

The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors Serving the National Capital



August 2000



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August 29th Meeting

Program: To be announced

Refreshments: **Jim Sears** (unless someone else wants to volunteer real quick)

Show & Tell: Bring in whatever you've collected this summer.

July Meeting-We were greatly saddened by the death of **Karl Shipman** on July 9th. At the July meeting members voted to make a \$25 donation to the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer's building fund in Karl's memory.

Program: **Phil Godwin** explained the process of selling on Ebay. Phil has sold more than 400 items on Ebay including a bottle that brought \$600. While old glass can certainly fetch high prices on Ebay, selling involves plenty of work. Phil estimates that those wishing to start listing a few items should expect to spend about two hours per item taking pictures, writing descriptions, answering email, packing, and shipping. With experience and higher volume, sellers can streamline the process somewhat. Phil uses a video camera with a frame grabber to quickly photograph his sales items.

June Meeting-Congratulations (or condolences) to the officers elected in June: president-**Phil Godwin**, vice president-**Allan Einseln**, treasurer-**Ken Anderson**, secretary-**Jim Sears**.

Program: **Mike Fasano** showed his bottle cleaning machine and explained how he had built it. The machine tumbles a bottle to clean both the inside and the outside. Mike put a great deal of effort into building this machine, but he saved hundreds of dollars by doing the work himself.

Show & Tell: We had been very surprised to see an amber Bridwell hutch sell for \$1725 on Ebay. Thank you to **Al Steidel** for giving us the chance to see an example of this rare DC bottle.



Karl Shipman: A Great Guy

When we think of Karl, we remember him in different ways. Each of us has a different vision – close your eyes and reflect. Of course, our thoughts depend upon how long we have known Karl. We may have been comrades in bottle digs or just discussed collecting at our monthly meetings, wondering why he collected urinals and old rusted pieces of metal. What we have done together with Karl brings forth different memories. What are yours?

We in the Potomac Bottle Collectors are lucky that we knew Karl. My vision of Karl was of an active man who enjoyed people, was always thoughtful and helpful – be it as a club officer or as a fellow collector. Karl had a quick mind and a sense of humor that I enjoyed. His efforts over the years made our Potomac Bottle Collectors one of the finer bottle clubs in the United States. God bless you, Karl, and thanks for being “A Great Guy.”

Dick Fulton



Above: Karl Shipman (center) discusses club business with Ed Reisman, Mike Fasano, Mike Jordan, and Roland Longerbeam in July 1999.

Karl Shipman reminded us that our hobby should be fun. He seemed to find more joy in accumulating unusual low-cost artifacts than most “serious” collectors can ever hope to get from their thousand dollar bottles. And he managed to share that joy with many other people. When I first visited the Potomac Bottle Collectors ten years ago, Karl made sure I knew that this would be an enjoyable group to join.

Because of Karl’s clowning nature, I think we sometimes underestimated the amount of effort he really made on our behalf. He would set up at any area bottle show, whether he had a chance of making money there or not. He also promoted our club and the Baltimore Antique Bottle Club equally. I recently learned from Lee Shipman, that, for a brief period, Karl was actually president of both clubs at once. I don’t think this is the sort of fact I would ever have heard from Karl himself. He never seemed concerned about getting credit for his contributions to the hobby.

Jim Sears

Digging Memories with Karl Shipman

by Peter Rydquist

Karl, Randy, and I did a lot of digging together going back to the mid-1980s. I was invited to dig with them shortly after I joined our bottle club. We would dig pretty regularly on weekends from then on. Randy was a surveyor and had access to lots of sites that were being developed. Karl knew where all the old digging spots were. It was a thrill to be digging and learning from an expert digger such as Karl. Karl had a knack for finding dumps and we rarely came back empty handed back then. At that time, I provided few digging sites that yielded any decent bottles. I will describe some of the dumps that we dug with Karl. Most are gone now and those that remain are well known, so I do not think I'm giving away any secrets.

