

The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors Serving the National Capital

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April 2001

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**The Usual Suspects
(What color is citron, anyway?)**

April 24th Meeting

Please join in planning our **Saturday, June 23, 2001** show.
Show & Tell: Allan Einseln requests that members bring in unusual pontiled bottles. Those members with limited collecting interests may bring Mason jars as usual.

March Meeting

Thanks to **Bob Ford** and **Steve Charing** for a very insightful presentation on planning a bottle show. We will try to heed their advice for our upcoming show. Bob was the chair of the Baltimore Antique Bottle Club's recent show, and Steve is president of the Baltimore club. While the two of them put a great deal of effort into the Baltimore show, the volunteer efforts of about 50 other Baltimore club members also helped make that show a success.

Free Bottle Appraisals will be offered at our show. Bob and Steve suggested that offering appraisals may help attract local people to our show. Please contact Jim Sears to volunteer to help with appraisals during the show. **Volunteers must agree NOT to buy the items they appraise.**



Flask dug by Peter Rydquist & other displays at March meeting



Upcoming Area Bottle Shows

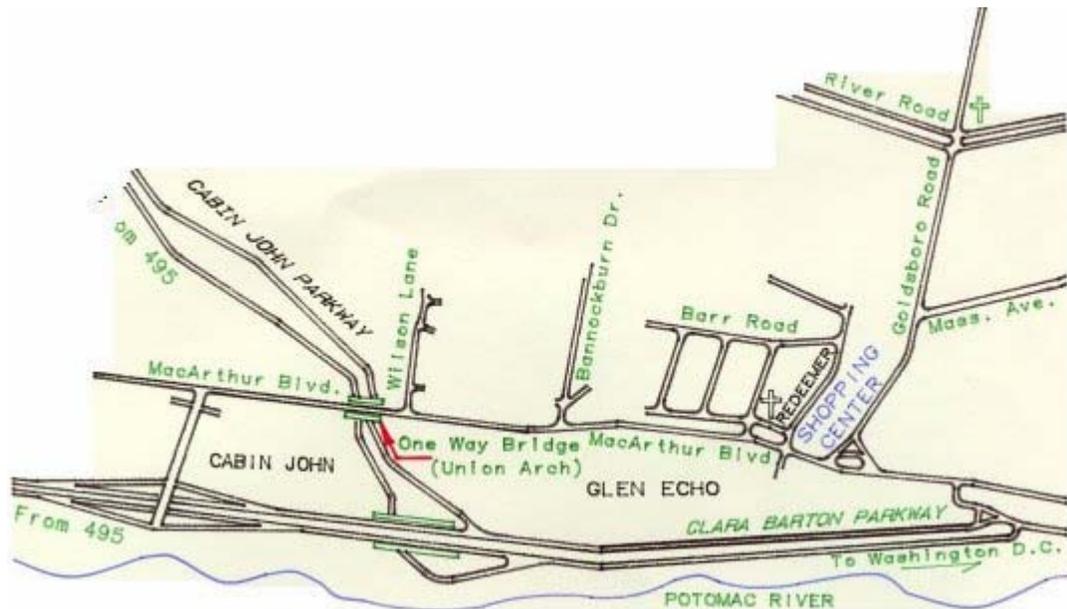
April 22 (9 AM to 3 PM) Harrisonburg, VA:
Historical Bottle Diggers of Virginia's 30th Annual Show & Sale at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds, Route 11 South (I-81 exit 243)a. Info: Sonny Smiley, Phone (540) 434-1129 or Casey Billhimer, Phone (540) 289-9866 email: historyed@webtv.net.

APRIL 28 (9 AM to 3 PM) RALEIGH, NC:
Raleigh Bottle Club's Show & Sale at the NC Military Center, Reedy Creek Rd. (off Blue Ridge Rd. 0.5 mile from fairgrounds), Raleigh, North Carolina. Info: Reggie Lynch, P.O. Box 13736, Durham, NC 27709, PH: (919) 789-4545, E-mail: rlynch@antiquebottles.com, Web site: <http://www.antiquebottles.com/raleigh>

June 2 & 3 (Sun: 9 AM to 3 PM, early buyers Sat. 6 PM) Kutztown, PA: Coal Crackers Bottle Club's 3rd Annual Bottle Show and Sale at the Renningers Antique Market. Info: Rod Walch, PH:(610) 377-1484 or Jody Farra, PH:(570) 462-1942.

