

Hycroft's High Style Stetson Hat

Hycroft manufactured two styles of Stetson hats over the years. This article looks at the first one which I will call the high style for a lack of a better term. I thought about calling it the 10 gallon hat as it reminds me of the one that Dan Blocker used to wear as Hoss Cartwright on the Bonanza TV series, but the classic 10 gallon hat does not have any crimping on the peak.

I even tried to find the correct terminology using the internet, but as usual I got more confused than ever. I must have looked at a dozen



hat stores and while there were lots of specific names, I could not really find anything to separate the early high style from the later low style. The closest pictured hat that I could find was one called the "Gus" but I doubt that any pottery collector would even know what I was talking about if I referred to it as the Gus.

I could have used a term such as Hycroft's Medalta-Shaped Stetson Hat, but that would likely have led to some confusion as well. So unless one of our readers comes up with the proper terminology I am proposing we refer to the two styles as simply the High and the Low Style Stetson Hat.

The high style Stetson hat appears to be made using Medalta's mould, and if it was not actually made from those moulds, then it was most certainly a very close copy. I suspect that it was the former, and that they came by the original moulds when they occupied the Medalta Plant in 1955.

As most of you know, Hycroft China took over the fully operational plant making pottery under the name Medicine Hat Potteries marking pieces with its "Little Chief" trademark. As a result, the majority of the shapes of Hycroft's pieces can be found as products made by its forerunner, but the Stetson hat is not one of them. That is why I think it came about by Hycroft using moulds that they found in the Medalta Plant when they leased one or more of the buildings from the receiver in 1955. At present, I am not sure why Hycroft rented this space, but I do know that it happened as the Hycroft records refer to Plant #1 and Plant #2, and we even have a few photographs showing some of the activities over there.

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Chicken Fountains

Chicken fountains like crocks, churns, bed warmers, bean pots and jugs were around forever, being a mainstay of Medalta Potteries Limited and its forerunner Medalta Stoneware Limited. There must have been a steady market for them, at least to the 1950s, as they also were made by the competition, Alberta Potteries Limited and Medicine Hat Potteries. Present evidence suggests that none of the potteries in the Medicine Hat area operating after 1955 included chicken fountains in their product line. Perhaps the 1950s is when chicken farming became big business with highly mechanized means of feeding and watering the fowl with little use for these heavy, awkward containers.

Stoneware fountains had to be time consuming to fill even if they were easier to clean, so it came as no surprise that they were replaced with other products.

Alberta Potteries Fountains

Before discussing Medalta's chicken fountains, I will quickly dispense with the competition's as I can say so little about them. So far the fountain made by Wyatt's Alberta Potteries Limited (1931-1936) has been recorded only in one size. Perhaps one of our readers has different sizes and, if so, I would welcome hearing about them. The ones that I have seen have all measured just over 10 inches in height (one was 10.5 inches) and 6 inches across the outer edges of the base. Is this fountain a 1/2 or a 1 gallon size? I really do not know as it is such an odd shape, and I have never taken the time to measure the contents of any of the chicken fountains. I did phone a collector who had one that he could

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A Note From The Editor

Thanks to a number of readers who responded to my request for cash donations to help cover the cost of an extra issue of the newsletter dealing with the Malibu Club dishes, we will be able to issue one. I have not yet had a chance to work on that issue, but with this one out of the way I will be able to start on it right away.

Also I would like to thank all our subscribers who so promptly renewed their subscription for another year. I look forward to another year of hearing from you and sharing information with one another.

The Editor.

The Medalta Review

Editor: *Ronald M. Getty*
216 Maddock Way N.E., Calgary,
Alta T2A 3X3 Canada
Phone: 403-273-1132
gettyr@nucleus.com

Photographer: *Jim Simpson*
Design & Layout: *Tony Hansen*

Published & Distributed by:
The Friends of Medalta Society
703 Wood Street SE
Medicine Hat, AB T1A 8S9
Phone or FAX (403) 529-1070
Dianne Finch, Chairman
info@medalta.org

The Medalta Review is published quarterly in the interest of keeping collectors of Alberta made pottery informed on newly found products, current prices, history of the potteries and other aspects relating to the Alberta pottery industry. Each issue includes a Hycroft and Medalta section. Other columns will bring you reports regarding Alberta Potteries (Wyatt and Yuill), Athabasca Potteries, Medicine Hat Potteries (Little Chief), Medalta (1966) Ltd., Provincial Industrial Enterprises (PIE) or Sunburst Ceramics, and our question and answer column will reply to inquiries from our readers and museum visitors.

