

The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors Serving the National Capital



June 2004

In this issue:

Back to Baltimore's Deep Brick Liners

by Andy Goldfrank.....page 2

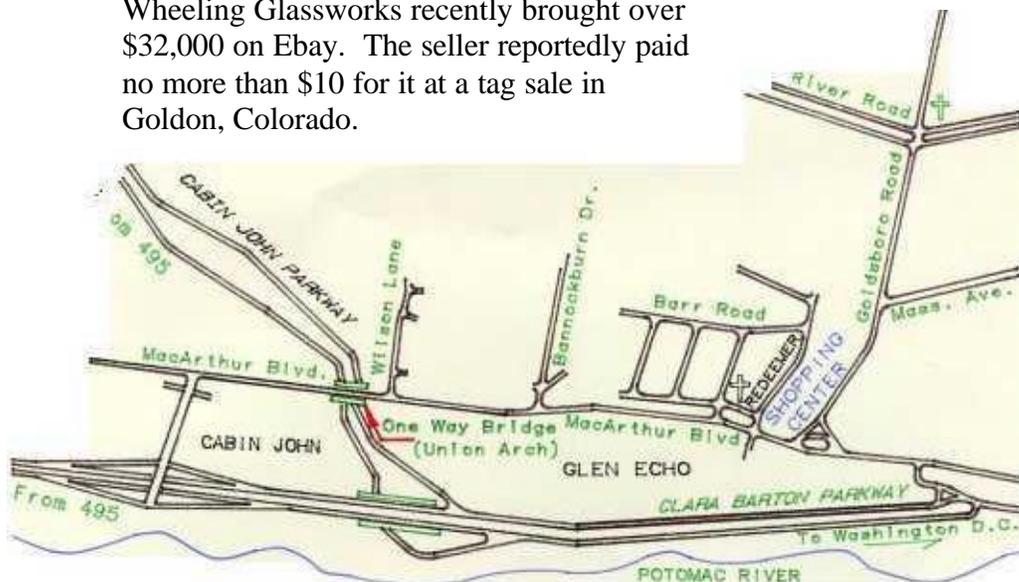
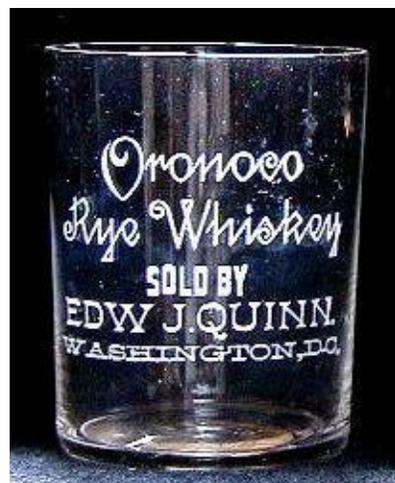
Upcoming Area Bottle Shows.....page 5

Meeting June 29

Please join us at the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Bethesda at 8 P.M. for our June club meeting. For anyone unfamiliar with the meeting location, the map at the bottom of this page show the neighborhood in Bethesda, MD.

Andrew Cooper seeks Oronoco Whiskey bottles from Quinn. If you have any Oronoco bottles or other Quinn items for Sale, please contact him at
Andrew S. Cooper, CPA
1625 K St., NW #140
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 331-4327
(202) 331-0054 (fax)

Another Ebay Bottle: This Benjamin Franklin historical flask from the Wheeling Glassworks recently brought over \$32,000 on Ebay. The seller reportedly paid no more than \$10 for it at a tag sale in Goldon, Colorado.



North is to the left on this map. The church of the Redeemer is just off MacArthur Blvd. Near the Goldboro Road intersection.

Back to Baltimore's Deep Brickliners

By Andy Goldfrank



Privy digging in Baltimore is not for the weak and timid. Persistence, hard work and knowledge are critical but even with those three qualities, in Baltimore, one also needs to be just plain lucky. Prior newsletters have talked about my many digging jaunts in Charm City (*see The Potomac Pontil* issues of September 2001, November 2001, January 2002, February 2004, and others) and relayed the general lack of quality uncovered in comparison to my privy recoveries in New York, Philadelphia, and elsewhere. It is universally accepted amongst local diggers that excavating an outhouse in Baltimore which contains more than a dozen blown bottles is an exceedingly rare event. Nonetheless, in large part because it is the closest major city to where I live, I continue to tackle the outhouses of Baltimore with only the hope of uncovering some fine adventures as opposed to quality bottles. This is another such tale.

