

# E.R. Durkee & Co. – and the Misunderstood Durkee Bottles

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For almost 80 years, E.R. Durkee bottled and sold a variety of condiments from New Your City, and that continued under the Glidden Co., when that firm purchased Durkee in 1929 and continued sales into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Toulouse (1971:182-184) gave the Durkee marks extensive treatment, but he only touched on the complexity of marks. Durkee bottles seem to be ubiquitous on late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century archaeological sites.

## Histories

### E.R. Durkee, Buffalo, New York (ca. 1850-1858)

Toulouse (1971:182) placed the inception date for Eugene R. Durkee – making spices and extracts in his basement at home – at 1850, and we have seen an advertisement for the firm as early as 1851 – the year given by most sources. The early ad noted that E.R. Durkee (no “& Co.”) was a “Wholesale and Retail Dealer in Drugs, Medicines, Perfumery, Brushes, Fancy Articles, Glassware, Congress Water, Leeches, Cigars, Pure Wines, Liquors, Oils, Camphene, Burning Fluid &c.” in Buffalo, New York. The only products specifically linked to his name were Durkee’s Venetian Liquid Hair Dye, Durkee’s Vermifuge, and Durkee’s Baking Powder (Matt’s Collectibles 2014) (Figure 1). Durkee developed his salad dressing during this period, probably in 1857, and won awards for it (Kovel 2010; Museum of the City of New York 1999:71).

### E.R. Durkee & Co., New York City (1858-1929)

On June 15, 1858, Eugene R. Durkee moved his business to Sedgwick St. (near Columbia St.) in Brooklyn. Durkee and George G. Haven became partners in E.R. Durkee & Co. on

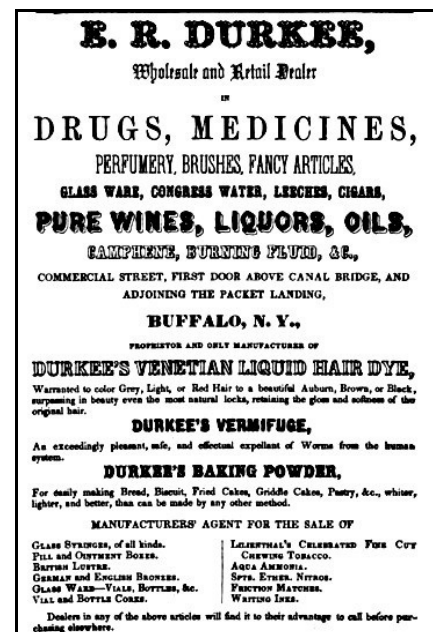


Figure 1 – 1851 ad (Matt’s Collectibles 2015)

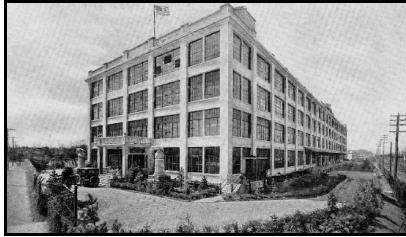


Figure 2 – Elmhurst building – front (Old Elmhurst 2007)

November 1 of the following year. On March 3, 1860, however, Zina Case purchased Haven’s share for \$12,000 (Court of Appeals 1863:9-10, 23). Durkee & Co. moved into a five-story



Figure 3 – Elmhurst building – loading dock (Old Elmhurst 2007)

building at 135-139 Water St. in 1888 and expanded into an even larger building in 1900,<sup>1</sup> the same year that James M.



Figure 4 – Elmhurst building – loading dock side (Old Elmhurst 2007)

French became a partner – apparently replacing Case. The U.S. Dept. of Agriculture fined E.R. Durkee & Co. under the Food & Drug Act of 1906 for using bottles for their flavoring extracts that held less than the one ounce

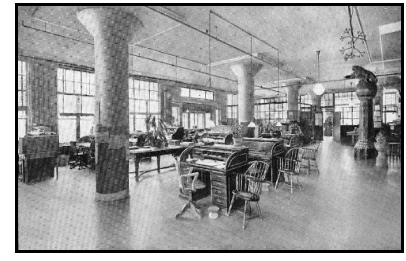


Figure 5 – Elmhurst building – inside (Old Elmhurst 2007)

stated on the labels. Durkee pled guilty and paid the \$150 fine. The firm moved the factory to 45-10 94<sup>th</sup> St., Elmhurst (Long Island), New York, in 1917 (Figures 2-5). The Durkee main office, however, remained in New York City. The Glidden Co. purchased the firm for \$1,800,000 in 1929 (Old Elmhurst 2007; *Real Estate Record and Builders Guide* 1900:632; Shurtleff & Aoyagi 2013:741; Toulouse 1971:182; U.S. Dept. of Agriculture 1913:1-2).