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The High Style Stetson was made by Hycroft from 1955 to 1957. By 1959 for sure, the Low Style Stetson was being made by Hycroft as indicated by the dated pieces that you can find in the marketplace. I am presently uncertain about just what happened in 1958. So far, I have only seen one actual dated piece for that year. The order was for 100 hats which were marked "MESS CLUB [slightly arced]/1958" at the top and "R.C.A.F. STATION CLARESHOLM" arced at the bottom of a blue hat with no gold banding. However while this is the only piece with a date on it, I have been able to match another six or so pieces to invoice records from 1958.

What is confusing the picture at present is a report of a High Style Stetson hat also with 1958 on it. Reportedly it is marked "SASKATCHEWAN CONSISTORY 1958" at the back of ashtray and with the logo of a cross with a red "32" on it. I have not seen this ashtray as yet so I cannot be sure that the markings or even the style of hat are accurately reported, but they likely are. 1958 was certainly the last year that the high style hats were made and who knows, perhaps this one was actually made in 1957 with the date marking the forthcoming year.

Why did Hycroft drop the one style for the other? The answer to that question is presently not known, but it probably will be found when I or someone else takes the time to read the Hycroft correspondence. I suspect that it might have been due to the low style packing more efficiently, as it takes up less space since it is over half an inch shorter in height. On the other hand, maybe someone forced Hycroft to stop making the high Stetson hat as it was one of the few, if not the only, fully registered design by Medalta. Perhaps, the rights to the hat were sold along with the other assets of Medalta.

Many of the Hycroft high style hats are not marked with a maker's name and as a result some collectors and more often dealers get the Hycroft and Medalta made hats confused. How do you tell them apart? I do not know if there are any size differences as they are not easy to measure due to the curled up edges, and besides I have found a great range of variation in those that I have measured. There are other attributes that are helpful, for one the colour of the clay.

If the colour of the clay is yellowish, the hat is not a Hycroft one (they only used white burning clay). Medalta used both yellow and white burning clay, the white ones dating after W.W. II. Secondly, and perhaps the best indicator of being a Hycroft made piece, is the use of gold in placing the advertising/naming on the piece. Hycroft loved to use gold, particularly in banding its pieces while Medalta tended to stay away from it likely due to both its expense and the fact that it required an extra burning (not to mention that gold was prone to scuffing, scratching and wearing off). I have not seen any Medalta made hats where the naming was in gold although I have recorded one with a gold hatband. Almost every Hycroft high style Stetson hat that I have seen had the naming in gold.

The exceptions were the Order of the Eastern Star ashtray which only has a coloured design on it, a plain white one which had a Hycroft stamp in green on the front of the hat (regretfully, I presently

do not have a picture of this one) and one that was finished with the coloured Jack Straws patterns (pick-up-sticks like).

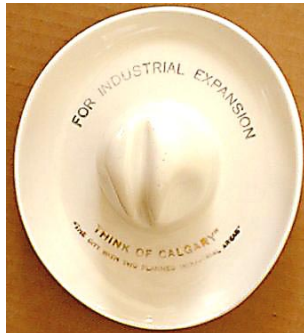


Of course the best way to know if your piece is Medalta or Hycroft other than the maker's name is to find a date on it. Any pieces dated 1955 or later, such as the Scottish Curlers Tour listed below, have to be Hycroft as Medalta closed its doors in 1954. When there is no date on it, then your last hope is to find it on the list below.

