

# THE WILSON'S PATENT POISON

BY  
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The patent for J. Wilson's poison bottle was issued on March 17, 1899. Wilson claimed "That by the combination of its shape, the markings upon it, its serrated edges and the warning notices, it can be readily distinguished by sight, from all other bottles. It can also be identified by touch whether held by its sides, edges or in any other manner. Therefore by sight or touch it is impossible to mistake it for any other bottle."

If you have had the opportunity to hold one of these beauties, I think you would agree with Wilson's claims. There is no mistaking that you have something unique in your hands and that the contents there in should be handled with the utmost care. The Wilson's poison is one of my favorite English poisons. The design utilized the triangular shape so common to American poisons. But the Englishman took the design to the next level by adding the deeply grooved serrated edges that sets it apart from any other poison, English or American.

The Wilson's poison is considered rare in most sizes. The bottle was manufactured in a number of sizes: 1/2, 1, 1 1/2, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 16, & 20 ounces. The sizes are embossed on the base of the bottle. The three largest sizes are considered to be extremely rare. The bottle comes in various shades of green (See Pic. 1). There is one known example in a 4 ounce size in aqua (See Pic. 2). So if anyone has a Wilson's in some color other than green, please let me know. The aqua 4 ounce is firmly entrenched in a collection and isn't coming out anytime soon and I would dearly love to add one to my collection.

There are five known variations in the embossing:

1. **Not To Be Taken** horizontally at the top of one panel with vertical ribbing in the middle of the panel, **Patent** horizontally to lower portion of the panel, **Caution** horizontally at the top, with vertical ribbing, back panel is plain with no embossing for a label.
2. **Parke's Drug Stores Ltd.** vertically down the center, with **Caution** above, the remainder is as no.1 (See Pic 3).
3. **Caution** embossed horizontally with no other wording
4. **Miriam's Embrocation** down the center of the panel, **Caution** above, the remainder is as no. 1.
5. The 1/2 ounce has no wording embossed, just the vertical ribbing

This unique design did have its drawbacks. The triangular shape with the exaggerated serrated corners often resulted in the glass being very thin along its edges. This design flaw made the

bottle prone to breakage either in manufacture or in domestic use. Fortunately a few examples did survive and now adorn the shelves of poison collectors lucky enough to have purchase this elusive poison.

There have been some interesting discussions regarding the Parke's Drug Store variant. Parke's was an American company. So why was their name on an English poison? Another conundrum, "Drug Store" is the American equivalent of the English term "Chemist". However, "Ltd." is the English equivalent of the American term "Corp.". An English poison with an American company's name and wording that was unique to both the States and England. Are you confused? I know I am!! The use of Ltd at the end of the embossing may suggest that Parke's Drug Stores may have been an English subsidiary. What was the connection between Parke and Wilson? The embossing on this bottle is confusing to say the least and certainly generates more questions than answers. To date these questions are unresolved. So if you have any insight to this dilemma, please let me know. Here's an afterthought, who was Miriam and who and where was she embrocating?

This is the first in a series of articles on English poisons. In future newsletters I will discuss, Taylor's, Stars, Crescents, Oval Ammonias, Eclipses & Stephenson's, T-Cross Poisons, Martin's, Quines, etc., etc.,.

I want to thank Brian Thatcher for his research on the Wilson's poison. Much of what you find here was borrowed from his Spring 2004 article in the ABC magazine. I have added a few bits of my own and hopefully added something useful to the information regarding this fascinating poison.





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