

Jug beer

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Hudson's Bay Company 3-gallon stoneware jug. It is covered with a cream glaze up to three-quarters of its height. A light brown glaze covers the top, handle and neck. Inscriptions are embossed in the brown part.

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Fabricant / Éditeur Hudson's Bay Company

Period 19th century, 20th century

Materials ceramics, stoneware, glaze

Measurements 46,2 x 24 x 27 cm

Historical context

This stoneware jug is covered with a feldspar-based “Bristol” liquid

glaze, tinted with iron oxide. This glaze was invented in Bristol, England, by William Powell around 1835. Waterproof and resistant to all liquids, it replaces the salt glaze method.

In North America, these containers were generally imported from England, but were also copied. They were used by bottlers throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. Sold by the Hudson's Bay Company, these jugs were intended to hold distilled spirits, beer or ginger beer, a non-alcoholic beverage that was widespread from the mid-19th to the 20th century.

Founded on May 2, 1670, the Hudson's Bay Company received a charter authorizing it to engage in the fur trade in a territory that today encompasses northern Quebec and Labrador, northern and western Ontario, the Prairie provinces and the Northwest Territories.

Initially trading posts for furs between European-Canadians and Aboriginals, these trading posts evolved over time according to cultural and economic habits. By the end of the 19th century, the fur trade was in decline. Settlement of the West brought a new clientele: the company transformed trading posts into retail outlets. This was the era of the retail trade. Company stores were stocked with an assortment of important items, including jugs of liquor and ginger beer.

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