South Carolina Receives *H.L. Hunley* Custody

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Blob Tops and Soda Water
By George Pledger, Hobby License #218

One of the pleasures of diving in South Carolina is the diversity of artifacts found in the area's rivers and streams. Many fellow divers have had their dives "made" by being presented with a fine example of an early soda water bottle in their collection bag.

Soda water bottles are often called "blob tops" by divers due to the sturdy construction of the tops of these bottles. It should be noted that there were many different methods of fashioning tops of bottles, but between 1840, and the advent of a reliable crown top around 1892, the blob top was the preferred method. The heavy construction of these bottles was required to handle the high pressures associated with soda water manufacture. The earliest of these bottles were blown into simple cup molds. Later, they were blown into more sophisticated two-piece molds. However, all can be classified as "blown in mold, applied lip," or BIMAL, which is a term used to distinguish this method from "free blown" or made in "automatic bottling machines," or ABM.

The soda water manufacturers required that bottles be returnable and reusable. The sealing method progressed from a pressed-in cork stopper found between 1840 and 1882-5. These were oversized stoppers and were pressed into the bottle with a lever and then wired down. Being under considerable pressure when the wire was removed, the bottles went "pop." Hence the name. Since these "pop bottles" did not travel very well until the invention of the crown top, the term was not common outside the coastal counties.

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