### **Durkee Famous Foods, a Division of Glidden Co. (1929-present)**

Glidden Co. purchased the firm in 1929, and it became Durkee Famous Food, a Division of Glidden Co. Glidden merged with SCM Corp. (formerly Smith-Corona Company) in 1967, and Durkee became the Glidden-Durkee Division of SCM. (Funding Universe 2015). In 2005, the Glidden-Durkee Division became part of Associated British Foods (Kovel 2010) (Figure 6).



Figure 6 – Durkee factory – 2000s (Old Elmhurst 2007)

<sup>1</sup> This was probably the 525 Washington St. address (New York) that was shown on an 1899 ad. If so, the move was apparently a year earlier than noted by Toulouse.

## Containers and Marks

Although Durkee was not a glass manufacturer, his embossed bottles are very common – although we know little of his early containers. It is virtually certain that he used round, cardboard canisters for his spices prior to his adoption of tins in 1918. Since his earliest ad (1851) featured “liquid” hair dye, he probably utilized *some* form of bottle from the beginning. It is virtually certain that these were generic in style with paper labels.

We have scant evidence for the inception of most Durkee products. For example, we know that Durkee “won numerous awards” for his dressing “by” 1857 (Museum of the City of New York 1999:71), although the source failed to identify the type or quantity of the “awards” or the packaging for the dressing. Although we have specified the initial date we have found advertising in our discussion of specific products (below), it is virtually certain that each of these was in use prior to our earliest documentary evidence.

Prior to an 1897 salad dressing ad and an 1898 illustrated post card, the Durkee ads only used wording, so we have no earlier historical clues to document the types of containers used for each product. We have noted below the varying forms of evidence for dating Durkee’s embossed bottles, although even the patented bottles were almost certainly initially used in unembossed formats.

We have also discovered few secondary sources for the logos used by Durkee. Toulouse (1971:182) listed four variations of marks and two symbols. The letter marks include:

ERD & Co – post-1874 pepper sauce

ER DURKEE – post-1874 pepper sauce

ER DURKEE & Co – ca. 1850 to 1860 spices

DURKEE & Co – meat sauce ca. 1880

While these may be correct within the limitations mentioned by Toulouse, they are *very* misleading. We have not discovered any containers marked “E.R. DURKEE” – without “& Co.” While these may exist, Toulouse posited several fictitious logos for bottles he thought *should* exist or ones reported to him by collectors – many of whom were *not* careful in their recording.

“E.R. DURKEE” may be one of those. We have also not discovered any containers with “DURKEE & Co” – although these may exist, or the logo may just be proposed, or the recorder missed a faint “E.R.” before the name. Of course, the missing “& Co” could also have been a very faint logo.

Two other markings used by the company on their bottles were a gauntlet surrounded by a belt and an imitation of the British registry symbol used between 1842 and 1883 – found especially on English pottery. Toulouse (1971:359) dated the gauntlet – a right hand with fingers pointed upward, obviously encased in armor – as “probably in the 1860s and until 1900; used on the side, surrounded by a man’s belt.” As discussed below, his early date was unrealistic.

Toulouse (1971:359) stated that the other symbol was the “imitation of the British pottery dating mark”: a baseball diamond shape with numbers or letters in each corner and an apparent “cap” on the top. The “III” in the “cap” indicated that the mark was used on a glass item, and the mark, itself, showed that the design was registered with the British Patent Office. Toulouse dated the mark “circa 1877 to 1900 used on the bottom.” Both dates are probably too early – as discussed below.

As noted, we have not found examples of two of the marks listed by Toulouse. Our research, presented below, only shows two sets of initials – E.R.D.&CO and E.R. DURKEE & CO – as well as the gauntlet and British pottery mark symbols. Unfortunately, neither historic contexts nor manufacturing techniques provide us with any clues to the manufacturers of any of the bottles. It is unlikely that the British registry mark indicates that the bottles were made in England. With Durkee’s location in New York, the bottles were almost certainly produced by a glass house on the East Coast or Midwest.

