

Lancaster Farming *Antiques Center*

Review Century Of Penn State Creamery Milk Bottles

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UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre
Co.) — Penn State's University
Creamery is world-famous for its
ice cream. This reputation makes
it a much-loved landmark for
campus visitors and Nittany Lion
faithful.

Other Creamery items from
years past are less well-known to
Penn Staters, but one particular
class of objects is eagerly sought
by collectors of Penn State para-
phernalia and a small army of
specialized collectors throughout
the world. These are glass milk
bottles bearing Penn State identi-
fication.

While they may never ap-
proach the popularity of the Nit-
tany Lion, the demand for the
once common Penn State glass
milk bottles has escalated in re-
cent years and so has the price.
Dollars paid for some individual
Penn State milk bottles in excel-
lent condition could buy several
hundred of today's Creamery ice
cream cones.

The story of Penn State
Creamery glass milk bottles be-
gins nearly a century ago. When
the Patterson Building was con-
structed in 1904, the creamery lo-
cated there began bottling milk in
glass bottles. Those first bottles
didn't even include the words
"Penn State." Instead they were
labeled "State College Dairy" in
raised letters. That's all — no
other information was on the bot-
tle. The first College Creamery
delivery wagon for retail custom-
ers was identified with "State
College Dairy" on the side panels
and was drawn by one horse.

This first Creamery milk bottle
was mouth-blown, having been
made before the final develop-
ment of the automatic bottle-
making machine. It is apparently
a quart in size, although there is
no capacity indicated. Size identi-
fication was not needed until a
1907 law required milk or cream
bottles or glass jars to be for con-
sumers to have the capacity per-
manently blown into them during
manufacture.

Patented September 17, 1889,
by Thatcher Manufacturing
Company as the celebrated



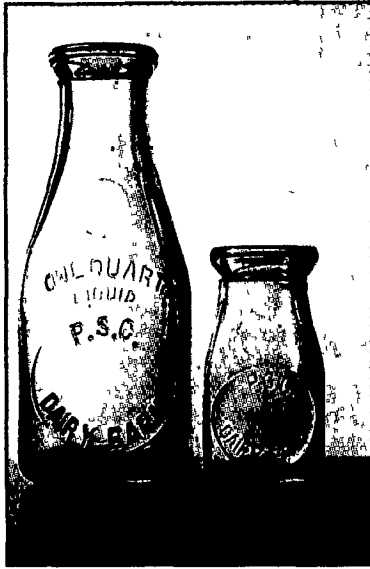
Those first bottles didn't
even include the words
"Penn State." Instead they
were labeled "State College
Dairy" in raised letters.

"Common Sense Milk Jar," the
first Penn State Creamery bottle
used "ligneous disks" — more
commonly known as paper caps.

Although three "State College
Dairy" bottles are known to exist,
the one pictured is the only one
that shows the manufacturer's
mark and patent date on the bot-
tom. The other two show the
trade mark "Bestov," a jobber
(middleman) of bottles in the
early 1900s. They also say "To Be
Washed and Returned," on the
side, a slogan not on the author's
bottle. It is thought the Creamery
started with bottles supplied di-
rectly by Thatcher, then changed
to Bestov as a jobber.

From 1904 until retail milk
sales were discontinued in 1958,
only two manufacturers supplied
most of the glass milk bottles for
the Creamery. These were
Thatcher Manufacturing Compa-
ny with a plant in Elmira, N.Y.,
and Owens-Illinois Glass Compa-
ny with a plant in Clarion.

This information should be
helpful to collectors of Creamery
milk bottles. For example the au-
thor owns a half-pint bottle la-
beled only "State College." When
purchased the seller was certain
it meant "Penn State College"
and priced it accordingly. How-
ever, the author later determined

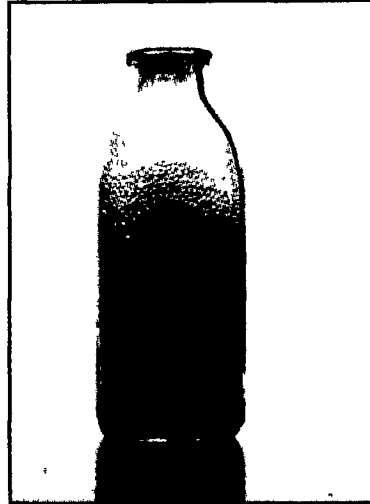


A completely different
logo — "P.S.C. Dairy Barn"
inside a circle — was also
used from the early 1920s
into the late 1940s.

that the Florida Glass Company
in Jacksonville, Florida, manu-
factured this bottle. It's highly
doubtful that any Penn State
milk bottles would have been
shipped such a long distance be-
cause of transportation costs. In
the early days of land-grant insti-
tutions like Penn State, several
states had state colleges. Let the
buyer beware!