If you cannot find the advertising/naming on a hat in your possession in the list below, please give me a call. I can look it up in my notes and data file to see if I have a record of the rubber stamp used to mark it or the actual invoice for the order. Several of the pieces on this list have not been seen with a Hycroft marker's mark on them, but they were found when searching the invoice records. Your help in bringing questionable pieces to my attention will be appreciated as it is the only sure way that we can confirm that they were made by Hycroft.

Check List of Hycroft's High Style Stetson Hat

- ""CANADIAN MANUFACTURERS'/ASSOCIATION"" arced upwards at back and "CONVENTION MONTREAL MAY 1955"/"FOR INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION/THINK OF CALGARY"" arced downwards at front of hat, gold lettering on white, no stamp, dated 1955.
- "FOR INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION" at the back and at the front "THINK OF CALGARY"/"THE CITY WITH TWO PLANNED INDUSTRIAL AREAS", each row of lettering slightly smaller from back to front, all lettering in gold on a plain white hat, no stamp, dated 1955. Stewart Bowman MacPherson Ltd., Advertising Agency, Calgary, was billed for 2500 white hats each stamped "For Industrial Expansion/Think of Calgary" at \$.75 each with the cost of stamp at \$2.00 extra. The hats were delivered from June 1955 to February 1956 and the last invoice dated 16 Feb. 1956 (883) said this completes the first order for 2500 and that the second is being held.
- "FOR INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION" and at the front "THINK OF CALGARY/THE CITY WITH TWO PLANNED INDUSTRIAL AREAS", each row of lettering slightly smaller than the other, all lettering in gold on a white hat with gold trim around the rim and with a gold hatband, stamped, likely 1956 as per order. Stewart Bowman MacPherson Ltd., Advertising Agency, Calgary, was billed for 2500 white Stetson hat ashtrays each imprinted for the City of Calgary at \$.825 each 23 Feb. 1956 (949). Based on other Medalta style hats that for the most part have no gold banding on them, I believe the gold banded ones to be later in date. Therefore, I suggest that this hat is from the second order of 2500 hats, the first order being the 1955 one.



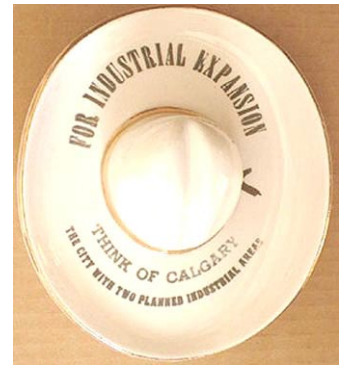
· "FOR INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION" arced at the back in large block lettering and at the front "THINK OF CALGARY/THE CITY WITH TWO PLANNED INDUSTRIAL AREAS", each row of lettering slightly smaller than the other, all lettering in gold on a white hat with gold trim around the rim and with a gold hatband, stamped, likely the 1956 order as well. Perhaps, there was a third order in 1956 or 1957 that I have not yet identified.

· "CALGARY FOR INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION" arced at the back and arced at the front "DOUG. WIGHT FOR VICE-PRESIDENT/JAYCEE NATIONAL CONVENTION/1957" all in gold on a plain white ashtray, no stamp, dated 1957.

· "COMPLIMENTS/WESTERN DISTRICT" arced at the back and arced at the front "ST. JOVITE CONFERENCE/1957" all in gold on a plain white ashtray, no stamp, dated 1957. A.F. Alsford, c/o Immigration Dept., Lethbridge, was billed for 144 hat ashtrays at \$.45 each 25 Sept. 1957 (9088).

· "IMPORT TOOL CO. LTD." and arced at the front on the left-hand side "CALGARY/CH3-6651" and on the right-hand side "EDMONTON/36160", all naming in gold on a plain white ashtray, no stamp, date not known, not yet positively confirmed as Hycroft.

· "P/PLtd./PIONEER PAVING" at the back and arced at the front "CALGARY, ALBERTA/CHESTNUT-32250", all lettering in gold on a plain white ashtray, no stamp, dated 1957. 103 white hats with "Calgary, Alta./Chestnut 32250" at \$.55 each 11 June 1957 (7593) billed to Sun Specialty Co., Edmonton, and



shipped to Acme Novelty Ltd., Calgary, with a charge of \$1.98 extra for the stamp.

