



Checkerboard

July, 2013

Beauty in advertising: The alluring images of ladies from the Victorian era

by Chris H. Beyer

A wise man once noted that pretty women have been selling us things since the beginning of time.

Images of attractive women have long been used by advertisers to promote a wide variety of products. Interestingly, the commercial use of artwork depicting attractive ladies to sell products began just before the turn of the century during the Victorian era. Advertising art provides a compelling and interesting chronicle of the styles and cultures of times gone by. For those of us who are fascinated by the beauty of the fairer gender, scarce original advertising pieces featuring alluring ladies of the Victorian era are a rare treasure which present an exciting field of collecting. Here is how it all began.

The Industrial Revolution in America (1870-1910)

In 1880, the industrial revolution was in full swing. Production line products of all types could be made in such quantities that the need for merchandising and promotion to create consumer demand was growing rapidly. Until this period of history, advertising was anything but sophisticated. Moreover, the only mass media for product promotion had been drab black and white newspaper print ads. The Victorian Era (1880-1910) ushered new technological, industrial and societal changes that would reshape the manner in which businesses would use printed matter to create customer demand.

Early Printing Processes

It was not until the 1860's that the process of chromolithography or "stone lithography" as it is also known, was made possible by using artist-created images on stone plates which were then transferred to a rubber plate and subsequently to the printed surface. Each color or shade which the artist wished to use required a separate stone plate. Colors were painstakingly applied by individual applications to paper, metal or other materials. Often as many as fifteen color plates were used to create the final printed piece. This laborious process resulted in

quality, depth and color subtleties to such a degree that more efficient, modern photographic lithography appears pale and lifeless by comparison. As such, some of the more detailed, artistic and colorful printed pieces from this era are masterpieces.

The Birth of Mass Marketing

Prior to the 1880's, most trade and advertising signs were individually produced hand painted signs. Hence, mass produced advertising collateral as we know it today such as the volume production of identical signs was not practical. However, new printing processes in the mid 1880's changed that. With the ability to reproduce high quality color images, emerging industry could take advantage of the process of mass merchandising. The first advertising pieces for distribution were called advertising trade cards. These small colorfully printed paper cards were used by local merchants to promote their products. Because trade cards were new, unusual and colorful, there were often saved and placed in albums. Today, these early examples of advertising promotion are eagerly sought by collectors.

By 1887, two small firms in Ohio, (The Meek Company and the H. D. Beech Company) led the advertising printing revolution and began producing stock advertising images on items such as fans, umbrellas, chairs, and school bags. Companies wishing to advertise their products would choose existing pre-printed stock pieces to which their own product and company name could be over printed to individualize the advertising. In 1889, the first twelve sheet calendar (one for each month) designed for commercial use was produced by The Meek Company. Shortly thereafter, in 1892, the first powered press was used for printing onto metal. While printing on metal occurred as early as the 1870's, the process was mechanical, slow and extremely laborious. With technology for mass printing of high quality images blossoming, several companies entered the printing promotion field.

Early tin, metal and paper lithographers

Companies that produced turn of the century advertising were anxious to promote their brand on the pieces they printed. Today, the incorporation of these printers' marks (usually in small mouse type) on advertising pieces can be used to verify the originality of an advertising item. Although there were numerous firms who got into the advertising printing trade, the ones most seen on vintage advertising pieces include Ginna & Co. NY., Wolf & Co, Phila., H. D. Beech, Standard Advertising Co., The Meek Co., Charles W. Shonk Co., Passaic Metalware, NJ., and American Art Works.

Colorful signs, calendars and other printed pieces revolutionize advertising

Beer, tobacco, spirits, and soda water producers were among the first significant users of colorful serving trays, tins, signs and calendars to promote their wares. Many firms hired accomplished illustrators and artists to create the look they wanted to portray. From the start, lovely ladies became the focus of advertising art and were an obvious hit. The Coca-Cola Company and other firms launched their way into business history with advertising pieces which almost exclusively portrayed Victorian ladies in their fancy, elaborate attire. Coca-Cola, in fact, produced a twelve month sheet calendar featuring 'The Coca-Cola Girl' beginning in 1896 each year up through the 1970's. Examples of vintage Coca-Cola calendars feature various images of ladies in Victorian attire through 1915 when fashions began changing dramatically.