June 17 (10 AM to 5 PM) Millville, NJ: F.O.H.B.C / Wheaton Village Museum, 4th Annual Antique Bottle Show & Sale at the Wheaton Village, Exit 26, Rt. 55, 1501 Glasstown Rd. Info: (800) 998-4552

June 23 (9 AM to 3 PM) Bethesda, MD: Our Show is Back!! Potomac Bottle Collectors Antique Bottle Show and Sale at the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer, 6201 Dunrobbin Drive, Bethesda, MD 20816, near Glen Echo and the Clara Barton National Historic Site. Info: Jim Sears, (703) 243-2409, email: searsjm@usa.net (See Map below.)



The Raleigh Bottle Club presents its First Annual **ANTIQUÉ BOTTLE & Collectibles SHOW & SALE**



**Saturday, April 28, 2001
9:00am - 3:00pm
at the NC Military Center
(near the NC State Fairgrounds in Raleigh)**

Admission \$2 - Kids Free
Special Early Buying Available from 7-9am (\$15 per couple)

**96 Dealers / Refreshments / Plenty Free Parking
50/50 Raffle / Free Bottle Appraisals & Information**

Directions: from I-40, take Wade Ave, then exit at Blue Ridge Road follow green signs to "NC Military Center" on Reedy Creek Rd.

Info: Reggie Lynch (919) 789-4545
Addr: PO Box 13736, Durham, NC 27709
Web: www.antiquebottles.com/raleigh
Email: raleigh@antiquebottles.com



An American [Bottledigger] in London

by Andy Goldfrank

The cold drizzle was incessant, night had fallen, the paths were muddy, the full moon was cloaked in the fog, and yet there I was in my muck-caked shoes and water-soaked clothes walking through an overgrown English farmer's field. There I was in that pasture after spending almost seven days in this dismal weather seeing the sights of London from Westminster Abbey to Shakespeare's Globe Theatre. There I was meandering on a cold, dark evening, over bridges and into a tunnel, along highways, railroads and waterways, through waist-high grass, thistles and brambles. Only an hour before, the only thought in my head had been returning to my sister-in-law's apartment where dry clothes, hot food and a soothing drink awaited. On this wet, dark night, what was it that had pulled me to this place like a iron filing to a magnet?

Perhaps I am getting ahead of myself . . . let me start from the beginning. Last month, my wife and I traveled to England for a vacation and visit with family living in the London suburb of Windsor. It was my intention to focus on family and perhaps attend a bottle show, for much had been planned, from touring Windsor Castle to trekking around London to a trip to Stonehenge and the English Channel, leaving little opportunity for locating a privy or dump site let alone digging one. Accordingly, I had done no research for potential sites or leads, made no effort to contact local bottlediggers, and did not bring my metal detector or digging equipment.

Over the first weekend, my sister-in-law and wife drove me to, and attended with me, the Alton bottle show. This event was quite an experience considering that, along with the hundreds of collectors packed into a tiny community center, there were dozens of dealers, each with thousands of bottles, potlids and other goods strewn upon their tables and laden in boxes nearby. Somehow I managed to pick up a few bottles for digging buddies and a few magazines for my personal edification without smashing anything or offending anyone with inadvertent elbowing. My purpose in obtaining the magazines was to learn about the British bottle scene and to allow me to vicariously experience local digging through magazine stories.

As I devoured the magazines over the next few days, it soon became apparent to me that the bulk of digging was done in "tips" or dumps. It also dawned on me that there was a pattern to the location of these tips – not only were many of these dumps near waterways or railroads, but also wherever large-scale brick structures were built that required clay borrow pits for the brick-making operations. Moreover, I realized that on my daily sightseeing treks to and from London on the railroad, there were many places that had all of these attributes. Over the next few days, every time we departed the station my eyes were fixed upon the passing landscape in search of a likely spots. It seemed there were plenty of locations, but none readily accessible or identifiable to a tourist (without a car or shovel) scheduled to leave shortly. On the second to last day of our trip, much like the others in that it was gloomy, cold and rainy, we departed from a different train station because we were going to different part of London to see the British Museum and Sir John Soane's home. The ride into the city on this train exposed me to a different landscape but was otherwise uneventful (other than the bullet trains that whip past at unbelievable

speeds!). The day was spent meandering through wet streets and mind-boggling museums, and at its conclusion we ventured back to Windsor on the same train line. My faith in finding a digging spot long extinguished, I sat looking out the window examining the architecture and countryside for amusement as I thought about changing my clothes and eating some hot food.

