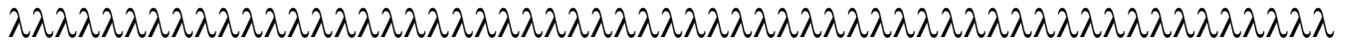


The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors Serving the National Capital



August 2001

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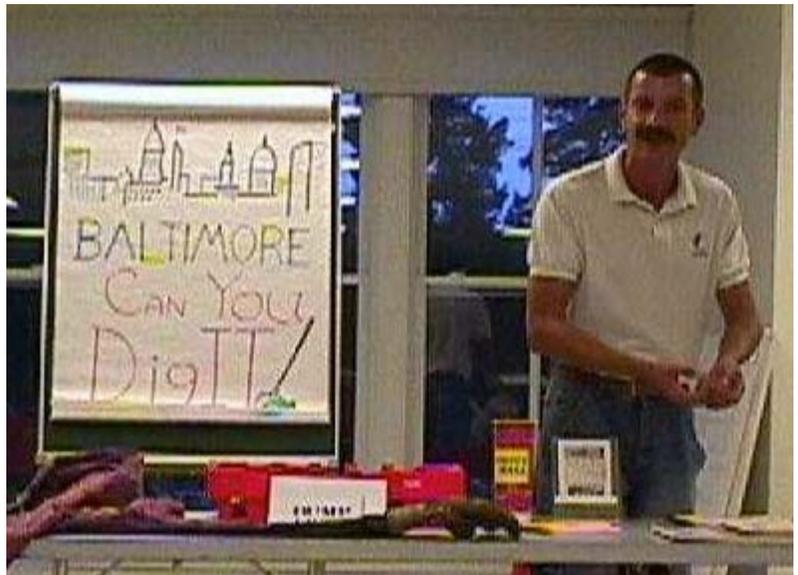
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August 28th Meeting

Dave Matthews will return with part 2 of his talk “Baltimore – Can You Dig it?” Dave plans to bring a video showing actual Baltimore digs.

Show & Tell: Bring in your summer finds. Some collectors report that the offerings on Ebay have been rather limited lately, but we hope the diggers have been making some interesting finds.

Club Officers: **We still need to find someone to be president of the club.** Lee Shipman will preside at the August meeting, but future travel plans prevent her from accepting this position for the next year. Please consider volunteering to be club president. You may then delegate virtually all responsibilities to other club members!



Peter Rydquist (left) tries to sell bottles at our June 23rd show, but everyone wants the ones pictured on his shirt instead of the ones sitting on his table.

See pages 4 and 5 for more pictures of our show and a big “Thank You” to everyone who made it possible. Everyone seemed to have a good time at the show, but it’s already time to start planning for the next one.

Meetings: 7:30 PM on the last Tuesday of each month in the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer, 6201 Dunrobbin Dr., Bethesda, MD 20816.

President: Needed Vice President: Allan Einseln Secretary: Jim Sears Treasurer: Ken Anderson

Pontil: Jim Sears (email: searsjim@usa.net, PH: 703/243-2409) & Andy Goldfrank (email: amg_sticky@yahoo.com, PH: 202/588-0543)

Web Site <http://members.aol.com/potomacbt1/bottle2.htm> Maintained by Peter Rydquist: pehraug@aol.com

Baltimore – Can you dig it?

Most of us had at least heard of privy digs and farm dumps, but the Baltimore county water dumps described by **Dave Matthews** were something different. At our July meeting, Dave explained that much Baltimore trash was carried on barges to the ends of creeks. The dumpers would sometimes dig out the side of a creek and later cover the trash with old bricks and oyster shells. Bottle hunters can sometimes locate these dumps by looking for pieces of old pilings. Other water dumps are recognized by the straight, abrupt end to the arm of a creek. These dumps are usually about chest high, and diggers go in a low tide with rubber waders.



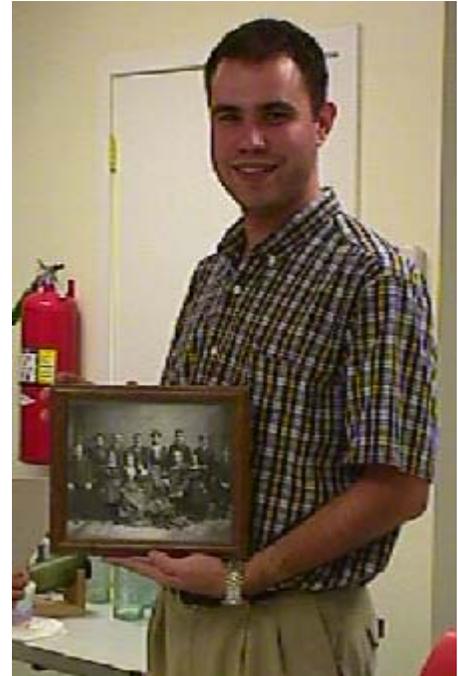
Dave also shared “tricks of the trade” for other types of Baltimore digs. He mentioned that most Baltimore row houses now have concrete covering the back yards. This concrete often breaks above the privy due to settling. The privies themselves may be lined with barrels or bricks, and they are often plugged with clay on the top. Since the privies vary greatly in depth, diggers should be prepared for plenty of hard work.