It is most fascinating to note the rather diverse portrayals of Victorian ladies based upon the products being promoted. Saloon advertising for beer, spirits, tobacco and cigars was designed to be daring and bold in those exclusively male dominated turn-of-the-century dens of libation and frolic. An example is the colorful early sign for a brand of whiskey with a caption reading "life's three pleasures" which depicted a risqué looking woman, a branded whiskey bottle and a deck of cards. One can just picture a trail worn cowboy in town on a Saturday night who, upon seeing such an image in a saloon, would quickly select the designated brand of whiskey to toast

to his imaginary fantasies. Because of the saloon environment where beer, whiskey, bitters, spirits, tobacco and cigars were predominantly advertised in, many firms engaged in using lady images that were considered extremely revealing and bold for that period in history.

Other producers of products unrelated to what we now think of as vices such as tobacco and alcohol also quickly adapted their signs and advertising pieces to incorporate images of the Victorian lady. A vast array of products including chewing gum, medicinal, clothing, sodas, and many others were promoted using images of the Victorian lady.

Collecting Vintage Victorian Lady Advertising

Collecting early advertising art featuring lovely ladies presents the potential for either a diverse focus or specialization of product categories. Some specific fields include tobacco, brewery and saloon, soda, chewing gum and clothing advertising. A variety of medias featuring the images of vintage lovely women include but are not limited to; tin and paper signs, soda and beer serving trays, cigar box labels, match safes, calendars, pocket mirrors, trading cards and reverse painted glass signs. The best of Victorian lady advertising pieces enhance the appearance of any antique collection. Most collectors frame their prized pieces in antique or contemporary produced frames to enhance their beauty while providing protection for them.

Over the years, styles, fashions and society have continuously changed and evolved. Perhaps that is why antique advertising featuring the images of attractive ladies hold such an appeal for collectors because it captures a different era in our country's history. The vibrant and colorful examples which remain today recall another time and reflect images of something which is never out of date.....a beautiful woman!

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About the author: Chris H. Beyer and his wife Gina are avid antique collectors who focus on early vintage saloon and country store advertising in a variety of Medias. Mr. Beyer is also the author of three books on the subject of antique advertising including the book; *Coca-Cola Girls: An Advertising Art History*. Professionally, Chris H. Beyer has over the past twenty years, worked as a marketing executive for two international companies. Anyone interesting in contacting Chris H. Beyer can do so via email at cbeyer2100@aol.com

Illustrations



Photo 1. Buffalo Brewing Company:

A beautiful woman with an ethereal look on her face graces this large Buffalo Brewing Company advertising metal sign (CA 1909). Produced by American Artworks, this is one of the most desired advertising pieces of Western saloon memorabilia collectors. Buffalo Brewing Company was located in Sacramento, CA and utilized the images of Victorian women to grace many of their advertising pieces. Most are quite rare.



Photo 2. Mathie Brewing Company

A dazzling image of a Victorian lady is portrayed on this Mathie Brewing calendar top (CA 1910). The Mathie brewery was located in Los Angeles during the 1890's-1910. This is an exceedingly rare piece with only one other example known to exist. It's unimaginable but Los Angeles was a very small agricultural town at the turn of the century and advertising pieces from this brewery are very difficult to obtain.



Photo 3. Old Coon 5 cent cigar

This Old Coon brand metal advertising sign was printed by the H. D. Beech Co. and is dated 1905. A fancy Victorian lady at her best, the copy reads 'take a look!' and is promoting Old Coon cigars. The sign features a beautiful array of colors enhanced by the painstaking stone lithography process.