Around 1918, the bottle logo
was changed to "State College
Creamery" with block letters em-
bossed inside a circle. Capacity
was embossed above the logo. An
unusual characteristic of these
bottles, which were used until
about 1929, was the heavy, raised
ribs on the neck of each size
(quart, pint, and half-pint). The
raised ribs provided a better grip
for the deliverymen who carried
the heavy, cold bottles in the
early morning darkness. The ribs
also provided a method of identi-
fication by touch in the darkness
so a deliveryman could differenti-
ate his bottles from those of a
competitor. At least one patent
was granted for this rib innova-
tion. These "State College
Creamery" bottles in the late
teens and 1920s were made by
Thatcher Manufacturing Compa-
ny.

"State College Creamery" in



An unsolved mystery
surrounds the square
Creamery bottles used in
the early 1950s. Some have
the college seal inside the
Keystone, while on others
the college seal is missing
from an empty Keystone.

block letters continued as the
logo into the early 1930s, al-
though smooth-neck bottles were
used. What happened to the
ribbed bottles? Apparently, the
purchaser of Creamery milk bot-
tles decided to try smooth-neck
bottles. The quart and pint bot-
tles were made by the Berney-
Bond Glass Company of Clarion.
The half-pint shows the mark of
the Winslow Glass Company of
Columbus, Ohio. Winslow was
purchased by Berney-Bond in
1927. In 1930, the young Owens-
Illinois Glass Company pur-
chased Berney-Bond. The ribbed
necks didn't appear again on
Creamery milk bottles.

A completely different logo —
"P.S.C. Dairy Barn" inside a
circle — was also used concurren-
tly from the early 1920s into the
late 1940s. These bottles were
filled in the milk house attached
to the dairy barns and used only
for milk sent to the campus dining
halls and the sandwich shop lo-
cated in the Old Main basement.
They were made by Thatcher
Manufacturing Company and
did not appear on off-campus de-
livery routes.

Professor Emeritus Donald L.
Ace started working in the barns
as a freshman during fall semes-



A picture of Old Main
with the pre-1929 tower
appears in the center of
the above phrase, and Old
Main appeared on Penn
State milk bottles for the
rest of their existence.
However, this was the only
bottle that ever carried the
pre-1929 "old" Old Main
bell tower. These bottles
(quart, pint, and half-pint)
in the author's collection
are the only ones known to
exist and the only
Creamery milk bottles that
ever carried advertising. On
the opposite side (panel)
was the slogan "Use Col-
lege Ice Cream For All Oc-
casions."

ter 1941. Among other chores, he
"cashed thousands of those
P.S.C. Dairy Barn bottles." He
remembers that milk produced in
excess of campus dining hall
needs was sent across the street
to the Creamery in Borland Lab-
oratory.

In 1932, Borland Laboratory
was completed. Both the
Creamery and the dairy depart-
ment moved from Patterson
Building to the new facility. This
historic occasion apparently ini-
tiated two new milk bottle logos,
which replaced previous bottle
designs. The fourth bottle logo,
which appeared about 1932, was
dramatically different from pre-
decessors. It had the Pennsylvania
Keystone with The Pennsylvania
State College Seal in the center
embossed on the bottom half of
each bottle. "State College
Creamery" was embossed on the
shoulder above this in Old Eng-
lish letters. This design was the
only one to be embossed on the
front and back of each bottle.
These were used through the
mid-1930s and were made by
Owens-Illinois Glass Company,
who continued as the only manu-
facturer of Creamery bottles
through 1958.

Also around this time a fifth
bottle logo appeared. Embossed
in a round circle on one side only
was "P.S.C. Dairy Dept. State
College, Pa." These bottles were
used for about a 10-year period
through 1943.

Around 1940, the top of this
bottle was changed to accommo-
date the "Dacro Top." The inside
cap seat was eliminated, and an
airtight, tamper-proof metal cap
was securely locked in place over
the top of the bottle. Apparently,

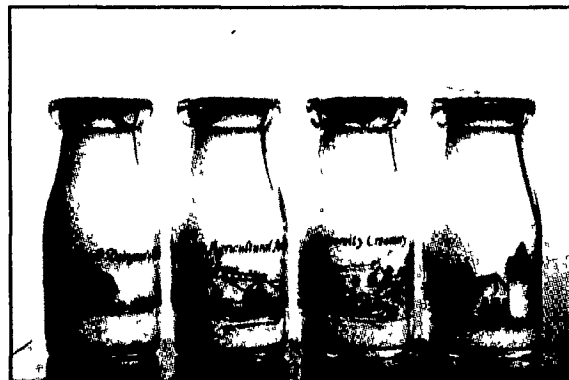
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The third pyro design
featured war slogans dur-
ing World War II. The bottle
shape had also changed
from "tall round" to "squat
round," which resembled a
bowling pin.



The label wasn't the only thing that
changed in 1953. A two-quart (half-gallon)
size was added, and, for the first time,
collectors looking for a complete set of Uni-
versity Creamery milk bottles needed four
(two quart, quart, pint, and half-pint) in-
stead of the traditional three.



The 2000 edition has a generic barn
scene in blue and green. All subsequent
editions have continued with the blue
and green color. The second edition in 2001
carries a drawing of the Penn State Agri-
cultural Arena. For the 2002 third edition,
none other than the University Creamery
is depicted. The "old" Penn State Dairy
Barns adorn the fourth edition issued in
2003.