One of the first memorable digs was when we went to an area along the river south of Annapolis. The sight was being developed and ground had been cleared and it was very wet and muddy. We walked around in the mud and picked up Annapolis Dairy milks, and other 1930s bottles, but were asked to leave after a while. Sometime later on the way back to D.C., we spotted a grove of older trees on a hill off of Central Ave. We decided to stop and explore. It was a house site but had been visited by diggers before us who had found the ice house. It was built square with a stone foundation and was partially filled in with 1950s stuff on top. The diggers had dug down the center and had left behind a few G.B.S. beers and a Thomas Carroll flask which I kept. We tried to dig it some but didn't get make any progress. To this day, I can't figure out why we never went back to dig that ice house. I do not it think it had been dug completely.

The three of us went to an old city dump on the Eastern Shore of Maryland quite a few times. In the summer you wanted to leave very early in the morning, so that you would arrive there by dawn, because it would get so hot by early afternoon. On one occurrence, we left Karl's house shortly after 4 am with Karl driving (he wasn't the best driver in the world, when he drove it would be an adventure). I had been up too late the night before with some friends and my stomach was churning. But he got us there in one piece and we proceeded to dig until mid-afternoon. I can't remember what we dug that day. Almost every time we went there we each filled a bucket up with bottles to take home. Digging there one day I had found a large complete dolls head still with the paint and the eyes. Karl wanted to look at it, so I handed it to him. He didn't have a hold of it, started to juggle it and dropped it. It broke in many pieces. It had survived buried in the ground for almost a hundred years, but only for five minutes after it was dug up. We stopped digging there after a "backhoe incident" where a sewer or water line was damaged by an overzealous digger causing the site to be off-limits for everybody.

Karl knew about the Frederick dump and we finally went up there one day in the winter. Karl told us to stay out of the field, it was actively being farmed. I remember Randy digging a cobalt Triloids poison and I found an rectangular amber Riker Chemical Works bottle in the woods. It was the first of many digs that we did in Frederick. Eventually the digging moved out to the edge of the field. Any time we dug some interesting object, especially if was rusty metal, we would hand it to Karl for him to examine. He loved to ponder what it might have been used for and why it was thrown away. Sometimes he kept this metal junk -- Randy and I would just shake our heads and laugh.

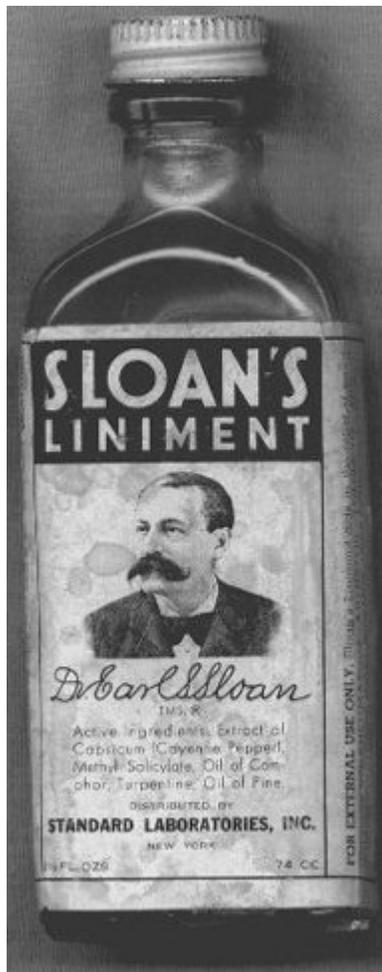


Another site we dug was in Falls Church just inside the beltway, where troops from Camp Alger had been stationed while preparing for the Spanish American War. Other collectors beat us to the site and it lot of it had been dug up. We managed to find some bottles such as an Anheuser Busch crown top beer, amber crown-top Portners, and others by digging under some trees. The site is now Fairview Park which is the location of my office.

At Buzzard's Point in D.C., Karl and I dug in a construction trench at a parking lot. I learned of the site at one of the club meetings from Mike Jordan who was told about it from an office worker that worked in the building across the street. A few days later I had a service call in the same building and could see the site had potential to be good judging from the shards that had been unearthed. Karl and I were there the following weekend on a cold, gray winter day. The top layers were from the 1930s. It was at the bottom of a 5 feet deep trench were the 1900s layer started. We dug down in the trench trying not to disturb the walls of the trench. I remember Karl

finding a H.H.H Horse Medicine and a local pharmacy. We had a few scares when some of the locals walked by and we got out of there before it got too dark. We never made it back there. I think this was a dump that we missed out on and often wonder what we might have found there.