• "COMPLIMENTS OF WILLARD BAXTER" arced at the back and arced at the front "HAT AUTO WRECKERS/MEDICINE HAT, ALBERTA" all in gold on a plain white ashtray, no stamp, date not known but likely 1955-1957, confirmed as Hycroft from a matching rubber stamp.



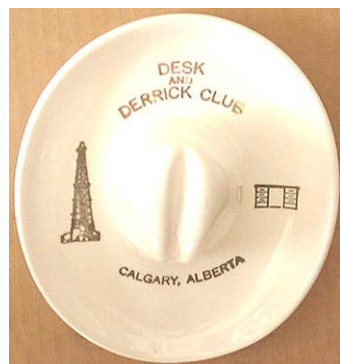
• "VAN DUSEN BROS. LTD./EDMONTON - CALGARY/Ph.-28112 Ph. AM 25122" arced at the front of hat and arced at the top, upside down, "Distributors/ROCK-OLA/Automatic Phonographs/____/Capital Records" gold lettering on white, no stamp, date not known but likely 1955-1957, confirmed as Hycroft from a matching rubber stamp.



• Order of the Eastern Star crest on the back of the peaked part of the hat, a star with the centre in black with a white lectern with a book on it within that black centre. Each of the five points a different colour including brown, blue, yellow, white and green and each of those points with a design on it in black. All on a white ashtray with a double gold ring around the base of the hat's peak and with gold trim around the rim, stamped, date not known but likely 1956-1957. This is an unusual early hat with its combination of coloured star and the double gold ring.



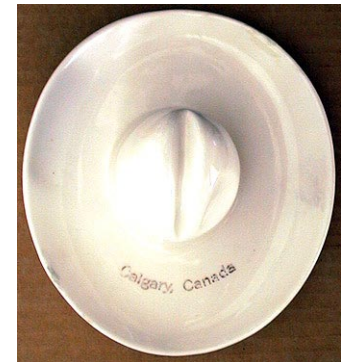
• "DESK/AND/DERRICK CLUB" arced at the top, the first two lines almost horizontal, and arced at the front "CALGARY, ALBERTA", at the left-hand side an oil derrick and at the right-hand side a desk, all lettering and images in gold on a plain white ashtray, no stamp, date not known but likely 1955-1957, confirmed as Hycroft from a matching rubber stamp.



• "COMMEMORATING/THE SCOTTISHCURLERSVISIT/ JAN. 14TH 1957" arced at the back and arced at the front "10TH ARTIFICIAL ICE BONSPIEL/MEDICINE HAT/JAN. 28 TO FEB. 2 1957", all naming in gold on a plain white ashtray, stamped, dated 1957. The Medicine Hat Artificial Ice Curling Co. was billed for 514 hat ashtrays at \$.38 each on 11 Jan. 1957 (5319) with \$5.00 extra for the rubber stamp.



• "Calgary, Canada" slightly arced at the front in gold on a plain white ashtray, no stamp, date not known but likely 1955-1957, the order for this ashtray has not yet been identified in the Hycroft records,



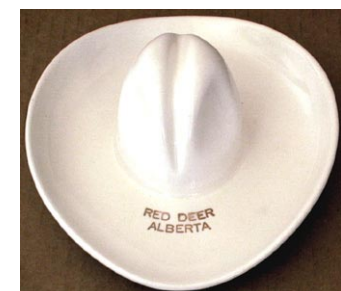
• "CALGARY STAMPEDE" slightly arced downwards at the front of a plain white hat, gold lettering on white, no stamp, date not known, the order for this ashtray has not yet been identified in the Hycroft records.



• "MEDICINE HAT/ALBERTA" in gold arced downwards at the front of a plain white ashtray, no stamp, date not known, the order for this ashtray has not yet been identified in the Hycroft records.



