

Giant Milk Bottle Collection Helps Preserve Dairy History

Milk bottle collecting isn't as easy as it used to be, but every once in a while someone unearths something that makes the hearts of collectors beat faster.

Pete Whiteford knows. The prolific Maryland collector has what may be one of the oldest milk bottles still in existence – an 1884 Corbin Amos & Son Upper Xroad embossed bottle. A “digger” found it 6 ft. underground on the eastern shore of Maryland and contacted Whiteford. Though it has cracks, the collector considers it his most valuable piece.

“The history part drives you,” says Whiteford, who grew up in Harford County, a predominantly dairy region. A milk bottle Christmas gift from his sister in 1980 started his appreciation for the vast variety of milk bottles. A few years ago he had more than 3,000 bottles in his collection. Since then he's sold off duplicate bottles to trim his collection to about 2,000 bottles that he stores in various areas and displays on floor-to-ceiling shelves in a room in his basement.

The collection includes bottles from other countries and from all 50 states. It also includes related items such as bottle caps,

cream spoons, signs, stools, advertising and milking machines.

“It took me 30 years to put the state collection together,” Whiteford says. States such as Pennsylvania had more than 18,000 different bottles. But bottles from places like North Dakota, Arkansas and Louisiana, with far fewer dairies, are more difficult to find.

Collectors like the painted bottles, because they can be filled with finely ground Styrofoam and look nice in a display, Whiteford says. But the embossed bottles are the oldest, often dating from the 1880's.

Though he is interested in all unusual bottles, he focuses on bottles from his state, which has an estimated 1,036 different bottles. He has 732 of them, including 29 from Harford County.

There are so many bottles, particularly from Michigan to New York, because many dairy families bottled their own milk or ran a bottling business for area farmers. The names on bottles can drive prices high at auctions. Whiteford has heard of a bottle selling for more than \$5,000 because a family member wanted it.

“I have 150 bottles with names, but don't



Pete Whiteford has more than 2,000 milk bottles in his collection, which includes bottles from other countries and all 50 states.

know where they are from,” Whiteford notes. For example, one bottle is labeled, “Lennox Dairy JH Bell, 808 6th Avenue” but there is no town or state name.

Serious collectors go to dumps and old outhouses, poking with rods to find old bottles.

“I get most of my bottles at antique stores or from people who call me,” Whiteford says.

He is a member of two area bottle clubs

and the National Association of Milk Bottle Collectors (www.milkbottlecollectors.com). He advises people interested in bottle collecting to join, and they will receive “The Milk Route,” a monthly newsletter with articles and ads of people looking for and selling bottles (www.milkroute.org). A sample issue is on the organization's website, and the group holds a convention every spring near Hershey, Penn.

Rare Breed Helps Heal Troubled Kids

With textbook perfect hooves that need no shoes, an A-frame chest for agility in rough terrain, and thick leg bones with extra bone marrow and red blood cells for strength and hardiness, Santa Cruz horses thrived for 200 years on an island off the coast of California. Brought originally from Spain, the horses helped cultivate the land for homesteaders, then found fame in Hollywood as stunt animals in silent Western movies in the early 1900's. They might have quietly gone extinct, except for one woman with a passion for horses.

“We started out trying to save the breed. Today we're using the horses to save kids,” says Christina Nooner, who founded Sunshine Sanctuary with her husband, Troy, on their 22-acre Los Molinos, Calif., property.

After a legal battle with the private owners on Santa Cruz Island, there were only 3 remaining horses. Nooner and the troubled kids she works with at Sunshine Sanctuary

brought the breed back. They proved to be excellent therapy horses.

“They're very intuitive with gentle dispositions. They form strong human connections, especially with children,” Nooner says. “They're also smooth-gaited making them very comfortable to ride. They've evolved to be very easy keepers, making them an economic, loyal friend, who is also a hardy farm worker.”

Together, horses and kids were magic, and many of Nooner's first Sunshine Kids now lead productive lives, including a veterinarian, and an Army veteran.

To reduce the annual \$15,000 hay bill, Troy recently transformed an old ice cream truck into a custom-made, fodder-growing unit to save money. With the hydroponic system, he can turn 50 lbs. of seed into 400 to 500 lbs. of green forage.

Nooner's vision is to expand and develop a better breeding and training program that benefits both horses and children. She



Santa Cruz horses have proven to be excellent therapy horses, says Christina Nooner, who works with troubled kids at Sunshine Sanctuary in California.

currently has 25 Santa Cruz horses on the property; (a limited number of geldings are for sale). The Nooners would like to purchase 15 acres adjacent to their property to add much needed space. And, of course, they hope to continue and grow the riding programs and camps that have touched

the lives of hundreds of kids since 1996. Donations to the program are needed.

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Farmers Can Donate Directly To Food Bank

Between its “Glean Team” and “End Rows to End Hunger” programs, a southeast Minnesota organization makes it easier for producers to make charitable deposits to its food bank.

In an agricultural-rich region of the state, the contributions are welcome and needed, says Diana Evans, development projects coordinator for Channel One Regional Food Bank. The name refers to the organization's purpose to focus (channel) attention on one need – hunger. Established in 1979 with a food shelf for senior citizens, the nonprofit in Rochester, Minn., has grown to a food shelf and a food bank, partnering with more than 200 agencies in 14 counties in southeast Minnesota and western Wisconsin.

Because it's a certified member of Feeding America and has ties with other organizations, Channel One gets more bang for the buck.

“When people donate cash, \$1 is enough for five meals with our resources,” Evans says. Five days per week, three trucks pick up food from area retail stores and donor partners to deliver food to programs and agencies throughout their service area.

“End Rows to End Hunger provides another avenue for people to donate and gives

us the opportunity to develop relationships with local growers,” Evans says.

Through mailings, local ads and phone conversations, she invites farmers to pledge a portion of crop sales or a set amount of cash to go to the food bank. Evans has reached out to about 50 elevators in the area to educate them how the donation program works.

“Farmers can pledge up to three years of crops or cash at a time,” Evans says. “In addition to the impact the donation can have in the fight against hunger, we also tell them to consult with their accountants about tax benefits.”

In its second year, the program is just starting to take off.

“We've also developed relationships with local growers to get agriculture surplus like garden produce, apples and potatoes,” Evans says. While some donors deliver their surplus to the food bank, others contact Channel One to send its Glean Team to harvest and transport leftover fruit in orchards and excess produce from vegetable growing operations.

The extra thousands of pounds of produce were welcome during the last fiscal year when Channel One distributed nearly 9 million pounds of food to about 100,000 individuals.



Farmers can pledge up to 3 years of crops at a time.

Food distribution was up from 8 million pounds the years before.

With cuts in the SNAP program and continuing economic struggles, Evans anticipates even more need in the future. She is grateful for the support from donors in agriculture and pleased that Channel One can help prevent excess produce from being wasted.

Cash donations can be made through the

website where volunteers can also learn how they can help. Farmers interested in making pledges should contact Evans for more information.

“We can all use our talents and resources to make a big difference,” she says.

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