



# TECHNICAL NOTE

FOR IN-SERVICE USE



CULTURAL RESOURCES FL - 2

December 2009

## Historic Glass Bottle Identification



*Picture taken from Society of Historical Archaeology (SHA) website.*

### Introduction

Some of you may have come across historic sites in the field, but it is somewhat difficult to ascertain the site's time period. If there are glass bottles present, glass bottles will often provide us with an approximate date or time period for historic sites. If you observe glass bottles during a surface inspection, take a photograph of the glass bottle(s) making note of the dimensions, color and any other interesting details. The information you record can be deciphered through an excellent web-site that assists you in ascertaining an approximate date and type of the glass bottle(s). This website is not all inclusive of every glass bottle manufactured, since there were literally hundreds of thousands of bottles manufactured in the U.S. during 1800 – 1950s; however, it may lend very useful information and provide an approximation of age and function of the glass bottle(s) making it easier to determine a historic site's time period.

Go to <http://www.sha.org/bottle/index.htm>.

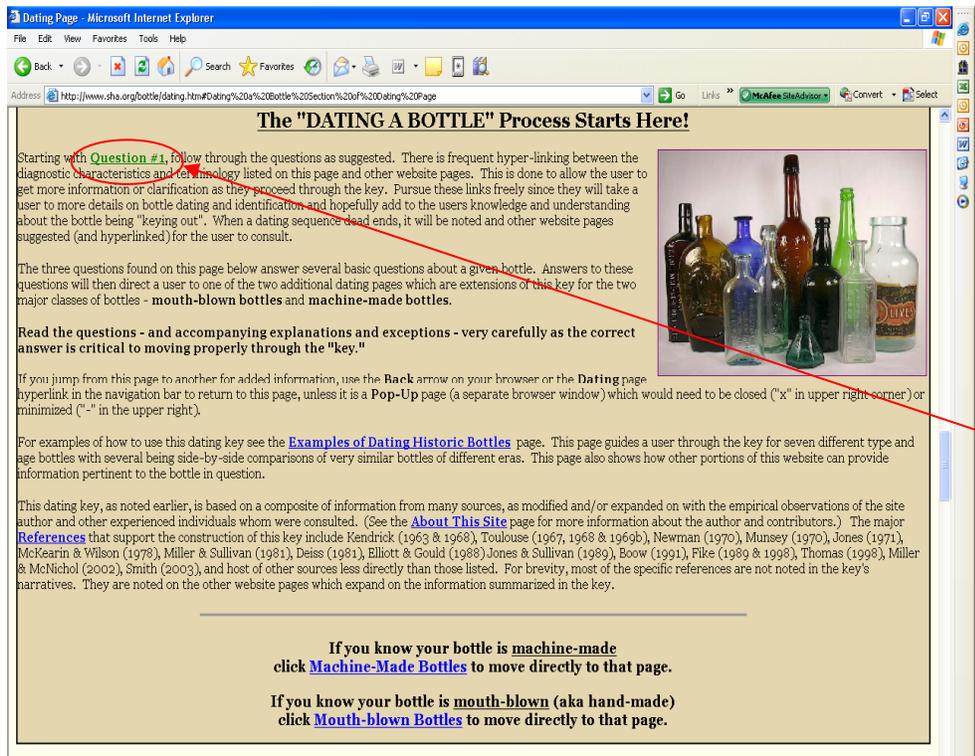
The screenshot shows the homepage of the Historic Glass Bottle Identification & Information Website. The browser window title is "Historic Bottle Website - Homepage - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The address bar shows "http://www.sha.org/bottle/index.htm". The page features a navigation menu on the left with "Main Subject Pages" including Home, Dating, Typing/Shapes, Glassmaking, Colors, Finishes (Lips), Body & Seams, Bases, Fragment ID, Glossary, References, Links, FAQ's, About this site, and Website Map. The "Dating" link is circled in red. The main content area has a header "Historic Glass Bottle Identification & Information Website" and a sub-header "Welcome to the BLM/SHA Historic Glass Bottle Identification & Information Website!". Below this is a photograph of various glass bottles. A text box with a red arrow pointing to the "Dating" link contains the text: "Click on 'Dating' in the right-hand margin." At the bottom, there is a footer with information about the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA).

The screenshot shows the "Dating" page of the Historic Glass Bottle Identification & Information Website. The browser window title is "Dating Page - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The address bar shows "http://www.sha.org/bottle/dating.htm". The page features a navigation menu on the left with "Main Subject Pages" including HOME: Bottle Dating, Dating, Typing/Shapes, Glassmaking, Colors, Finishes (Lips), Body & Seams, Bases, Fragment ID, Glossary, References, Links, FAQ's, About this site, and Website Map. The "Dating" link is circled in red. The main content area has a header "Bottle Dating" and a sub-header "INTRODUCTION". Below this is a photograph of various glass bottles. A text box with a red arrow pointing to the "Dating" link contains the text: "Click here to move directly to the 'Dating a Bottle' Section below." Below the photograph, there is a text box with the text: "For the first time user of this site it is highly recommended that the following information be read prior to using the key below." At the bottom, there is a text box with the text: "First this cautionary note: **Bottle dating is not a precise science!** Using physical, manufacturing related diagnostic features, most utilitarian bottles can usually only be accurately placed within a date range of 10-15 years (i.e., 1870-1880 or 1885). There are numerous reasons for this:"

Then click on "Click here to move directly to the 'Dating a Bottle' Section below."

The Bottle Dating section in its entirety provides valuable background information that may assist you in determining what features are important when describing and recording information from the glass bottle(s) you observe.

Once you have clicked on the “Dating a Bottle” you are automatically directed to the page “The DATING A BOTTLE” Process Starts Here!”



Read the page in its entirety in order to understand the context of the information.

Once you have completed this task, click on “Question #1” in the first sentence. This begins the forensic-type analysis on glass bottles.

There are three questions that are asked, and each section will direct you accordingly to the next applicable question based upon specific features of the glass bottle(s).



Dating Bottles with the Side Mold Seam "Myth"

Once you have completed the “Dating a Bottle” process, more specific information is available at the <http://www.sha.org/bottle/index.htm> homepage on additional glass bottle features, including typing/shapes, glassmaking, colors, finishes (lips), body seams, and bases. The background information for each feature is listed on the right-hand margin. To access the information, click the specific feature listed and you will be directed accordingly.

Though you may observe glass bottles during a surface inspection, always keep the site intact and leave any artifacts in place where we originally observe them. Additionally, a surface inspection is not complete until it is documented with a record of the exact location of what was observed with GPS points listed and noted on the plan map including detailed photographs.

## **References**

1. Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA); <http://www.sha.org/bottle/index.htm>.