indian Queen bitters bottle patented in 1868 sold for \$14,375 and a Lafayette DeWitt Clinton half-pint lime green flask brought a record \$10,925 in Auction #64, an internet and catalog auction that went online October 13th and ended Sunday, October 22nd, by American Bottle Auctions ([www.americanbottle.com](http://www.americanbottle.com)), based in Sacramento.

“

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Jeff Wichmann

The auction featured rare and [vintage bottles](#) from across the United States – to include Western and Eastern sodas, bitters, inkwells, whiskeys and more. “This auction had the largest and finest selection of [Western soda bottles](#) we've

ever offered, with many rare one-of-a-kinds,” said Jeff Wichmann, owner of American Bottle Auctions, “led by the superb collection of Ken Salazar.”

Of the 75 sodas from the Salazar collection, nearly 50 exceeded prices from the past. “Together they brought in more than \$80,000 which was a surprise to us and the consignor,” Wichmann said. “Eastern sodas also did well. When the quality was there so was the money.” Also offered were scarce bitters bottles from both sides of the country, a large inkwell collection and more.

The Indian Queen herb bitters bottle (“Brown’s Celebrated”), light to medium green in color, was the sale’s top lot, as eager bidders were not deterred by a condition issue at the mouth. “It was the highest price we’ve seen that bottle go for,” Wichmann remarked. The Lafayette flask, boasting embossed portraits and a condition grade of 8.8 out of 10, did gavel for a record price.

“Typically our sales are top-heavy with Western bottles and this sale had plenty of those, but we also had some of the finest known examples in many other categories,” Wichmann said. “With a little over 300 bidders, it was enough to set a record for us, selling 250 bottles. And although we had a lot of good stuff, we didn’t have that one monster bottle, so the gross was extraordinary.”

Wichmann added, “This sale didn’t feature any super lots expecting tens of thousands of dollars, but almost every lot with a quality bottle broke a previous record and then some. An Italian soda (Italian Soda Water Manufactory / S.F. Glassworks, Philadelphia) that normally sells in the \$800 range finished at a staggering \$6,325. It was one of the best looking examples we’d ever seen.”

Following are additional highlights from the auction, one in which 250 bottles sold for around \$380,000 (“That’s almost 50 percent more than we usually do per bottle,” Wichmann said). A total of 303 registered online bidders bid on 260 total lots. About 2,600 online bids were cast.

A Dr. Wynkoop's Sarsaparilla bottle that wasn't particularly rare (one of about 20 known), but was a highly desired medicine and sarsaparilla category bottle, ended up fetching \$7,150. Its early production, dating to the 1850s, combined with a beautiful blue color and crudity, made it one of the most popular bottles for collectors in that category. The bottle was graded well, at 8.

A Wonser's Indian Root Bitters in the aqua variant – the earliest made of the more prevalent amber examples, somewhat rare, one of maybe ten known – changed hands for \$9,775. The bottle had exceptional color going for it: a fiery blue aqua with good crudity. American Bottle has sold amber versions of this bottle, but never an aqua. Also, it was in near-perfect condition.

An R&H Columbia western soda bottle, made especially for the Gold Rush town of Columbia, in California from 1852-1856, topped out at \$7,200. The bottle was one of only a half-dozen known and had an estimate of \$7,000-\$15,000. Columbia – previously known as Hildreth's Diggings – was called “the gem of the Southern mines,” having produced a good bit of gold during the rush.

The auction featured five J. Boardman & Co. (N.Y.) sodas, “a ridiculous number to offer at one time and all five completely different shades of puce,” Wichmann said. “All sold for solid money averaging almost \$5,000 apiece.” A standout J. Boardman lot was #176, a mineral water bottle in a grape juice color with just a hint of orange. Having a high condition grade of 8, it made \$6,325.

“Western sodas are at an all-time high,” Wichmann declared, “but the fact is all of the quality bottles in every category ended up selling for the maximum. Western collectors don't have the diversity or volume that eastern collectors enjoy, so it's becoming apparent now that when a western bottle meets the color, condition and rarity criteria they soar way beyond typical prices.”

[Western whiskey flasks](#) made between 1870 and 1900 are considered desirable and are a part of any serious collector's arsenal. A Jesse Moore & Co. whiskey flask (Moore Hunt & Co., Sole Agents), with loads of embossing, circa 1878-1882, made \$7,200. The bottle was one of perhaps 25 known, but one rarely comes up for bid because collectors like to keep them close to home.

An early American blown flask from Louis Kossuth Calabash (S. Huffsey Calabash), embossed with the U.S. steam frigate Mississippi, powered its way to a new record price of \$9,775. The bottle, brown amber in color, showed the mold maker's name at the bottom and was graded 9.6.

Rounding out just some of the auction's top performers, an Eastern Cider Company olive green western soda bottle, made between 1877 and 1882, went to a determined bidder for \$8,050; and a McKeever's Army figural bitters, graded 9.6, with a drum and mound



Brown's Celebrated Indian Queen figural bitters bottle, deep green (\$14,375).



Lafayette DeWitt Clinton half-pint lime green flask, graded 8.8 (\$10,925).

of cannonballs, hit \$4,830.

American Bottle Auctions is always accepting quality consignments for future sales. To consign a single bottle or an entire collection, you may call them toll-free, at 1-800-806-7722; or, you can e-mail them at [info@americanbottle.com](mailto:info@americanbottle.com). To learn more about American Bottle Auctions and news of any upcoming online-only auction events, please log on to [www.americanbottle.com](http://www.americanbottle.com).

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Wonser's Indian Root Bitters bottle, one of maybe 10 known (\$9,775).



Wynkoop Sarsaparilla bottle, early production, dating to the 1850s (\$7,150).



Italian Soda Water  
Manufactory bottle  
(S. F. Glassworks,  
Phila.) (\$6,325)

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