

Wanding: to Cover



Wanded bottle, 18th century. French wanding, Encapsulated English bottle (not original). Straw wanding fastened with fine string. Bottle cylindrical blown of dark green glass. Lent by Hollis Brodrick.

TECHNOLOGY AND TERMINOLOGY: From the 17th well through the 19th century many bottles and pocket flasks were wanded, or covered, with fiber, such as wicker, rush or straw, to protect them in shipping, or while carried in one's pocket. Perhaps most pocket flasks were originally wanded. However, collectors are more interested in the glass as opposed to the covering and as such very few remain as originally wrapped. Each flask is described as having a chestnut form, this terminology refers to a free blown rounded vessel with slightly flattened sides, which produces a form resembling an American chestnut.

THE OBJECTS: The first object is of an 18th century French example of disposable shipping wanding. While the late 18th century cylindrical bottle is not original to the covering, the straw cover is an extremely rare survivor. Similar examples are illustrated in 18th century mezzotints, including Hogarth's "Midnight Modern Conversation", circa 1732.

The second object is of a c.1800-1835 American pocket flask wanded with woven rush. The wanding encapsulates the flask, which is probably a plain free-blown flattened chestnut form of light green glass. From the 1780s through the 1840s such flasks were manufactured by the hundreds of thousands from New England to the Midwest. Following the War of Independence the economy was unstable and hard currency scarce. For many farmers fermented drink, such as cider, perry, mead, whiskey, beer and ale were a reliable means of exchange, sometimes only limited by the availability of glass vessels needed to store and ship them. Markets in the South and Caribbean were particularly lucrative. Most pocket flasks ranged in size from a half pint to one pint. While these vessels are generally linked to alcoholic beverages, they were, no doubt, used to contain almost any liquid.

The third object is of a pocket flask blown in brilliant light-green/aqua, pattern-molded in eight checker diamond design in flattened chestnut form. Five other examples in this pattern are known of varying color. The mold appears to have originated c. 1785-95 with John Frederick Amelung at Frederick, Maryland. However, there is suggestive evidence that the mold may have moved West, perhaps to the Pittsburgh area, following the closure of Amelung's New Bremen Glass Manufactory in 1795. Therefore, the date of manufacture could extend into the early 19th century. It is of interest that "fragments of the pattern have been found at Grunenplan, a German glass works where Amelung had worked" and perhaps he brought a mold to America. The interest in this pattern and history would have guaranteed the removal of any covering had it originally been so treated.



Wanded pocket flask, c. 1800-30, American. Woven rush wanding. Flask free-blown of light green glass in flattened chestnut form. Private collection.



Pocket flask, c.1785-1810, possibly John Frederick Amelung, New Bremen Glass Manufactory, Frederick, Maryland. H. 6 5/8". Private collection.

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