I did come up with two good digging sites that we dug in. Off of I-395 in west Alexandria, we had dug a gully dump for a housesite, finding only a few strap sided warranted flasks. I decided to pay the site one last visit on a Sunday afternoon. I spent a couple of hours digging with nothing to show for it. It was late afternoon when I headed back down the trail to the two-track towards my car. Where the trail joined the two track I started to look suspiciously at some of the bigger trees. I decided to walk parallel to the two-track and spotted a circular depression. It was about 10 feet diameter and about 2 feet deep in the center. I walked to the center and hadn't dug more than a minute and I found a D.C. hutch. After digging for about an hour and a half, I had proceeded to find 12 more hutches and a 2 gallon B.C. Milburn jug from Alexandria, D.C. (handle missing and cracked, but still a great find). I finally had a site worth digging! I couldn't contain the excitement after I got home to call Randy and Karl and invite them to finish digging it. We spent all day digging there that weekend. We had walked past it several times and I do not know how we missed finding it, as it was only about 30 feet off the trail. Some of the finds that I remember besides the hutches were some flasks from D.C. notably an amber strap sided Chas. Kramer, an amber straight sided D.C. coke, pharmacies from Alexandria, and a broken in half black glass double collar squat soda that might have been from Alexandria. We each kept what we dug, so we would dig in separate areas in the hole. We finished digging the pit at about 5 feet and filled it back in. The pit had no wood walls or foundation, it was just a pit that had been dug for some reason and later used to dispose of trash. We were walking back to the car and as we crested a small hill there sat a police car on the other side of the gate. We didn't approach any closer to find if a cop was in the car who might be waiting for us and took off through the woods to get out of sight. We took a broad circle through the woods and had to climb down this steep bank to get to Edsall Road. Unfortunately Karl fell and bottles came tumbling out of his bucket. A large size Sloan's Liniment got broken, along with some other good bottles I'm sure. We recovered from the spill and walked back to car through the driveway to the parking lot and the police car was gone. To this day, we still do not know for sure whether it was a police car, all we saw at the time was the light bar on top but no one wanted to get close enough to find out.



The other site I found and actually had received permission to dig was near Vienna and had a civil war aged house, barn, and a shed still standing. The owner asked us to stay out of the barn. All kinds of junk could be seen inside the shed. We had a look in there and Karl had to stop and contemplate what any unusual item might have been. We didn't find any bottle keepers and didn't find any keepers in the house either. We saw a hollow depression near an open stone well off and away from one side of the house. It probed very soft and crunchy. We all knew we had found something. It turned out to be a rectangular pit about 6' x 8' about 4 feet deep. It had 1930s stuff on top and 1900s on the bottom. As usual once we got down in it, we started to dig our own little area. It was tight quarters and it can get a little competitive once you started hitting the older bottle layers. We found a large broken pickle bottle in many pieces. I was digging in the middle and out rolled a minijug. It was free game to whoever grabbed it first. I pounced on it before Randy could start to move. It was a L.N. Stely, Vienna VA minijug. A little while later, Randy had started to work the layer that I was standing on. He started to unearth what appeared to be a fruit jar. The fruit jar turned out to be a Lafayette. He had dug it almost under my feet. Karl dug a toy cast iron stove. We each that day filled up our buckets full of good bottles.

These are just a few of many memorable digs that I had the pleasure to participate in with Karl and others. Karl enjoyed encouraging others to join the hobby. He liked giving away bottles to children who happened to stop at his table during bottle shows. Sometimes he would flag down kids that were walking by his table just to give them a bottle. He brought in many visitors over the years to our club meetings. Karl will be missed by all those that knew him.

Karl and My First Bottle Dig

by Richard Lilienthal

Karl Shipman took me on my first bottle dig. I was going to say that Karl taught me to dig bottles but, as any one who has gone “digging” with me knows, that would not be a compliment.

