

Myth: Glass to glass is the most perfect seal known to mortal man!

Sounds downright glorious, don't it? That's what the great zomba's of wet-plate will spout out from time to time as they lift their favorite glass stoppered chemical bottle high into the air for all to admire. Well, I really, really wish this perfect seal stuff was true, because glass stoppered chemical bottles are indeed quite beautiful and exotic looking. But, unfortunately, my experience has shown they don't give a perfect seal. They may even give you a headache or two!

There was a time I tried to put as many of my wet-plate fluid chemicals in glass stoppered bottles as I could. After awhile I discovered that the only time I got a perfect seal was when I so stupidly put my sandarac varnish in one. I ended up breaking the glass thumb piece off in a vain effort to try to get the thoroughly fused in glass stopper out. Then there was the collodion pouring bottle and its glass stopper would get stuck in it to from time to time or else it would not be well sealed enough and I'd lose volume to evaporation of the ether and alcohol out of it and the collodion would then get too thick.

So, what to use instead? I find a natural cork stoppered clear glass bottle for a collodion pouring bottle to do the best all round job. But, choose one that is super clean inside and has a nice wide bottom on it. Ones that are narrow-bottomed or flask-shaped are too prone to falling over. For your bulk supply and for long term storage of collodion, you should use a glass bottle with a good tight fitting screw cap. Never put collodion or ether in a plastic container, as it will attack the plastic. For your silver nitrate solution, fixer, and developer, plastic is the best choice for transport and storage. For varnish I like to use glass quart jars, with their standard screw caps, for mixing and bulk storage. For a varnish pouring bottle I like to use a small wide based antique glass bottle with a black neoprene stopper. Most all lab ware suppliers have these stoppers in an array of sizes.

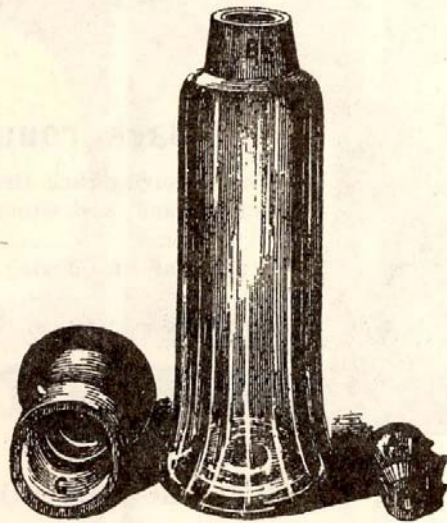
So, this is my take on glass stoppered bottles for wet-plate use. You may or may not agree with me. If you would like to prove the perfect seal bit to yourself and all, here's how you can do it: Fill your most prized glass stoppered bottle half full with cheap Rubbing Alcohol (also, known as Isopropyl Alcohol). Mark the side with a felt tip pen with a line corresponding to the fluid level. Put the bottle on a sunny window sill for a couple weeks. If you have a perfect seal there should be no change in the alcohol level at the end of that time. If it's gone down, well, obviously you didn't have a perfect seal and the same thing would have happened if it had had collodion or ether in it.

Historical Note: They did have special glass stoppered glass collodion pouring bottles in the 19th century wet-plate era. They were often referred to as "comet less" pouring bottles. There is one illustrated and described on page 37 of the 1870's E. & H.T. Anthony & Co. catalog that is included with the "Doer's Guide" how could you live without one wet-plate manual. You will notice it has two stoppers. The inner is one is in fact a glass stoppered glass to glass one. But, the outer one is a glass to cork seal. It, in fact, keeps the inner glass stoppered seal from drying out and thus from getting stuck or producing dried flecks and chunks of collodion from mixing in with the collodion flow onto your plate and causing spots which sometimes have comet like tails on them when the plate is developed. That's why these special bottles were called "comet less". Now, to find one of these original bottles would be on the order of

finding an original iron head rest stand for ten bucks at your local junk shop. There is no modern made equivalent, either. But, not to worry, your wet-plate life can go on nicely as described before with other kinds of bottles other than glass stoppered fancy pants bottles.

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Anthony's Improved Collodion Vial.



The bottle is strong. The cap is very strong, and can be replaced, if broken, at a nominal cost; any piece of one vial will fit any other vial. The outside of the neck is made of cork, and therefore fits tightly, and is not in danger of breakage.

Price, 6 oz. \$1.00
" 8 " 1.25