

Bottle Collectors Have a Hot Time at Phoenix Show

Bottle expert and author Michael Polak walks us through The 41st annual Phoenix Antiques Bottles & Collectibles Club's Show, introducing us to old friends and great finds along the way.

MICHAEL POLAK • APR 16, 2024

Image courtesy of Michael Polak

Bring Bottles, Antiques, Advertising and Collectibles, and the buyers and collectors will come. Besides digging for that elusive rare or scarce bottle in a now deserted once flourishing mining town, or for any bottle, I have always looked forward to attending various bottle shows sponsored and organized by individual Bottle Clubs. One of my favorites is the Phoenix Antiques Bottles & Collectibles Club's show, held this year on Feb. 23-24 at the North Phoenix Baptist Church. I have never been disappointed and this year was no different.

This was the club's 41st annual show and as usual the Club's Show Chair Betty Hartnett did a fantastic job of organizing an event that offered something for every collector.

There were 95 tables with a wide variety of collectibles for sale beginning with Antique Bottles; Bitters, Poisons, Whiskeys, Milks, Fruit Jars and Medicines, to name a few, along with Advertising, Coca-Cola and Beer Trays, Railroad Lanterns, Western Memorabilia and Indian Artifacts. In addition, there was a great selection of Coins, Tokens, Mining Equipment, Rare Documents, Stocks and Bonds. As all collectors know, you can't get enough reference material. Throughout the show there was a good variety of reference books and materials available for sale.

The show opened at 2 p.m. Friday for “early bird” buyers who flocked in to find their special tables offering great early deals before the doors opened at 4 p.m. for general admission attendees. Within minutes there was a flurry of activity as deals were quickly happening between buyers and sellers. There were even more buyers looking for those elusive hard to find treasures when the show re-opened on Saturday at 8:30 a.m., running until 3:30 p.m. Overall the crowds for both days were excellent with anxious buyers looking for great deals among the many bottles, advertising and collectibles for sale.

For the avid Milk Bottle collector, club members Mike and Karen Miller offered a great selection of rare, scarce and unique Milk bottles covering the various towns throughout Arizona, along with a great variety of Medicine bottles, Miniature Stoneware and Crocks, Hutchison Bottles and Soda Bottles. Selling next to me were Rick Littell and Jeanette Power from Clarkdale, Ariz., offering a great selection of Whiskeys, Hutchinson, Medicine and a variety of other bottles.

Dave Carr and Lisa Helm, also club members, always present a great grouping of Whiskey Bottles, Railroad Lanterns, and unique and rare Household items. For the collectors searching out vintage Advertising, Signs, Lighting, and Bottles, Todd and Lisa Barnes from Glendale, Ariz., offered the best selection. I enjoyed Joe Brisson’s table since he had a large collection of items representing various types of bottles, collectibles and antiques for all types of collectors.

Phoenix Club’s Show Chairman Hartnett said she was not only very pleased with the attendance but also with the variety of items for sale offered by the dealers. She is also looking forward to next year since this year there were several dealers on a wait list due to the show being sold-out. A big thank you is owed to the Phoenix club and all of its members for their efforts to help all of the dealers with loading, unloading and table set-ups.

As an avid bottle collector of 50 years, I have always felt the bottle shows organized by various bottle clubs monthly across the country represent the heart of the hobby, and are the best source for collectors, buyers, and dealers to meet up with fellow collectors, search for that special bottle and continue to learn more about bottles and glass.

There are always plenty of bottle collectors attending these shows, buying, selling, trading, and just having a lot of fun with the hobby of bottle collecting. If you are interested in trying to find a Bottle Show in your area, The Federation of Historical Bottle Collectors provides a complete listing on their website at www.fohbc.org/shows.

Regarding the Federation of Historical Bottle Collectors, the FOHBC in conjunction with the Houston Museum of Natural Science, is hosting the [FOHBC 2024 Houston National Antique Bottle & Glass Exposition, Aug. 1-4](#), at the Hotel Zaza Museum District. For additional information contact Ferdinand Meyer at fmeyer@fmgdesign.com. The FOHBC has expanded on this show which is expected to present a spectacular display of rare antique bottles, glass, insulators and advertising.

And as always, keep having fun with the hobby of bottle collecting.

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