It was back in the early 1980s, when I first joined the club and was a novice milk bottle collector. I met him at his home and we took his car. Karl whistled when he drove. Trouble is, he didn't know how to whistle. I don't know if he was actually tone deaf, but it sounded terrible. So I was doubly happy when we reached the dig site. We parked at Catonsville Community College and walked a short distance into the woods. He took me to an entire hillside of milk bottles. I don't mean a hill where you had to dig for bottles. The entire hill was covered with milk bottles. We didn't need to dig - we raked. Apparently, the community college was built on the site of a dairy and the dairy had dumped all those bottles when it closed. Although there were thousands of bottles, most were from the same dairies, e.g., Hilton, Wilton, and Wills. Most cities (to include Baltimore, I believe) had “bottle exchanges,” companies that returned milk bottles to their proper owners. So we never figured out why this dairy had bottles from other dairies.

After lunch (my first dining experience sitting on rusty milk cans), Karl wanted to explore deeper into the woods. I didn't understand why, since we had sifted through only a small percent of the hillside. As I was to discover, Karl was really more interested in exploring than in bringing home bottles. We found several surface dumps, but none with any good bottles. Karl did pick up a chamber pot and some other rusty metal. I later learned that Karl collected chamber pots. He even displayed chamber pots at one of the club's annual shows and won an award (as I recall, the coveted Peoples Choice award). Karl also collected rusty metal. Perhaps “saved” or “brought home” might be a better word than “collected.” Years later, Mike Jordan and I would give Karl silverware and pieces of rusty metal we would find in our digs.



Karl and I each brought back several sacks of bottles from that dig. I returned to the site many times and managed to find some rarities among the common bottles. They include a “Polish American Dairy” and a “Bonnie Blink Farm,” the latter being the only known bottle from the farm on the property of the Masonic lodge in the Bonnie Blink neighborhood just north of Baltimore.

This dig spoiled me. At other digs, you actually have to search through the earth for bottles. Sometimes, you even have to use a shovel. As they say, you always remember your first.

Show Reports

Muncie, Indiana: The summer fruit jar and bottle show at Muncie, Indiana was unusually small this year, but the total amount of buying and selling seemed as large as ever. Many of the better jars that changed hands at this show are being resold on Ebay.

York, Pennsylvania: The bad news is that the July 14-15 York show suffered from a lack of dealers. This show has apparently been shrinking for several years, but this year's large number of empty booths was still surprising. The good news is that the show may have the chance for a come-back in future years. This had been advertised as the final York show because of expected changes to the fairground site. These changes now appear to be proceeding slowly, and some area collectors have expressed an interest in continuing the show even after the site does change.

Recollections of Karl Shipman

by Mike Jordan

My earliest recollections of Karl go back to 1982 when we moved to VA. Karl was President and I became his Vice President. Karl was really notable back then for several things: He collected hats and always wore several during a meeting or a show; The crazier the hat the better. He had a booming voice and several clubs including ours used him for a loudspeaker during shows. He loved to dig, anytime, anywhere. He gave away many of the bottles he dug to anyone who showed any interest.

We always gave him odd things which we dug and couldn't figure out what they were. That's how he got started collecting urinals and honey pots. He was the only one I ever met who collected these things. He even built a display of them and won People's Choice at one of our shows.



There may be a few members around who can recall Karl leading volleyball games at our annual picnics at Potter Payne's on the river. Karl had a way with children that was amazing; he could interest them in just about anything. Karl had always been the club's auctioneer because of his voice. I was always his helper until he had his heart attack and lost his vocal power and I took over the auction.

Karl loved to dig in the woods and he met a lot of people that way and got them into bottle collecting and several came into the club over the years. Even after his heart attack, he was digging almost as soon as he came home from the hospital. He also went digging the night before he went in for his operation, I guess he wanted one last chance just in case. Some have wondered what happened to all the good stuff, he must have dug. Karl seldom actually sold anything at bottle shows. He gave it away to anyone who admired it. I don't think a child ever passed by his table without receiving at least one free bottle.