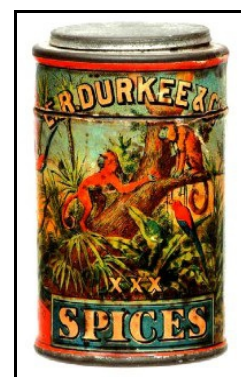


Figure 7 – Durkee spice box (Advertising Antiques)

The embossed logos were used on a variety of containers. Durkee used two patented bottles as well as a number of more typical bottles of the various periods during which he operated. The bottles are best classified by use. Durkee bottled five different products as well as packing most of his spices in cans and boxes. Kovel (2010) suggested that Durkee was the first company to package spices in tins instead of cardboard containers – in 1918 (Figure 7). See Table 1 for a list of bottled products, logos and dates.

**Table 1 – Durkee Bottles to 1929**

Patent	Side/Heel Embossing	Basal Embossing	Manuf. Technique	Dates
Sauce Bottles – Round				
1874	None	E.R. DURKEE & C <sup>o</sup>	Applied	1878-1885
1874	None	E R DURKEE / & Co	Tooled	1885-1895
Sauce Bottles – Hexagonal				
1874	None	E.R.D & Co. horiz	Applied	1880-1885
1874	None	E.R.D & CO. invert arch	Tooled	1885-1890
1874	DEC 17 1877 (heel)	E R DURKEE / & Co	Tooled	1890-1895
Challenge Sauce Bottles – Round with Long Neck				
none	E R DURKEE / & CO	unknown	Tooled	1895-1923*
Salad Dressing Bottles				
1877	Prob. paper label	Unknown	Unknown	1877-1890s
1877	Gauntlet and Belt	Patent date around edge	Imp Tool	1895-1900
1877	E R DURKEE & CO	Patent date & pottery mark	Imp Tool	1900-1908?
	E R DURKEE & CO	Patent date & pottery mark	Owens	1908?-1923
Salt Shakers				
1887	E R DURKEE / & CO	Patent date & pottery mark	Valve	1890s-1923
Extract (Panel) Botles				
None	E.R. DURKEE & CO	None	Appld.	1870s-1880
None	E.R. DURKEE & CO	None	Tooled	1880-1890s
Ball-Neck Panel Bottles (for Extracts)				
None	Paper Label	None	Machine?	1890s-1929
Curry Powder				
None	Gauntlet and Belt	None	Applied	1895-1900

\* In use by at least 1896.

## Sauce Bottles

Durkee used embossed sauce bottles made in at least three configurations. Although we have found no evidence indicating when he began making and bottling his own sauce, it was not mentioned in an 1860 *Country Gentleman* ad or in Silleck's 1878 *Reliable Cook Book*, and he could not have used any of the embossed sauce bottles prior to his 1874 patent. The first sauce mention that we could find was for Challenge sauce in an 1896 *Ladies' World* ad. It seems likely that he began bottling sauce ca. 1880, although an earlier date is possible.

### Round, "Beehive" Sauce Bottles

The earliest sauce bottle used by the firm was patented by Eugene R. Durkee, who received Design Patent No. 7,181 for a ringed sauce bottle on February 17, 1874 (Figure 8). The bottle was "hexagonal, tapering from about its middle lengthwise to the neck, where it terminates in a round, for about two and a half inches, more or less, below the mouth of the bottle. . . . but may be applied to round, or square, or any other many sided bottle."