Here is Dave’s check list for diggers:

- 1) Steel probe with handle (Dave recommends getting one that does *not* bend)
- 2) Round end shovel (Take two – they break)
- 3) Three-pronged rake
- 4) Hand digger (Use shovel *only* to get down to trash layer; dig by hand to avoid breakage)
- 5) Breaker bar (for breaking concrete privy caps)
- 6) Small mall hammer (for breaking up debris)
- 7) Screw driver (for removing bottles)
- 8) five-gallon bucket / two-gallon bucket
- 9) Rope
- 10) Ladder
- 11) Hat, gloves, and boots
- 12) Water, snacks, and first aid supplies
- 13) Bags (just in case you find some goodies!)
- 14) Newspaper (to wrap the O.P. bottles)
- 15) Luck and patience!

Michael Gaines spoke on the life and bottles of Robert Portner at our June meeting. Gaines, who is shown at right holding a photo of the Portner family, is writing a book on Portner. We look forward to getting a copy for our club library.

Robert Portner began his career as a grocer and branched out into brewing during the Civil War. Although much of his earliest brew was transported in barrels, plenty of Portner bottles exist for today's collectors. The example shown at right is marked "Alexandria, PA" instead of the correct "Alexandria, VA." Other bottled Portner products include mineral waters and a few sodas.



Al Steidel brought in a very impressive collection of Portner bottles and advertising items. All of the bottles at right are in Steidel's collection.



The 1896 photo a right shows a very prosperous looking group of Portner workers.



Upcoming Area Bottle Shows

September 9 (9 AM to 3 PM) Lewes, DE: Delmarva Antique Bottle Club's 9th Annual Show & Sale at Cape Henlopen High School. Info: **Ferd Meyer**, PH: (302) 945-7072, E-mail: jfmeyer4@cs.com or **Alan Wesche**, PH: (410) 352-5975, E-mail: wishman@beachin.net.

September 16 (9 AM to 3 PM, early admission 7 AM) Winchester, VA: Apple Valley Bottle Collectors Club's 28th Annual Show & Sale at the National Guard Armory, U.S. 50 West (I-81 exit 313). Info: **Frank Kowalski**, 3015 Northwestern Pike, Winchester, VA 22603-3825, PH: (540) 877-1093.

October 6 (9 AM to 3 PM, early admission 7:30 AM) Richmond, VA: Richmond Area Bottle Collectors Association's 30th Annual Show & Sale at the Showplace Annex, 3002 Mechanichsville Turnpike. Info: **Judy Foles**, 12275 Cedar Lane, Ashland, VA 23005, PH: (804) 798-7502, E-mail: judyfoles@mail.com.

October 7 (10AM to 4PM) Batsto Village, NJ: South Jersey Antique Bottle & Glass Club's 18th Annual Show & Sale at Historic Batsto Village, 7 miles east of Hammonton. Info: **Paul Delguercio**, 548 Spring Rd., Nammonton, NJ 08037, PH: (609) 567-4972, E-mail: paulhavoc@excite.com.

October 28 (9 AM to 3PM) Timonium, MD: The 3rd Annual Mid-Atlantic Bottle Show & Sale at the Maryland State Fairgrounds, just north of Baltimore on I-83. Info: **Holiday Promotions**, P.O. Box 845, Abingdon, MD 21009, **Bill Thomas** – PH: (410) 538-5558 or **Rick Lease** – PH: (410) 239-8918.



Bottle Show Report

by Jim Sears

As show chairman, I would like to thank everyone who volunteered to help put on our June 23rd show. I am grateful that so many club members took time to help sell tables, distribute show fliers, and sell and display at our show. I will not attempt to list everyone who helped with the show because I would surely forget someone. However, I do want to mention a few individuals who made particularly large contributions.

Our club absolutely could not have held this show without **Lee Shipman**, who rented the hall, created the table layout, designed a show announcement with map, purchased bagels and donuts, and chauffeured the show signs. Lee also brought along her friend Louise, who helped at the admission table.