• "RED DEER/ALBERTA" slightly arced at the front in gold on a plain white ashtray, no stamp, date not known but likely 1955-1957, confirmed as Hycroft from a matching rubber stamp. •



Continued from page 1

compare with Medalta's and MHP's and he reported that the Alberta Potteries one held about a fifth less than the other 1 gallon ones. Perhaps Alberta Potteries' fountain was made in the American wine measure while the others were in the British imperial measure!

The four fountains that I have recorded all had an impressed factory stamp on the top of the knob, and the hole cut from



the bottom edge has no reinforcement around it. And for the record, I have not yet seen a fountain saucer with an Alberta Potteries mark on it. The only one I recorded measured 9 inches across the top and stood 1.5 inches high. The only marking on the bottom was an impressed numeral "1". It certainly differs from Medalta's in size and markings but regretfully I do not have a clear photograph of it to share with you.

I suspect that Wyatt's fountain was not popular, but the only reason I can offer in support of this contention is that production of the fountain was not continued by later operators/owners of the Redcliff plant, namely Alberta Potteries (Yuill) and Medalta Potteries (1966) Limited. As to its value, I can only guess as none have appeared in the marketplace over the last five years. I suspect that dealers would be pricing it in the \$75 to \$100.00 range and more if it has a saucer with it. Of all the chicken fountains made in the Medicine Hat area, the Alberta Potteries Limited one is the hardest to find. •

Medicine Hat Potteries

Medicine Hat Potteries made both the 1/2 and 1 gallon sizes of fountain. The one gallon size stands about 10 inches high and measures 8.25 inches across the outside of the base, while the 1/2 gallon one is 8.25 inches high and 6.5 inches in diameter. I have only recorded the 1 gallon saucer and both stamped samples measured 11 3/8 inches across the top and 1 1/4 inches high. The number "1" was impressed in the bot-

tom of one but not the other, and both were stamped with the oxide "Little Chief". All samples that I have recorded had reinforcing clay around the hole cut from the base. To date, I have not heard of any advertising fountains made by Medicine Hat Potteries.

How easy is it to find these fountains? Not very. I have only heard of 6 or 7 one gallon ones and only 2 half gallon ones. Most dealers ask about the same price as for Medalta fountains, ranging from \$60 to \$100.00 and adding another \$60.00 if a saucer is present.

Medalta's Chicken Fountains

Medalta's chicken fountains date from 1922, and perhaps a year or two earlier, as they are found listed in records from that time, and specimens can be found in the marketplace that have an oval Medalta Stoneware Limited oxide stamp on them. That it was available right through to 1954 is attested to by being listed in factory price lists from that date.

The listing in the 1924 Medalta catalogue states "Sanitary chicken fountains with open bottom: very easily cleaned and filled. Made in 1/2 and 1 gallon size.", and in 1922 they were priced at 6.66 and 10 cents each for the two sizes. The ad in the 1947 hotel china catalogue is identical to the

early one, but by July 1953 the wholesale prices had increased to \$1.21 and \$1.55 each.



The ads says nothing about material or colour but so far I have only seen stoneware ones, although you can find different clay textures, black inclusions, glaze bubbling and different shades of grey. I recorded one sample that was a dark tan in colour, but all the others have effectively been grey.

When I first saw a chicken fountain I had no idea what it would be used for. Due to the size of the cut-out hole, I pre-

sumed that they were used for feeding grain to chickens. A water hole that size made no sense to me especially since I was familiar with metal waterers that had small holes.



Some time later I happened to run across an ad in the 1935 Spring & Summer Catalogue for The Williams Brothers Limited, Calgary, which actually stated the use of chicken fountains. It said "Recommended by leading poultrymen. A large opening for feeding buttermilk, sour milk or water to baby chicks." Still

later when I had the chance to view the Medalta letters in the Provincial Archives in Edmonton, I ran across the letter included herein that made it clear that the fountain was mainly for feeding curdled



TELEPHONE: 857 8857
857 8780

CABLE ADDRESS: "RENLI" / CODE: 82175, A. S. C. 87th St.



RENWICK & CUNLIFFE
LIMITED
380 WATER STREET
VANCOUVER, B.C.

WHOLESALE CHINA
CROCKERY
GLASSWARE
CUTLERY
ETC.