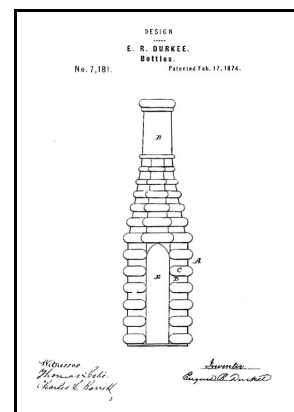


Figure 8 – Durkee's 1874 patent

The round or "beehive" configuration – with stacked, molded, concentric rings – was probably the earliest bottle with any Durkee embossing. There has been no previous serious report on Durkee variations that we have found, and a full study of these bottles is beyond the scope of this section. However, there were two configurations of the patented sauce bottle, each with variations. The earliest round configuration was embossed "E.R. DURKEE & C<sup>o</sup> (arch) / NEW YORK (inverted arch)" on the base (Figure 9). These aqua bottles had applied, double-ring finishes, used from ca. 1878 or earlier to ca. 1885. Although there were certainly later exceptions, the underlined, superscript "o" in "C<sup>o</sup>" was generally used during the 1870s, extending into the very early 1880s. A modified variation was a lighter aqua tint (almost colorless), but the base was embossed "E R DURKEE (arch) / & Co (horizontal) / {3-digit number} / NY (inverted arch)." These appear to have had applied finishes and were probably used from ca. 1885 to ca. 1895.



Figure 9 – Beehive sauce bottle (Linsdey 2015)

## Hexagonal, Tapered Sauce Bottles



Figure 10 – Hexagonal base 1 (eBay)

Durkee also used at least three hexagonal bottle variations. The earliest was embossed “PATENTED (arch) / ERD & CO (Horizontal) / FEB 74 (inverted arch)” on the base (Figure 10). Although the photos of the bottle were slightly out of focus at the finish, it appears to have been applied. These bottles were likely made between ca. 1880 and 1885. A slight variation had a basemark of “PAT FEB 74 (arch) / {illegible number or letter in the center} / E.R.D. & Co (inverted arch)” (Figures 11 & 12). The finish was tooled. This variation was probably in use from ca. 1885 to ca. 1890.



Figure 12 – Hex base 2 & heelmark (eBay)

A third variant was also hexagonal with a tooled finish. The heel was embossed with a patent date of “DEC 17 1877” – and the part of the heel not in the photo probably included “PAT” or “PATENT.” The 1877 embossed date on these bottles was actually for the salad dressing bottle described below; as noted above, the patent for the sauce bottle was received in 1874! The base was embossed “E R DURKEE (arch) / & Co (horizontal) / NY (inverted arch)” with part double stamped (Figure 13). Double stamps are generally found on bottles made between ca. 1895 and ca. 1914, although a few were made earlier. These appear to have been used concurrently with the beehive variations described above. The final variants should be dated ca. 1890-ca. 1895.



Figure 11 – Hex sauce bottle (eBay)



Figure 13 – Hex base 3 (eBay)

## Round, Long-Necked Challenge Sauce Bottles

By at least 1896, Durkee adopted sauce bottles similar to those used by Lea & Perrin: cylindrical, with a fairly tall neck and a three-part ringed finish (Ladies’ World 1896:13). The bottle was sealed with a cork-lined glass stopper. The side was vertically embossed “E.R.



Figure 14 – Challenge Sauce bottle & finish (eBay)

DURKEE & CO” to be read with the finish to the right (Figure 14). The shoulder was embossed “CHALLENGE” on one side and “SAUCE” on the other; the top of the stopper was embossed “ER DURKEE (arch) / NY (inverted arch)” (Figure 15). Some of these were mouth blown with tooled finishes and a three-digit number (e.g., 248) embossed on the base (see Figure 15). Others were machine-made with Owens basal scars but no

number. The mouth-blown bottles were likely made between ca. 1898 and ca. 1910, while the machine-made containers were probably used from ca. 1910 to 1929. It is likely that the Glidden Co. used the same style bottles with paper labels and no embossing.



Figure 15 – Stopper & base (eBay)

## Salad Dressing Bottles

Durkee’s salad dressing bottle is his best known and is practically ubiquitous in dumps from its use period. The story begins when Eugene Raynaud applied for a patent for a “Design for a Bottle” and received Design Patent No. 9,916 on April 17, 1877 (Figure 16). Raynaud lived in Paris, France, but he assigned the patent to D. St. Amant & Son, of New York City. The bottle was intended for “olive-oil and other articles.” to replace “ the present tall and unsightly oil-bottles in common use.” Its “tapering shape” evolved into the well-known Durkee bottle, embossed with the patent date on the base. The paper labels called the concoction “DURKEE’S SALAD DRESSING AND MEAT SAUCE” by at least 1897, and the last two words were replaced by “MAYONNAISE” by the Glidden Co.