When Lee and Karl invited me over towards the end of his days and gave me the choice of anything I wanted, I searched his home over until I found the one that I always considered to be my favorite. It was a female model with open pontil. It will be a favorite piece in my collection and will serve to remember him by.

If the club had a permanent trophy case there are several items which belong in it to remember Karl by: His old battered black briefcase, overalls, his junk collector badge, and of course some goofy old hats.

Upcoming Area Bottle Shows

September 10 (9 AM to 3 PM) Lewes, Delaware: Delmarva Antique Bottle Club 8th Annual Show & Sale at the Cape Henlopen School, 1520 Kings Highway (Rt. 9), two miles west of the Cape May/Lewes ferry terminal.



September 17 (9 AM to 3 PM, early buyers 7 AM) Winchester, Virginia: The Apple Valley Bottle Collectors Club 27th Annual Show & Sale at the National Guard Armory, U.S. Rt. 50 West (at I-81, U.S. 50 West, Exit 313). Note: In the newsletter exchange, show chair Frank Kowalski (540/877-1093) states that plenty of tables remain available for this show.

October 7 (9 AM to 3 PM) Richmond, Virginia: The Richmond Area Bottle Collectors Association 29th Annual Show at the Showplace Annex, 3002 Mechanicsville Turnpike (next to the Big Antique Extravaganza).

October 15 (9 AM to 3 PM) Bedford, Pennsylvania: Bedford County Antique Bottle Club 25th Annual Show & Sale at the Bedford High School gymnasium, 330 Bedford St.

Around the Swamp . . .

Bottles from our Nation's Capital

by Andy Goldfrank



Earlier this month, I was packing the antique bottles that lined the window sills of the breakfast nook in my grandparents' kitchen on Nannyhagen Road in New York when I stumbled across a milk bottle I had discovered some 23 years before. This bottle, a small half pint, embossed "Orbaek Farm, Pleasantville" in a slugplate, is a testament to my early years of digging, my family's history, and the story surrounding the Victorian home that my grandparents are now vacating.

In the 1940s and 1950s, my father was raised in a small tenant farmer's house just up the road from this mansard classic, then owned by Farmer Bard. The surrounding thousand acres were filled with hundreds of dairy cows that grazed under the watchful eye of old Bard. In the early 1960s, my grandparents decided to leave the country and move to the city. A decade later, my parents returned and on a whim purchased Bard's dilapidated Victorian which now sat on a single acre and was one of 1,300 homes along Nannyhagen Road. In the midst of the oil crisis, this run-down house which lacked insulation, had enormously high ceilings, and housed too many rooms (even for all of us kids), certainly appeared to be a folly to everyone but my family. My parents were nostalgic, recalling their memories of their Pleasantville High School sweetheart days when my mother would visit my father's home by traveling along the old dirt farm lanes. They shared with us the memories of the home-grown turkeys Farmer Bard would give to his few neighbors, about the bull that managed to get loose on the farm lane one day, and of the fresh milk and eggs readily available from the Bard Farm.

My interest in bottles started in that wonderful old house, or rather started below, under the porch where I uncovered some old medicine bottles. In those early years, one of my most exciting finds was a milk bottle from the local dairy, namely Orbaek Farm, to whom Farmer Bard used to sell his excess milk. I held onto that local bottle and left it in the house on Nannyhagen Road for my grandparents when they bought the house from my parents in 1979.

Since then I have managed to find hundreds of milk bottles, blown and machine-made, from local farms and national dairies, some laden with pictures and others simply embossed with initials. Although I rarely retain a milk bottle for long, each discovery always provides an ephemeral twinge of nostalgia for me. They speak of times when life was distinctly different -- throughout this country and for my family. Every milk bottle that I discover makes me think about Farmer Bard and my father growing up with his parents on Nannyhagen Road.

