



Checkerboard

October, 2012



2013 AAAA Convention-Register TODAY!

AAAA members, **mark your calendars!** The 2013 AAAA Convention will take place at the Crowne Plaza Reading Hotel in Wyomissing, Pennsylvania from Wednesday evening, July 17 through Noon, Saturday, July 20, 2013. This exciting convention will hearken back to the traditional successful AAAA Convention formula, while borrowing heavily from last year's innovative Round-Up in Knoxville, which many attendees referred to as the most enjoyable event ever!

For a copy of the Convention Registration Form, [click here](#) and register today! There will be a limited block of rooms located together that is reserved for AAAA members. Avoid disappointment by ensuring that you are located with your fellow AAAA members. Register now while you are thinking about it.

Along with your registration, a one-night deposit is required on the hotel room (single or double occupancy) of \$120.99 (including taxes). Payment for a Special Meal Package of \$110.00 per person is also needed. The meal package includes 2 buffet breakfasts, 1 buffet lunch, 1 plated dinner, and 1 box lunch or dessert snack for Wednesday evening's gathering. There will be no additional registration fee.

Plan to join in on the room-hopping, auction-excitement, contests, educational presentations, good food, and most importantly, fellowship with other advertising collectors. When the Convention is over, visit Adamstown and the surrounding area with Renning's and dozens of other antique venues.

Our sincere thanks go to Amy Vehling who, once again, is serving as Convention Chairperson. Appreciation is also extended to several club members who are assisting her on the Planning Committee. If you have any questions or ideas, please direct them to Amy at avehling@sbcglobal.net.

Door to Door: Collecting J.R. Watkins

By Marsha Watkins

Editor's Note: This article is a product of AAAA's efforts to reach out to and partner with other advertising clubs. The author is an officer of the Watkins Collectors Club and she graciously consented to write this article about J.R. Watkins collectibles for the AAAA Checkerboard. Read on to learn more about these fascinating advertising items and the Watkins Collectors Club.



It all started in Plainview Minnesota in 1868 where Joseph Ray Watkins founded the company from his home, making liniment in his kitchen from camphor from evergreen trees and capsicum from red peppers. J.R. Watkins was so confident of his home-manufactured natural product that he introduced the now famous Watkins "Trial Mark" bottle, along with the first-ever money back guarantee. In 1885, J.R. moved the company to the booming lumber town of Winona, Minn., which boasted five railroads and was already an important port on the Mississippi River. At the turn of the century, the company's expanded product line from medicinal products and included an array of natural consumables for everyday living, including perfumes, soaps, food products,

natural spices and extracts. At one time, the y even expanded into farm and automotive products.

The company was once the largest direct sales company in the world and expanded to Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and England. Items were sold "door to door" often by a salesman in a horse-drawn wagon. Today, the company is still thriving and headquartered in Winona, MN. In addition to direct sales, Watkins has recently expanded into retail stores such as WalMart, CVS and some grocery stores.

The Watkins Collectors Club was formed in 1997 for collectors who like all things Watkins. Some (like me) collect because we share the Watkins name, some are actual decedents of the J.R. Watkins family, some because they or a relative once worked for Watkins either in the factory or as a salesman. Others collect because of the awesome variety, the great look of the tins and bottles, and affordability of the collectibles. A short list of the variety includes: tins and bottles of all kinds, wooden & aluminum sales carriers, Watkins dealer and ag product signs, almanacs, calendars, cookbooks, trade cards, magazine ads, tea strainer, sifter, colander, spark plugs (YES – spark plugs!) chewing gum, salesman

wagons, advertising giveaways like chewing gum, rulers, thimbles, needle threaders, pens & pencils, and a tape measure. Salesman awards like lapel pins, jewelry, and other trinkets and sales support literature.