And then it happened . . . out of the corner of my eye, I spotted some turned earth in a field that had specks of white. Not even realizing it, I said aloud: "I saw a tip, a real English dump!" My wife, incredibly supportive but also keenly aware of my obsessive bottle digging tendencies, looked at me as if I had seen a mirage of a watering hole in the Mojave Desert. Without Joan even asking, I explained to her that we had just passed an area that was bordered by water on two sides (indicating a likelihood of clayey soil), and a mile-long brick railroad trestle on a third. This spot was a prime location for a temporary brick manufacturing and then an ideal place for subsequent dumping to fill the void left from the clay borrow pits. Within minutes we pulled into the station and parted ways: her off to the apartment to dry off and eat, and me off on an trek of undefined distance to seek an inexact location if it existed at all.

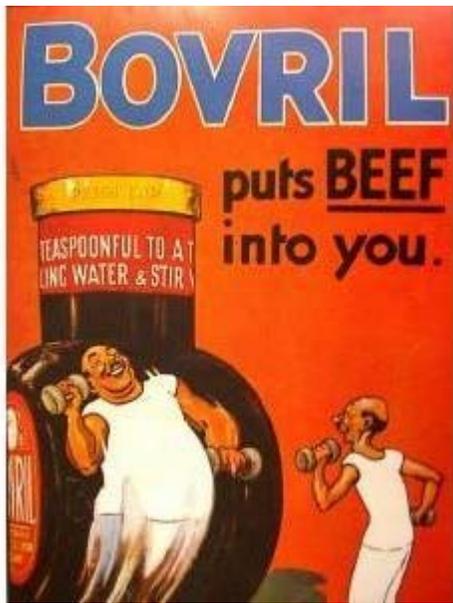
Practically running along paths, roads and highways, I attempted to travel parallel to the railroad tracks. My first obstacles were a dead-end street followed by a river which required a slight detour onto a highway bridge. Then with the light fading, I walked along a narrow and muddy hiker's trail which stopped in a field. Straining to determine my location in relation to where I had thought I had spotted the dump from the train, I finally noticed the brambles that had been a clue from the train. Also, up to that point, the fields had all been flat and this one was not only covered with thorny bushes but also rolling and uneven. There had been displacement of soil here, but the animal burrows failed to reveal any artifacts and no dump appeared to exist. Disheartened, I thought perhaps I had let my dreams and desires get the best of me.

Daylight long gone, I decided to walk into one last field that bordered the railroad bridge. Breaking through a line of pine trees, I literally stumbled into a rabbit hole. Stepping away, I scanned the dirt and saw a pottery shard. Walking thirty yards further into the field, even with my eyes straining in the dark to see, it was evident that this was an old Victorian tip! Stumbling around for fifteen minutes, I managed to pick up a few shards of bottles and pot lids to show everyone back at the apartment (and so that they would not think that I had gone on a wild-goose chase). As I retraced my steps back into town, my mind raced about the site: could I get a chance to dig before we left for the United States, where could I get a shovel and digging stick, how old was this dump, had it already been dug, could I possibly find a pot lid, and a dozen other questions?

Needless to say, I arranged to get up before 6 a.m. to return to the site and dig for a few hours on the day that we were scheduled to depart for home. Purchasing a (terrible, flat-bladed) shovel and a broom handle, I trekked back to the site and saw that large portions of the tip had already been explored. Scouting around, I managed to isolate a spot that had not been dug. My goals were simple but certainly not easy: a ginger beer, a bottle embossed with London and a pot lid. The incessant drizzle did not bother me in the least.