Figure 16 – Raynaud 1877 patent

## Gauntlet and Belt Logo

The Raynaud-patent salad dressing bottles were made in two major variations as well as nuances. The earliest design used a recognized Durkee symbol – an embossed drawing of an armored gauntlet, with “TRADE” to the right and “MARK” to the left, encircled by a belt. The

right side of the belt was embossed “E.R. DURKEE & CO.” with “NEW YORK” to the left (Figure 17). Toulouse (1971:559) claimed that the gauntlet symbol was used “as late as 1874” – although it was obviously used much later (see below). He further noted that “the earlier ‘Gauntlets’ were in outline form and less stylized.” Unfortunately, we have not yet found one of these “outlined” gauntlet examples, and the earliest mention we have discovered for the gauntlet was in 1878 (Silleck 1878). The base of the bottle was embossed “BOTTLE PATENTED (arch) / APRIL 17 1877 (inverted arch)” in what appears to be a Rickett’s-type plate with a three-digit number in the center (see Figure 17). In one of our examples, the number (318) is upside down relative to the patent embossing, indicating a separate baseplate and Rickett’s plate.

In both of our examples, the finish appears to be tooled, and this requires a bit of explanation. The patent drawing shows a single-ring “patent” finish, but the only examples we have found had continuous-thread finishes. These were of necessity blown into the mold, with the rim then tooled – what Lindsey (2015) called improved tooled finishes. This technique was not used until the late 1890s, and the earliest ad we have found for this finish was from 1897 (Figure 18), so these bottles could not have been used prior to that time. Currently, we have not found examples of the earlier bottles of this type, and they may have only used paper labels. Toulouse (1971:183) was in error when he said that “early bottles were cork-finished, but the 1877 patent was for a bottle using a screw finish.” He had obviously only looked at bottles – *not* the patent document – and had not thought through the impossibility of a continuous-thread finish on a small-mouth bottle at that early date. The Gauntlet Brand was used on spice boxes and tins into the 1920s – although the gauntlet bottle design was probably only used until ca. 1900.

### Vertical Embossing Bottle

The next, much more common variation was embossed “E.R. DURKEE & CO. / SALAD DRESSING / NEW YORK” vertically on the side of the bottle, read with the finish pointing to

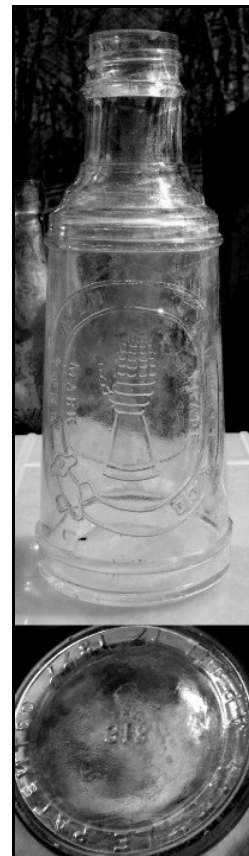


Figure 17 – Gauntlet dressing bottle (eBay)



Figure 18 – Durkee continuous-thread finish (eBay)

the left (Figure 19). The base was embossed “BOTTLE PATENTED (arch) / APRIL 17 1877 (inverted arch)” around an British pottery mark (see Figure 19). These “pottery marks” looked like a slightly rotated square or a baseball diamond with a cap on top. Each corner had a number or letter: 31 at the top, L at the right, R at the bottom, and 16 to the left. Toulouse (1971:183, 559) discussed the “pottery mark” at some length, presenting two possible dates of 1856 and 1882 – although neither is relevant for dating the bottles.

Many (probably most) of these bottles were colorless but solarized to an amethyst hue, and all in our sample had continuous-thread finishes. At least some of these bottles were sealed with aluminum caps (Figure 20). These were used from about the turn of the century probably until 1929, when the Glidden Co. purchased the operation – although some bottles may have been made later. Glidden almost certainly eliminated embossed bottles and relied only on paper labels.



Figure 19 – Salad dressing bottle (eBay)



Figure 20 – Salad dressing cap & Owens scar (eBay)

Three manufacturing characteristics may help with

dating. Some of the eBay photos appear to show mouth-blown bottles, but these were probably the earliest ones of this style and were only made for a short period. Unlike the machine-made bottles, these had a three-digit number on

the base – similar to the ones on the gauntlet variation. A salt shaker of this same design (see below) was made by a press-and-blow machine – even though the mouths on these are very small for that technique. It is likely that at least some of the salad dressing bottles were also made by the same machine. These were likely manufactured during the very early 1900s. The final technique was the use of the Owens machine, leaving the distinctive feathered scar (see Figure 20). These were probably not made until the ca. 1908-1910 period, and the bottle appeared in a 1928 ad, so these were certainly used until the sale to Glidden in 1929 (Figure 21).