REFER TO: B.A.C.

Mar. 11th, 1926.

Messrs. The Medalta Potteries Ltd.,
Medicine Hat, Alta.

Dear Sirs:-

Messrs. A.I. Johnson & Co. have just had us down to inspect the chicken fountains which were shipped on your invoice February 19th. These you will note from our order #8148, were ordered to be made with a large hole as made before.

If you would check back on those previous instructions you would find that the hole had to be made as large as it was possible to make it and still retain its contents, that is to say, that the hole had to be only just a trifle lower than the top lip of the saucer. In those delivered to Messrs. A.I. Johnson, the greater proportion of them are made with a hole just about half that size, and this renders them useless for the purpose for which a chicken breeder buys them namely, to feed butter milk from. Butter milk becomes very lumpy and curdles, and they must have the largest possible hole to get this stuff out of.

There is apparently, here at any rate, no market for these utensils for providing water, as the Poultry Supply people have water containers in enamel and tin much cheaper and much less likely to be broken. It is because of the fact that these can be very readily cleaned that they are saleable for the purpose for which they are used.

We have asked Messrs. A.I. Johnson to endeavour to dispose of these, and in the meantime are holding the account open until they see what luck they have with them. We shall be glad if you also would hold payment of this particular item, that is, 1 1/2 gallon chicken fountains until we see what is going to happen to them.

Yours very truly,
RENWICK & CUNLIFFE LTD.,

Renwick & Cunliffe
Secretary-Treasurer.

ED:

dairy products to chickens and not water. Being a city-slicker, I had no idea that chickens were even fed buttermilk, never mind how it was fed to them.

To fill a fountain with water, buttermilk or what have you, you have to hold the vessel upside down, place the base over the top and then quickly turn the whole right side up before placing it on the ground. If you go too slowly, some of the contents, especially if it was filled with water, would be lost. I have never actually tried to fill a fountain but I am sure that I would get half the water all over myself.

The secret to successfully using a fountain is to make sure that the saucer is higher than the hole cut from the bottom edge. The contents would quickly all flow out if the vacuum within the fountain was lost through air entering any part of the hole not under the water within the saucer. Several of the Medalta letters comment on this very problem.

In one instance where the fountain cuts

earlier Medalta made the two sizes of chicken fountain, each with a matching saucer. The earliest fountains simply had a hole cut from the edge of the base, and it was only after receiving complaints about cracking around the cut-out that Medalta improved the fountains by reinforcing the cut-out with extra clay placed all around the hole. Just when this happened is not clear from the letters that I copied, but it appears to have occurred after 1924 as, so far, none of the fountains made by Medalta Stoneware Limited have had reinforced holes. It likely happened sometime after April 25, 1927 as B & K advertis-



were too high for the saucers sent with the fountain order, Medalta's solution was to send new fountains with smaller holes. This was a good solution for Medalta but it left the chicken farmer with fountains that were not useable. Medalta did not want to make new saucer moulds, but smaller holes were not a solution for the farmer who needed holes large enough to permit the proper flowing of the curdled buttermilk. New saucers were eventually modelled.

As mentioned

ing fountains were not made before that date, and B & K Feed pieces often do not have the reinforced holes.

You can also find chicken fountains that are holed just above the bottom, rather than notched. Presumably these

were used only for water as curdled products would not pass through the hole very well. Regrettably I did not measure the one shown



here other than to record it as the 1 gallon size, and judging from the picture I would guess that the hole was at least 1/2 an inch in diameter. While I have seen several of these fountains only one was marked with a Medalta Potteries Limited stamp, indicating a date of 1924 or later.

The only Medalta stamps that I have recorded on fountains are several of the oval shaped G.4 and the G.5 varieties. Fountain saucers can be found with oxide stamps dating to the 1940s, but to date no fountains have been found that were marked with those stamps.

