

# Rare blue Cassin's Grape Brandy Bitters bottle, circa 1867-68, soars to \$155,000 in American Bottle Auctions online sale

*It was the Part 1 sale of the Ken Fee collection of mostly Western bitters bottles, held November 29th by American Bottle Auctions ([www.americanbottle.com](http://www.americanbottle.com)).*

SACRAMENTO, CA, UNITED STATES, January 7, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A 150-year-old blue Cassin's Grape Brandy Bitters bottle so rare that for years many doubted its very existence has sold for a staggering \$155,000 at the Part 1 sale of the Ken Fee collection of mostly Western bitters bottles, held November 29th by American Bottle Auctions ([www.americanbottle.com](http://www.americanbottle.com)). Part 2 will go online February 14th and end February 23rd.

The Cassin's Grape Brandy Bitters was the undisputed headliner in American Bottle Auctions' Auction #67, Part 1, an online-only affair with phone and absentee bids also accepted. Part 2 will be the same. What made the Cassin's so desirable to bidders was its bluish-teal color, which many bottle collectors, even seasoned pros, had never seen and were skeptical one even existed.

"No one had seen Ken Fee's collection of over 300 bottles in four decades," said Jeff Wichmann of American Bottle Auctions. "It only came to light following his death in November of 2018. I've been working with the family ever since." Many of the bottles are outstanding examples that brought a few hundred to many thousands of dollars. Part 2 contains many desirable rarities, too.

The Cassin's Bitters is arguably one of the greatest Western bitters blown. Made in San Francisco in 1867 and 1868, its shape was meant to resemble a cello. The first variant of the bottle had thin corners and because of the fragility of the bottle only a few mint examples remain intact today. The second variant eliminated the fragile lines of the bottle and some still survive today, although there are still believed to be only a half-dozen or so in undamaged condition.

This example, though, was a marvel, regardless of age or history, and the only example known in this unique blue color. In addition, the bottle was in mint condition with no discernable flaws, a rarity for any bottle this old but especially important for the only blue Cassin's known to date. It was expected to do well, with an estimate of \$75,000-\$100,000, but the final price blew past that.

Following are additional highlights from the Part 1 auction. All prices quoted include a 10 percent buyer's premium.



This 150-year-old blue Cassin's Grape Brandy Bitters bottle so rare that for years many doubted its very existence, circa 1867-1868, bluish teal in color, sold for a staggering \$155,000.

A Dr. Boerhaave's Stomach Bitters bottle with an applied tapered top, circa 1868-1869, finished at \$28,000. This San Francisco made bitters, with the distinctive windows on the reverse, had its own special identity. This one was a beautiful light to medium green, as these bottles came in a multitude of colors. Graded a high 9 out of 10, the bottle also boasted good whittle and bubbles.

A Henley's OK Bitters bottle with applied band, made circa 1869-1871, graded 9.5 out of 10 for condition, climbed to \$21,000. The size of the lettering on the bottle was quite unusual, although it fit very well. The curved "R" was the most pronounced of any Mr. Wichmann has ever seen. He added, "With the overall whittle and blue aqua, it will make for quite a bottle on one's shelf."

An exceptional Wonser's USA Indian Root Bitters bottle in a bright aqua color, probably blown between 1871 and 1873, changed hands for \$25,300. "Only a dozen or so aqua examples are known, so they don't come up often, and this one was in mint condition," Mr. Wichmann said. "When it comes to strike, color, condition and rarity, it's hard to top this iconic bottle."

An N. B. Jacobs Rosenbaum Bitters bottle – an early San Francisco bitters blown circa 1864-1868 – finished at \$904. "It would have fetched far more, had it not been for a 3/4 inch hairline crack in the side panel," Mr. Wichmann observed. The old amber bottle, variant 2, was the smaller size, with the Rosenbaum name embossed on it. It had an unusual top, as these bottles usually had a tapered top with a ring type collar. This example had no taper and, in fact, no ring.

A Lacour's Bitters Sarsapariphère bottle, a beautiful green with some nice overall crudity, topped out at \$14,690. "Louis Lacour and his fascination with the lighthouse is evident in this early San Francisco bitters bottle in mint condition," Mr. Wichmann said, adding, "Lacours have become highly sought after in recent years. Prices have escalated in proportion to desirability."

A Henley's Wild Grape Root IXL Bitters bottle, an early colored example circa 1868-1893, went for \$3,842. "Henley and his partners had great success selling the oddly named IXL bitters product in quart bottles," Mr. Wichmann said. "That's a long time, but many of those were later variants. Most were aqua but this one was an unusual green with crudity, and in mint condition."

A Catawba Wine Bitters bottle with an embossed cluster of grapes, in pristine condition with a super drippy top, found a new owner for \$7,150. It is known that Catawba grapes were grown in Ohio and it is thought these bottles were made for an Ohio concern. Some have the graphite pontil, including this one. Collectors love the distinctive embossing and colors they are found in.

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*Jeff Wichmann*

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 the Part 2 auction of the Ken Fee collection (February 14th-23rd), visit [www.americanbottle.com](http://www.americanbottle.com).



Wonser's USA Indian Root Bitters, an unusually shaped early San Francisco bottle in a bright aqua coloration, circa 1871-73, one of a dozen aqua examples known (\$25,300).

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Lacour's Bitters  
Sarsapariphère;  
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bitters bottle in  
mint condition  
(\$14,690).



Dr. Boerhaave's Stomach Bitters bottle with an applied tapered top, circa 1868-1869, a San Francisco made bitters with distinctive windows on the reverse (\$28,000).



Henley's OK Bitters bottle with applied band, made circa 1869-1871, graded 9.5 out of 10 for condition, boasting overall whittle and a nice blue aqua color (\$21,000).

This press release can be viewed online at: <http://www.einpresswire.com>

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