Figure 21 – 1928 ad (Amazon.com)

## Salt Shakers

Durkee also packaged at least two types of salts – “Iodized” and Celery, both under the Challenge brand name – and packaged them in smaller versions of the salad dressing bottles. These were embossed “E.R. DURKEE / & CO. / NEW YORK,” read with the finish of the bottle facing left (Figure 22). The shakers had the same basal design and patent date as the salad dressing bottles described above. At least some of the tops were



Figure 22 – Salt shaker, top & valve mark (eBay)

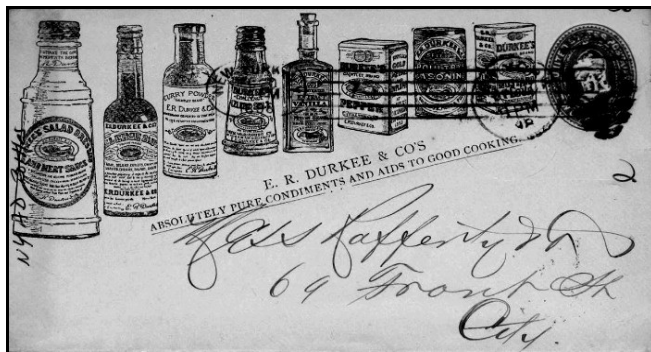


Figure 23 – Durkee 1898 postcard (eBay)

aluminum, embossed “E.R. DURKEE & CO. ☆ (arch) / CHALLENGE CELERY SALT ☆ (inverted arch)” (see Figure 22). At least one of these was made on a press-and-blow machine (see Figure 22). Another had a machine scar, possibly Owens, although the photo was not in focus enough to reproduce here.

Although we have not seen an example, some of these had to have been mouth-blown with tooled finishes. The salt shakers were advertised on the 1898 postcard (Figure 23).

## Curry Powder Bottle

Durkee used a curry powder bottle by at least 1898 (shown on the post card) that was colorless, with a rounded shoulder and one-part “packer” finish – to be sealed with a cork (Figure 24). The bottles were embossed with the same gauntlet and belt as the older salad dressing bottles, but the base was bare. These probably were used during the same period – ca. 1890s-early 1900s.



Figure 24 – Curry Powder bottle (eBay)

## Extract Bottles

Durkee also used a typical extract-type panel bottle embossed vertically on the front with “E.R. DURKEE & CO. / NEW YORK,” read with the finish of the bottle facing left (Figure 25). Again, at least three techniques help date these bottles. Some of the oldest had two-part applied finishes (Figure 26). These probably were made prior to ca. 1885. This type of small bottle was one of the first to have tooled finishes, and some of these had single-digit numbers on their bases (see Figure 26). A second type of extract bottle in our small sample was colorless, with one-part finishes, and these were probably made between ca. 1880 and ca. 1908 or later (Figure 27). Others were machine-made,



Figure 26 – Applied finish (eBay) & Extract base (Discount Bottles & Jars)

to determine whether the basal scars were from an Owens machine or another blow-and-blow device.

By at least 1898, the firm adopted a ball-neck panel bottle (with an embossed ring around the neck) with a paper label. A postcard showed all five bottle types only with paper labels (see Figure 23). The extract bottle in the drawing had the ball-neck, and we have not found that style with Durkee embossing. The cancellation on the card shows that it was mailed from New York in 1898, although the month and day are illegible.

## Discussion and Conclusions

Unfortunately, this study has provided only a cursory look at these bottles, and future researchers need to find a larger sample of each kind of bottle. Although temporal distinctions are clear for the variations of the salad dressing bottles, it is not fully evident whether the two earlier sauce bottles (round and hexagonal) were used concurrently or sequentially. It would also



Figure 25 – Extract bottle (eBay)



Figure 27 – Extract bottle (eBay)

be helpful to discover more information about the history of the company and to find more advertisements.

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