For the record, these are the measurements of the fountain saucers made by Medalta. The 1/2 gallon one measures about 1.75 inches high by about 8.5



inches in diameter across the top. It can be found with or without an impressed "1/2" in the bottom. The 1 gallon size is 2 1/4 inches high by 10 1/2 inches diameter and sometimes "1 gal" is impressed in the bottom. The stamps that I have recorded on saucers are all from the Medalta Potteries Limited period, and they include several of the G.5 varieties along with the G.33 and G.47 stamps.

In summary, one can see that if you simply specialized in chicken fountains and nothing else you could put together a collection of some 23 fountains: 2 made by MHP, at least 1 Alberta Potteries and a whole raft of Medalta ones. Medalta's would likely include the 2 sizes made by Medalta Stoneware Limited, 4 made by Medalta Potteries Limited (each size with and without the hole reinforcement) and each size holed instead of notched. Added to that would be the advertising ones including 4 or more B & K Feed ones, 4 A.I. Johnson, 2 Buckerfield's and 2 Vancouver Milling Company. Twenty-three fountains would indeed take up a lot of room and we have not yet considered different Medalta stamps nor the 2 gallon fountain, Supreme fountain or the reverse crocks. Those we will look at in the next issue of the newsletter.

Advertising Fountains

So far the names of four companies have been found on chicken fountains. Perhaps others will eventually be identified when someone takes the time to thoroughly examine the Medalta sales records for its stoneware products. It is interesting to note that all four of the companies recorded so far were located in the Vancouver area of British Columbia.

· "USE/B & K/FEED" in solid black lettering within a squarish border (feed bag variety). B & K stands for Brackman-Ker Milling Company that was located in New Westminster, B.C. You can find both 1/2 and 1 gallon sizes and some but not all have a Medalta stamp on the opposite side. Both the un- and the reinforced opening can be found. Named orders date after April 25, 1927, as Medalta replied to a request for the price of 1/2 and 1 gallon



drinking fountains quoting them \$3.18 and \$4.80 per doz. adding "Might say that if putting these out for premium we can print your name across them, so that your name is always in front of the public. This printing would be put under the outside glaze which makes it permanent."

· "USE/B & K/FEEDS" in solid black lettering within an oval. So far I have only recorded the 1 gallon size with this marking and the specimens had no Medalta stamp on them, the opening was the reinforced variety. As to which B & K variety dates earliest, the only clue that we have is the hole reinforcement which suggests that the feed bag shaped variety is earlier than the oval variety.



· "Buckerfield's Ltd." in black lettering slightly arced upwards. Both the 1/2 and 1 gallon sizes can be found and they are usually also stamped on the opposite side with a Medalta stamp. The cut-out hole is the reinforced variety. Orders for Buckerfield's fountains are found in the 1935



stock ledger and letters dating after May 1938. Other records indicate that 200 of each size were shipped on December 7, 1940 and another 65 half gallon and 33 one gallon fountains on October 3, 1941.

· "A.I. JOHNSON/ & CO./LTD./VANCOUVER, B.C." in black stencil style lettering all within an oval formed by dashes. The opening is not reinforced suggesting that this is the earlier of the two stamp formats. Both sizes of fountain can be found with this variety of the Johnson marking and so far none have borne a Medalta stamp. The first order recorded for this company dated to March 11, 1926, but earlier ones could well have been placed. In February 1927 Johnson & Co. received 170 half and 96 one gallon fountains, in April another 144 half gallon ones and then in May another 171 one gallon ones. This stamping can also be found on a rabbit feeder.

· "A.I. JOHNSON/ & CO./LTD./VANCOUVER" in black stencil style lettering all within a circle formed by dashes. Both the un- and the reinforced varieties have been recorded for the 1/2 gallon size. None of the A.I. Johnson fountains have a Medalta stamp.