After taking off about two feet of overburden and plowed soil in a small 3 foot by 5 foot rectangle, I finally broke into an undisturbed layer of ash. Almost immediately, bottles of all shapes and sizes started to pop out of the earth including some utility bottles, sheared-lip saucers, a small green poison, a rich blue-green unembossed medicine, and a squat amber 4 oz. Bovril. This was nothing but fun, but I was in fast pursuit of more as time was running out. Breaking past the ash, a 6 inch layer of coal-blackened soil that was void of artifacts needed to be removed, shortly thereafter more ash was





exposed but it was starting to get wet in the hole at the 4 foot level. Careful not to get too dirty (since I did not have proper digging clothes in England), I started tossing out some sloppy, wet dirt. After a while of this heavy-lifting, I jumped out to inspect the throw dirt and was surprised to find a brown pottery ginger beer stamped “R. White London” with only a small lip chip! Next to that, there was a 4 inch tall, sheared-lip, ice blue bottle embossed with the same name “R. White” on one side and “Sauce” on the other.

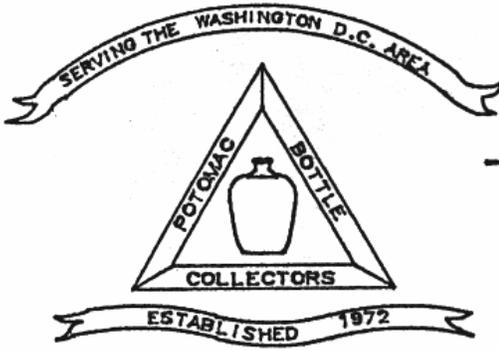
Back in the hole, I started collapsing the sides and found that my excavation was directly beside someone else’s digging efforts. Remarkably, I had managed to find one of the few untouched spots in the heart of the dump. Finishing up, I poked around with my



digging stick under a large rock that was in the side of the hole and recovered a beautiful sheared-lip aqua boat ink. These are quite common, but this was the first one that I had ever found and it will occupy a place of honor in my wife Joan’s collection of dug ink bottles. After that find, there appeared to be nothing left to dig and I started refilling my pit.

Looking at the soil, while pushing the dirt in a paddling motion into the hole, I spotted the chipped edge of a potlid. Not expecting much because this one was evidently damaged, I was delighted to find that the entire potlid was sitting there in a clump from when it had been pitched from the earth. This was exactly what I was looking for, namely, a printed English potlid. This potlid once covered a container of “Burgess’ Anchovy Paste.” In rapid succession shortly thereafter, I pushed my shovel and digging stick into the loose soil that filled my hole, wrapped my artifacts in newspaper, placed them in my backpack, examined the architecture of the brick railroad bridge with smile, and walked off to catch my plane home.





Potomac Bottle Collectors

Saturday, June 23, 2001 Show and Sale
 at the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer
 6201 Dunrobbin Drive, Bethesda, MD



Dealer Contract

The Potomac Bottle Collectors appreciate your interest in our show.

- The rental fee is \$20 per 6 foot table.
- One assistant is allowed per dealer regardless of the number of tables contracted. Only the dealer and assistant will be allowed in during the show set-up beginning at 7 AM on Saturday, June 23, 2001.
- The show opens to the public at 9 AM and closes at 3 PM, and dealers will remain set up through the entire show.
- There will be no early buyers at the show.
- Only bottles, jars, insulators, stoneware, breweriana, advertising, and tabletop antiques will be sold at the show. Modern collectibles such as Beanie Babies are not allowed.
- Glass, stoneware, and related items must remain the emphasis of the show. Other tabletop antiques may be sold by dealers who are also offering antique glass or stoneware.
- Sales prices will be clearly marked on all items
- Reproduction, repaired, and artificially colored items must be clearly marked as such.
- Dealers will provide their own table coverings, and we request that all tables be covered.
- Maryland requires that all dealers collect 5 percent Maryland sales tax. Collecting and reporting sales tax is the responsibility of the individual dealer, not the responsibility of the Potomac Bottle Collectors.
- Smoking and consumption of alcoholic beverages are prohibited in the show room.
- Each dealer agrees to be solely responsible for his or her property and assistant and releases the Potomac Bottle Collectors and its members from all claims for theft or damage.
- Dealer confirmations will be mailed out two weeks prior to the show.
- In order to receive a refund, a cancellation request must be received at least two weeks before the show (June 9, 2001).
- Please contact show Jim Sears for any additional information – (703) 243-2409 or searsjim@usa.net.

Please mail reservation form along with check to

Potomac Bottle Collectors
 c/o Jim Sears
 4211 N. 2nd Rd.,
 Apt. 1
 Arlington, VA 22203

Please reserve _____ tables at \$20 each Total \$ _____

Dealer Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ Email Address _____

Sign here to the terms of this contract _____