Photo 4. Nutwood Whiskey

Produced as a reverse glass sign, this piece is in its original frame as it came from the factory (CA 1905). Reverse painted glass signs are the highest form of advertising art in that each of them were individually painted in reverse by talented artists. This Nutwood Whiskey sign is very rare and is in as produced mint condition. Produced by Tuchfarber.



Photo 5. Ben Hur Bazaar advertising calendar

This beautiful embossed advertising piece produced on heavy card stock type paper advertises a local saloon and was given out to valued customers in the form of a calendar with padded sheets for each month of the year. The calendar is dated 1915 and was issued shortly before prohibition became law.



Photo 6. Kis Me Gum embossed sign

This easel backed sign features a sensational beauty with embossing to give the piece a three dimensional look. Kis me gum produced several pieces that employed the images of risqué looking women. This same art was used by the Buffalo Brewing Company for its 1909 issue calendar. Stunning!



Photo 7. Wunder Brewing beer serving tray

This metal beer serving tray features the advertising look typically seen in turn of the century saloons where images of the fairer gender were common. Wunder brewing Company was in business for less than a decade and went out of business as a result of the San Francisco earthquake in 1906. This is a very rare and desirable beer tray. Many breweries commissioned beer trays for distribution in saloons as advertising pieces meant to serve the function of holding bottles of beer.

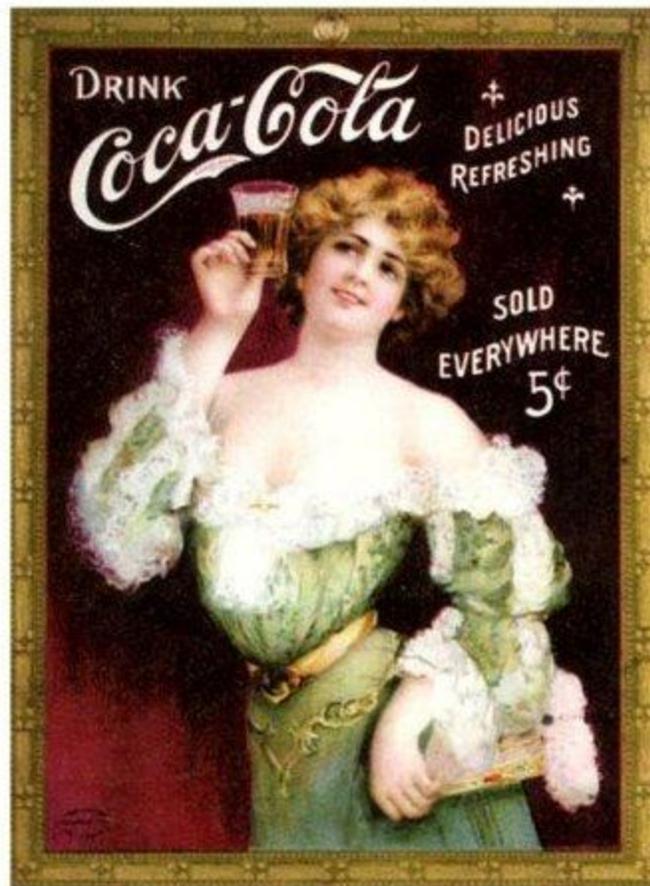


Photo 8. 1907 Coca Cola Calendar

One of the prettiest Victorian lady images available, this image is of the top of the 1907 Coca-Cola calendar. The art was also used for a couple of exceedingly rare Coca-Cola signs. One is a self-framed tin sign and the other a large paper sign. A longtime favorite of vintage Coca Cola collectors.



Photo 9. Glass Label back bar bottles

Exceedingly rare, glassed label bottles promoting the top brands of liquor in saloons were used as back bar advertising bottles. Before the turn of the century when liquors were shipped in barrels, these fancy and showy bottles were refilled and used extensively. The most desirable of these bottles feature the images of risqué looking women that were designed to motivate saloon patrons to associate a liquor brand with a beautiful woman. Fragile to begin with, very few of these have survived as most were destroyed once prohibition became law in 1918.