· "VANCOUVER MILLING & GRAIN CO. LIMITED" arced around "VANCOUVER, B.C." in the centre, all in solid black lettering. Only reinforced openings have been observed. This naming is found on both the 1/2 and 1 gallon sizes, and once again none have an identifying Medalta stamp on them. No orders for these

fountains were found in the paper records that I looked at. •



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Letter dated 1 October 2000

Dear Ron:

I have seen a picture in the 1924 Medalta, page 17, of a two handled jug called a Mexican Water Jar. What can you tell me about it: its date, what it was used for and how common is it? Thanks. A.M.M., Sunny Alberta

Dear A.M.M.:

Thanks for asking about Medalta's Mexican water jar for it is a product that most collectors are unfamiliar with. The first picture shown here is from the 1924 catalogue. The text and picture show that the jar was marketed with a paper label on it rather than the product name and description being under the glaze like other products such as the water filter. The paper label is actually readable in the 1924 catalogue but my copy is so small that I cannot make out all the words.

The title says "MEXICAN WATER JAR/The WATER COOLER of the Tropics" and below that it appears to say:

"GUARANTEED to keep water from 20 to 30 degrees cooler than any ordinary container under similar conditions. The jar is made from a specially prepared mixture of clay. When filled with water it will perspire on the outside and the continual evaporation of this moisture will keep the contents cool. Best results are obtained when placed so that the (1 word) will continually (4 illegible words)."

And at the bottom it clearly says in various sized print "MANUFACTURED BY/THE MEDALTA STONEWARE/COMPANY/MEDICINE HAT, ALBERTA".



MEXICAN JAR

This Mexican Water Jar is guaranteed to keep water from 20 to 30 degrees cooler without ice than any other container. It is made of a specially prepared clay. The jar is wrapped separately in an attractive wrapper for display purposes.

Size 1 gallon.

I wish I could read the last line as I would like to know how to get the best results, but to do that I would have to go to the either Edmonton or Medicine Hat as both the Provincial Archives and the Friends of Medalta Society have a copy of the 1924 catalogue.

The Mexican water jar is listed in various Medalta records dating from 1922 through to 1936. The entries from the 1930s are taken from year end inventory sheets and may simply reflect old stock that

was on hand rather than actual production. It was not a popular item judging from the lack of its mention in the Medalta papers.

Few collectors have picked the Mexican water jar as they have never heard of it or seen the catalogue illustration, and because

it lacks an identifying Medalta stamp. The paper label was purely cosmetic, as once the jar was sold and put into use the paper label had to be removed to permit evaporation from the exterior of the jar. I have yet to hear of or see a jar with a paper label still on it, and so far none have been found that are marked with an oxide factory stamp.

Tony Schlachter is one collector with an unmarked jar, and thanks to him I can give you a description of a Mexican water jar that in all likelihood was made by Medalta. He describes the clay of his specimen as buff coloured (almost ochre), and the top of the jar is glazed having a yellow coloured finish while the bottom part below the

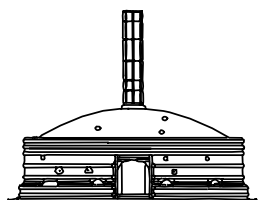
shoulder is unglazed. Overall the jar stands 14.5 inches high and measures 7.5 inches across the bottom. The measurement from the bottom to the shoulder is 9 inches. This jar apparently is not glazed on the interior, unlike Medalta's shouldered jugs which are.

The jar was even tested to see if it worked, and it did. It was partially filled with water and left to sit on the floor for several hours. When checked about 3 hours later, the jar had a sweat on the outside to the level of the water. The sweat was heaviest near the bottom where the jar touched the cold basement floor.

Getting back to your question. The Mexican water jar was simply a specialized jar to keep one's drinking water cool, operating on the same principal as the canvas water bags that you can still buy today. The jar was most likely sold to farmers and work crews working in hot, sunny, open areas where it was a problem to find a shady area for the jar.

And, no the Mexican water jar is not common. Its scarcity is likely due not only to low production numbers but to the fact that it is hard to find clean specimens. The porosity of the clay and evaporation often led to rust coloured staining of the unglazed portion of the jar, and if not stained from hard water, they simply got dirty. They also were not recyclable like regular jugs as they were not suitable for storing other liquids such as paint thinners or gasoline. As to their value, dealers usually ask \$50 to \$75.00 for them.

Sincerely,
The Editor.



703 Wood Street
MEDICINE HAT, Alta.
Canada T1A 8S9
Phone/FAX 403-529-1070
<http://www.medalta.org>