For me, the "holy grail" of Watkins collecting would likely be the Big W Tire, no one has ever seen one but there is plenty of advertising evidence that it once existed. Second might be the "Little Jo Baking Powder" tin, also never seen. Other highly sought after and rare items are anything marked J.R. Watkins Medical Company indicating pre-1918; spark plugs, spark plug tins, and a cross over item: one half, one and five gallon jugs made by the Red Wing pottery company in Minnesota. It is supposed that the jugs contained various extracts and were sold to restaurants.

We have a modest membership of about 75 members; we publish a quarterly newsletter and hold an annual convention, generally in Winona, Minnesota in August. Our conventions include: tours, talks, show 'n tell, display contests, sales tables and an auction. We visit historic sites related to the company or Watkins family including the Watkins Museum at the Winona headquarters that houses fantastic collection of company artifacts, tins, bottles, almanacs and other memorabilia. In 2008, the Plainview Area History Center in nearby Plainview, MN acquired & restored the original J.R. Watkins home where J.R. first mixed up his elixirs and showcases the early years of the Watkins story. The Winona County Historical Society in Winona also houses some Watkins artifacts and displays.

I hope to attend your club in the future and introduce you to the wonderful world of Watkins. Email marshawatkins@yahoo.com for a free sample of our newsletter or more info on the club!

<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~mnpahc/watkins.html>
www.jrwatkins.com
www.winonahistory.org

[Click here](#) for more photos of J.R. Watkins collectibles.

The One that Got Away!

At the 2012 AAAA Round-Up, a fun activity was conducted called "The One that Got Away!" We shared grimaces, groans, and laughs as stories of angst and frustration were shared about great acquisitions that were just not meant to be.

Here's one that comes from an anonymous source:

I walked into a little antique store and noticed a



beautiful carved wooden Frye's Chocolate cabinet topper on a shelf. I asked about the price and it learned it was a bargain. I quickly said "I'll take it" when the dealer said, It's a shame you weren't here an hour ago. "Why?", I asked. He picked up the item I was about to purchase, gazed at it, and said, "I just sold the cabinet this piece was attached to. The buyer said, 'I don't like that' and asked me to remove it. When I heard the bargain price the cabinet went for, I knew a good one had gotten away! (But at least I got the topper!)

Do you have a similar "tale of woe" to share? Just [click here](#) and briefly (or not so briefly) describe it and we will include it in a future issue of the AAAA *Checkerboard*. Just let us know if you want to remain anonymous.



Indy Ad Show



AAA was well-represented at the Fall Indy Ad Show that took place on September 28-29, 2012. Indy Ad Show owners and promoters Donna and Bruce Weir generously donated prime booth space right in the front of the room to AAAA at no cost. The club picked up 11 new or renewed members at the show, about half at the AAAA booth and the other half at the dealer

booth of AAAA Board Member and Past Times Editor, Marian Kirby Ough. Way to go Marian! A number of members stopped by the A AAA booth to say "hi" and to express how pleased they are to see AAAA moving forward with new vigor. They are looking forward to the next convention!

If you ever have an opportunity to express your appreciation to Donna and Bruce for their generosity, please do so.



Antique Adver-Trivia

Here is this month's installment of Adver-Trivia. Test your knowledge of advertising lore!

Question 1: What company rejected the iconic image of "nipper" by saying "Dogs don't listen to phonographs!"

- a. RCA
- b. Edison-Bell
- c. Berliner
- d. Gramophone Company
- e. Sony

Question 2: How was the albatross related to the tobacco industry?

- a. Albatross wing bones were fashioned into pipe stems
- b. Albatross meat was used as a tobacco flavoring
- c. Albatross would consume insects harmful to tobacco crops
- d. The albatross could locate native tobacco crops
- e. None of the above

For the correct answers, [click here](#).

Do you have any fascinating factoids about antique and collectible advertising? If so, please share them with the *AAAA Checkerboard* so we can try to stump our members in future issues. Just click here and describe your adver-trivia!



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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