

Vintage Olympia and Pacific Oyster Bottles and Lids

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I have long had an interest in old bottles and have found many while diving along the B.C. coast. I was excited when I tracked down some old Olympia oyster bottles recovered in the 1970's from an oyster shell heap of the Ladysmith Oyster Company on the foreshore of Ladysmith Harbour, B.C. I then looked online and also found an old pint jar used for Pacific oysters by the Pacific Oyster Growers Association in Washington.

Olympia oysters- Thorpe & Co Ltd. Vancouver, B.C.

The small Olympia Oyster jar (**Fig. 1**) was often called a *Mickey*, a slang term referring to a smaller size liquor bottle. The B.C. oyster bottle held 1/4 pint - 5 oz. Imperial measure and was for the cocktail trade. The style of lid was the same for both the bottles illustrated. The lids were clamped on with a swage, jar hammer. These lids were tamper evident and sealed quite nicely. The main drawback was if the hammer wasn't placed squarely on the jar top it would shatter the jar, causing the packers much trouble and the potential for cuts (pers. comm. S. Bloomfield, PCSGA). The bottling company "THORPE & CO LTD VANCOUVER" operated over the period 1889 to 1935.

It is amazing that the small "cocktail oyster" bottles in B.C. and Washington held on average 60 to 75 oyster meats and occasionally as many as 150 meats! It is confusing to convert the various measures of containers in both Imperial and US units.



Fig. 1

Fig. 1. Native Olympia Oyster 1/4 pint jar (L) and Pacific Oyster pint jar, base of jar and lid (R)

Fig. 2. Native Olympia oyster half pint jar, circa 1900-1920, image courtesy of Tim McMillin, Olympia Oyster Co., Washington



Fig. 2

Pacific oysters-Northwestern Glass, Seattle, Wa

The pint jar (**Fig. 1**) was in use by the Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers (PCOGA) until the late 1960's (pers. comm., S. Bloomfield, PSGA). It was made by *Northwestern Glass* and had the clamp on sealed lid. The initials *NW* can be found on the bottom of the bottle and the numbers (298 6) may refer to a mold identity or may be another internal company code (**Fig. 1**). Northwestern Glass in South Seattle, founded in 1931, produced many different types of glass food and beverage containers. Over the years, the plant was operated by many companies and has been modernized to increase the use of recycled glass. It is now operated by Verallia. Faint lettering, **PACIFIC OYSTERS and 15-18** can be made out on the rusted lid (**Fig. 1**). Another style of pint bottles was the "milk bottle style". It was used for oysters, circa 1930-1950. An example from Olympia Oysters is shown in **Fig. 2**.

Olympia Oysters- Washington

Native Olympia oysters in Washington were packed in both half-pint- 8 oz. and pint jars, sealed with a clamped on lid. An example is shown in **Fig. 3**.

The jars and other containers will become a part of the oyster aquaculture display at the Ladysmith Maritime Museum on the shores of Ladysmith Harbour, B.C.

Acknowledgements

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Fig. 3. Native Olympia oyster half pint jar, circa 1900-1920, image courtesy of Tim McMillin, Olympia Oyster Co. Shelton, Washington.



Fig. 3