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## Brief History of Enamel Advertising Signs

*Source – Enamel advertising signs by Glenn Rollo. E.& O.E.*

Vitreous enamel is a thin layer of glass fused by heat to a metal surface. The word enamel comes from the German word 'Smeltza' and the French word 'esmail'. Enamel is an ideal medium; hard wearing, scratch fine and chemical resistant.

The durability of these signs can be seen over a hundred years later, with colours as bright and clear as when they were original made. Bottle diggers throughout the world often find these signs buried in tips, they are usually in great condition.

Enamel signs were produced worldwide, including German, Belgium, France, British Indies, Czechoslovakia, USA and Australia. Museums now classify these humble signs as part of our cultural history and realise they are individual works of art. Enamel sign collecting has become a worldwide phenomenon, with world auction record prices paid for rare and desirable examples.

The dating of enamel signs is usually done by the style and pattern. Lettering style is an important dating tool, as strong differences appear over the years.

The two companies in England which have produced the most desirable and outstanding designs are Wolverhampton and Birmingham companies. Burnham and London makers are not far behind. In Europe, it's the Belgian/France Enamel Co., Stalker Enamels of Germany and Frankfurter Emaillierwerke; and in Asia, The Bengal Enamel Co., O.G. Works in Ogalevali, Sur Enamel Co.; and Simpson Enamels, Adelaide, in Australia.

The history of manufacture of enamel signs to advertise the sale of goods and services really took off in England in Dudley Road, Wolverhampton in 1897. Previously, enamel signs had been produced in small numbers in Germany from 1893.

### Important Dates

- 1855** Simpson's of Adelaide opened an ironmongery which later diversified into enamel signs.
- 1893** Schulze & Wehrnamn, Germany
- 1894** C Rober Dold, Germany
- 1895** Gottfried Dichanz, Germany
- 1897** Frankfurter Emaillierwerke Otto Lerol, Germany manufactured curved Metal Signs
- 1896** The Chromographic Enamel Co. Ltd. Set up on Dudley Street Wolverhampton.
- 1889** The Patent Enamel Co. of Birmingham founded.
- 1899** Burnham Sign, London
- 1916** Wolverine Sign Works, Sundusky, Michigan, USA
- 1947** Tupesy Enamel Plant, Czechoslovakia.

There are a few company trade names that are printed on the base of some signs, unfortunately most original enamel signs have no maker's names, so it is impossible to give an accurate maker.