Mike Fasano took charge of refreshments and provided an endless supply of coffee to the dealers. He also obtained some free publicity for the show in the *Bethesda Gazette*.



Joan and Andy Goldfrank took charge of admissions and the raffle. Besides designing the raffle tickets, Andy wrote a press release for the show, and did more than his share of the set-up and clean-up work. (You can see that Andy looks a little worn out at right, but he does have a nice Tippecanoe bottle).

Phil Godwin (below) also did plenty of work setting up tables for the show and cleaning up afterwards. He also did a good job of selling show tables to people outside our club.



Roland Longerbeam deserves a huge “Thank You” for helping to put up signs for the show in the pouring rain.

Matt Knapp distributed many of our show fliers at antique malls. He also took the photos included here.

Finally, I am extremely appreciative of the support our club received from the Baltimore Antique Bottle Club. The Baltimore club promoted our show in their newsletter and also lent us signs to guide people to the show site. Baltimore show chair (and PBC member) **Bob Ford** and Baltimore club president **Steve Charing** provided plenty of advice at our March meeting, and Steve even designed the flier for our show!

Comments on our show have been extremely positive. Dealers complimented us on the refreshments and on putting on a show that was just plain fun. The club also made a little bit of money, which should help us have even more fun in the future. **Rick Lease** suggests that we should build on our momentum by finding a larger site and planning a future show right away. Rick suggests that we look for a nearby location with 5000 to 10,000 square feet of space. **Lee Shipman** has already begun considering local churches and schools, but help from other members would also be appreciated.



Thanks to **Peter Rydquist** for sending in the following article, which appeared in the August 5th *Washington Post*.

Outhouse's Rich History Unearthed

By **Monte Reel**

They kneel down in the pit, surrounded by neatly squared walls of layered earth. The soil that's clinging to their hands and trowels is the same dirt that was here in the mid-1800s, under what was then a predominantly African American neighborhood in the middle of Annapolis.

In a year or two, this vacant lot on Franklin Street will sit under an addition to the Banneker-Douglass Museum. So while it still has the chance, this team of archaeologists sponsored by the University of Maryland is trying to find out what stories from that long-gone neighborhood are hidden underground.

Land records and architectural evidence from these excavation pits have revealed that four houses once stood here, with small patches of open yard in back. Of the various pits dug on the site, team members believe they might have hit pay dirt with one particular hole near the back of the lot. This hole, they have discovered, is where the communal outhouse stood.

"We normally call it a privy, not an outhouse," said Eric Larson, a doctoral student who is overseeing the excavation project. "It helps us not to think about where we actually are."

But for an inquisitive archaeologist, few places can compete with the ground under an old outhouse when it comes to providing clues about daily life. The dirt under such structures generally preserves artifacts well because of its unique chemical composition. And because people tended to use their outhouses as all-purpose garbage dumps, artifacts are likely to be buried below.

"We're not into the deeper, really trashy deposits yet," said Matthew Palus, a graduate student from Columbia University in New York who is helping with the dig. "But we're still finding a lot of stuff. We found part of a dog skeleton the other day. We also found a few pieces of an old porcelain doll."

The archaeologists pour dirt from the pits into wood-framed screens that sift potential artifacts from the lumpy soil. The fragments are analyzed in laboratories at the University of Maryland, providing the evidence to back up theories that anthropologists and historians will construct to better explain the lives of African Americans in the Civil War era.

Larson said the evidence unearthed at this dig and at previous excavation sites throughout Annapolis suggests that black enclaves were largely self-sufficient. The neighboring households were often economically diverse, with lower-income families living near professionals.

"This is just one of several African American enclaves found around the city, and that's interesting in and of itself," Larson said. "They weren't in just one neighborhood, but they were spread all around the city."

The dig on Franklin Street continues work that started in 1988, when university archaeologists teamed with the Historic Annapolis Foundation to explore the sites of former African American communities.

Throughout subsequent excavations, archaeologists have discovered that the African American residents often used national brands of food products -- Heinz ketchup, for example. Some historians have speculated that this indicates black residents did not buy local products because they encountered racism at the white-owned local markets -- where shopkeepers had the power to play with the pricing of local products but not national brands.

Larson said his team is hesitant to commit to such theories before its excavation is completed and the artifacts are analyzed. But as more evidence is unearthed, he said, more detailed theories about black life in Maryland could be formed and supported with hard evidence.

"We want to create a dialogue with the public, so we can discuss these issues," Larson said. "If we do that, everyone can learn more in the process."