About two months ago, my wife and I stumbled upon a construction site near Georgetown University that was laden with old milks. Water lines were being carved almost 25 feet deep through a gully that had been filled in during the 1920s and 1930s. The excavated soil, predominantly ash, was placed in two tremendous mounds alongside the hole and it is no exaggeration to say that hundreds of bottles were sticking out of the mounds. The vast majority of collectible bottles were milk, except for a White House Vinegar bottle that my wife discovered and innocently asked if it was "any good?" We were extremely selective in deciding what to take home, picking only perfect bottles that represented each dairy, including the different embossing and sizes, and still struggled to

cart back over 70 milk bottles. It turned out that most of these milks were relatively common (Aldernay Dairy, Chestnut Farms, Chevy Chase Dairy, Embassy, Fairfax Farms, Lewisville Dairy, Thompson's Dairy, and



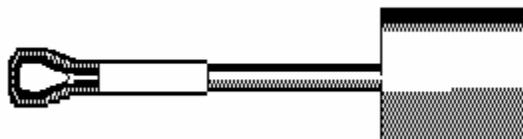
Wakefield Dairy); however, a large number had interesting pictorial embossing such as images of cows, nursing babies, George Washington and others. All of these dairies evidently had bought out or driven out the smaller dairies in the Washington, D.C., area by the 1930s. Moreover, none of these later dairy conglomerates are listed in the D.C. business directories until 1911. Aldernay Dairy had purchased or adopted the namesake of Green Meadow Dairy which was in business as early as 1904. Embassy likewise took the namesake of Walker Hill Dairy which was first listed in 1904, although its proprietor W.A. Simpson was a dairyman starting in 1897.



This remarkable haul prompted me to examine some of the other D.C. milks I had discovered on other local D.C. digging forays. Ultimately, I determined that in my collection included five milk bottles that were either unlisted sizes or altogether missing from Antique Bottles from the Washington, D.C. Area, published by the Potomac Bottle Collectors in 1995 (3rd ed.). The first two are known slugplate embossed milks that are unlisted as half pints: (1) "J.W. GREGG DAIRY/612-14-16 O ST., N.W." and (2) "PEARL DAIRY/A. MOWATT/WASHINGTON, D.C." (Milk/Nos. 99 & 154). It appears from business directories that John W. Gregg was in business from 1886 to 1927, while Alex Mowatt did not get his start until 1891 and was no longer operating by 1915. An unknown quart size of "SWISS DAIRY" embossed in a slugplate in an X pattern sharing the letter "T" was also buried in my bottle boxes. (Milks/No. 171). The business directories indicate that Swiss Dairy was located at 403 East Capitol starting in 1898, and was also listed in 1911 and 1912 as "The Swiss." Although there is no verification available (and the business directories in that era often had typographical errors), this name change may have been a marketing effort that did not succeed as the name quickly reverted to Swiss Dairy, and the business was extinguished by 1914.

Another unlisted milk embossed "H.L. MEEKS" does not indicate a Washington, D.C. address; however, I found it along with a number of local bottles. A few hours at the local library revealed that Henry (or Harry) L. Meeks was in business as a dairyman during the first two decades of the last century at a number of different locations: 446 H Street, N.W. (1900-1902), 611 L Street, N.W. (1903-1907), and 453 O Street, N.W. (1909-1915).

The last unlisted milk on my list, found along with three or four broken examples including a quart, is a pint embossed in a slugplate "HICKORY HILL/2306 L ST., N.W." Hickory Hill is listed in the Washington, D.C., business directories for only 1913! Further research indicated that Henry T. Watson ran a dairy at the same address in 1914 and 1915. Moreover, from 1900 to 1912, Walters & Watson are listed at 2306 L Street, N.W. There are no known bottles for any of these three listed dairies/dairyman; therefore, it is possible that this same bottle with the Hickory Hill moniker served all of these different dairy entities that were at that same address. Alexander B. Walters (Milks/No. 206) is not the same entity (and most likely not affiliated) because his business is listed during roughly the same period as being at three other locations: 2012 H Street, N.W. (1905-1907), 1757 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. (1909-1913), and 2004 K Street, N.W. (1914).



Hope you enjoyed this column. Club member Richard Lilienthal contributed significantly to this article with extensive historical research. Thank you! Any comments, suggestions, or questions, please let me know either by calling me at 202/588-0543 or by emailing me at amg_sticky@yahoo.com. Good luck searching, Andy.