Christmas in July!



The time is now! The AAAA Convention begins on July 17! For any last-minute questions, contact Amy Vehling at 317-439-1947 or avehling@sbcglobal.net

We are very pleased with the registration turnout!! The Convention schedule may be the best ever! The theme of the Convention is "Christmas in July". There will be events playing on that theme and lots of other fun things to keep us busy and amused in addition to the usual terrific room-hopping, auction, seminar, good food and fellowship with kindred souls! And don't forget about all of the antique shops and malls in the surrounding area. Hope to see you there!

Wanted Items

In this column are those sought-after items of desire that seem to be elusive. If you know where any of these items can be acquired or if you have one available, please click the link to reply directly to the seeker. To place a listing in this column, [click here](#). There is no fee for AAAA members. Up to three listings per member is permitted.

Clicquot Club: Lighted Clicquot Club advertising clock made by Telechron and Telechron lighted advertising clock. To reply, [click here](#).

"ANTI-FAT," Weight-Loss, "Reducing," Obesity Items: Signs, bottles, anything related. Also, any items related to VITAMINS. To reply, [click here](#).

Yellow Kid Wanted: The more unusual, the better. To reply, [click here](#).

Harvard Brewing Signs/Lithographs: To reply, [click here](#).

Firecracker Packs: Collector buying all old fireworks-packs, boxes, advertising, whatever. To reply, call 932-237-3646 or [click here](#).

Ivanhoe Pencil Tin: Fair price and also finder's fee paid. Approx 1" diam, 9" long, blue in color, round, with picture of Ivanhoe on horseback. To reply, [click here](#).

Noaker Ice Cream Company Canton, Ohio: 13" Round ice cream tray from "the Noaker Ice Cream Company Canton, Ohio" in good or better condition. It has the boy & girl eating ice cream on the front. To reply, [click here](#).

1 lb. Canadian Coffee- Circle Coffee: To reply, [click here](#).

B.T. Babbit Soap Advertisement Posters: See Antique Advertising Encyclopedia (Vol. II) by Klug page 54 and 55. Condition is very important. To reply, [click here](#).

DeLaval: Tin advertising, give-aways and other collectibles produced by the company. To reply, [click here](#).

Edmands Coffee Company, Edmands Tea Company, 1776 Coffee, American Beauty Tea, Japan Tea, Devonshire Tea, (imported by Edmands, Boston/Chicago): Any items such as tins, signs, paper, or anything else related to the Edmands family of companies in Boston is desired. To reply, [click here](#).

Heathman Bakery, Dayton, Ohio: Interested in any items related to this business. To reply, [click here](#).

Indianapolis Brewing Company Ephemera: Circa 1920. Specifically looking for signed documents. To reply, [click here](#).

Veterinary Advertising Collectibles: Pre-1930s veterinary posters, patent medicines, store displays, photographs, paper ephemera. To reply, [click here](#).

One (1) Pound FULL [Unopened, Sealed] Key-Wind Coffee Tins: To reply, [click here](#).

Near Mint English Biscuit Tins: 1880 to 1925 To reply, [click here](#).

Old Automobile Gear Shift Knobs: The kind that screwed on the gear shift that came through the floorboard. Many looked like a large marble. To reply, [click here](#).

Ben Bey Cigar Collectables: Any Ben Bey cigar collectable, other than tin containers. To reply [click here](#).

The AAAA Checkerboard is a monthly e-newsletter that is made available to all AAAA members at no cost. The mission of the Checkerboard is to increase knowledge about antique and collectible advertising among AAAA members. The Checkerboard also provides news and updates about AAAA. It is produced each month with the exception of the four months per year when the award-winning Past Times print newsletter is published. Paul Lefkovitz (plefk@generalstoreantiques.com) serves as Editor of the AAAA Checkerboard.



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