

GERMAN ENAMEL PAINTED POISONS

Today I would like to share information with the other members of the APBCA about German enamel painted poison bottles with or without glass stoppers. The bottles I am talking about resemble KC 44. They can also be square, rectangular, triangular or round. The colour is mostly amber in different shades, sometimes clear glass, very rarely in green, unknown in cobalt blue. Often with a polished pontil which puts them in the 1860's period. The plain based examples are a little younger, I would consider early last century.

From a local pharmacist whose family has been in business since about 1880 and interestingly enough still is at the same spot and still has the original shop fittings, set in a modern environment, I received this useful information. According to the pharmacist, black writing on a white background signifies harmless contents, red writing on a white background means poisonous drugs and white writing on a black background means deadly poisonous contents. He added that Heroin in those shelf bottles always had red writing on white background. Obviously, in those days Heroin was not considered deadly poisonous.

Morphine was sold in triangular bottles. I would guess that KT 22 was used for Morphine. Also KI 21, KI 23, and KI 25 which have a triangular shape, even though Rudy Kuhn listed them in the irregular hexagon section. Nevertheless all four types have in common the embossed skull and cross bones, the vertical ribbings, and a label space. I wonder if those bottles were meant to be used for Morphine also.

All enamel painted bottles except the deadly poisonous (white writing on black background) were set up on shelves on the back and side walls of the pharmacy. The bottles with the deadly poisonous contents however were locked up safely in a locker with the pharmacist keeping control over the key at all times.

See photos next page.

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