At the end of March, after leaving a meeting of the Baltimore Antique Bottle Club, Phil Edmonds and I checked out a construction site in downtown Baltimore just a few blocks from Oriole Park at Camden Yards. As we shined our flashlights on the rubble and earth of the site through the perimeter chainlink fence, Phil and I were approached by two Baltimore patrol officers who ran our licenses and warned us to not be tempted to dig without written permission from the construction contractor. After a bunch of "Yes, sir" and "Absolutely, officer," Phil and I walked back to my truck eyeing the pit and talked about writing this site off. It was then that I spotted a sign on the fence announcing the construction general contractor and stored that tidbit of knowledge in my head.

The next day, I attended the birthday party of my wife Joan's sister's father-in-law, Buddy Nutwell. He and I share a common passion; for years, Buddy has scoured antique fairs and auctions for rare and interesting collectibles ranging from automobilia to stained glass. Buddy and his son, Gary, have both previously joined me

bottle digging with mixed results; however, we had never gone privy digging. The moment I saw Buddy and Gary at the party, I told them about the site Phil and I had stumbled upon and our friendly warning from Baltimore finest – Buddy immediately said he would try to get us into the site since he had worked for the general contractor on a regular basis for over a decade! And two weeks to the day later, Buddy picked me up at 5:30 in the morning to dig on the construction site.

Reaching the construction site in downtown Baltimore, we were joined by Phil and Dodd Delph. Even at that early hour, we were greeted by a cigar-smoking, Harley-Davidson shirt clad project manager. He immediately informed us that the spot we wanted to dig was off limits because it was now behind a retaining wall and that the remainder of the area we were eagerly sizing up had been back-filled almost five feet. We attempted to probe in one area that was partially excavated and found no signs of outhouses. Pulling out my maps, which I had obtained from the Library of Congress the previous day, I surmised that the row of outhouses we wanted had been already excavated and back-filled with rubble. Frankly, we were out of luck with nothing to do for the rest of the day.

Phil and I consulted – since both Buddy and Dodd were novices at privy digging and digging in Baltimore – on what to do next. Were we going to call it a day (really, an early morning) or were we going to try our poor luck elsewhere in Baltimore? Eventually, we both recalled a bricklined pit in West Baltimore that was rumored to have been dug 5 years ago to a depth of ten feet without being completed. Apparently, the diggers who tackled the hole were overwhelmed by the pit's size and depth as it was almost 6 feet across and when they hit ten feet were still finding predominantly machined-made bottles; plus, the hole probed out at least another six feet. This privy dig was abandoned by those bottlediggers with the thought they might return when they got the proper tools, added a few more members to their digging crew, and there was nothing else to dig. Phil and I not only figured any claims of proprietorship had long since expired but, more importantly, rapidly approaching urban renewal and construction in that section of West Baltimore threatened to obliterate any chance of this pit being excavated to the bottom. We approached Dodd and Buddy with the choice of digging this hole or trying to line up a fresh one somewhere unknown. We promised no good bottles just the opportunity to dig a hole that we knew had some bottles. Without hesitation, they said chose the previously dug pit. I recall one of them supporting their decision by suggesting it must be easier to dig a previously filled pit than a new one . . . little did the rookies know.

In West Baltimore, it appears that in the areas developed after 1860 or so, the builders started constructing round, deep brick privies as opposed to shorter wood-lined boxes, hog barrels, shallow oval or square brickliners.

Often times in these “newer” neighborhoods (i.e., built in the 1860s), the lots will have only a deep, round brickliner and no other privies. Past practice by local bottlediggers was to see if the artifacts get older within the first six to nine feet of a large brickliner and then abandon the hole if there were no signs of older relics or if the cast-iron stack for the toilet remained in the hole. Another deterrent is that to dig deeper is back-breaking work, special equipment is needed (e.g., tripods, chains or rope, block and tackle, buckets, and ladders), and a larger crew of diggers is necessary.

The house we were digging behind dated from the late 1850s which suggested there was the possibility of digging some older bottles from the brickliner if it had not been completely dipped at some point in the past. Recently, I read that Baltimore had a strong privy dipper’s union that prevented the wholesale replacement of privies with a sewage system until the 20th Century unlike virtually all the other major cities on the Eastern Seaboard from Charleston to Boston. Apparently, the Great Baltimore Fire of 1904 (see <http://www.mdch.org/fire/>) prompted the modernization of the City’s sewer system. The completion of this overhaul did not occur until well past World War I for many of the poorer neighborhoods in Baltimore. It was for this reason, we were not surprised to see dozens of broken machine-made bottles as we started to re-dig the outhouse.

Two hours later, our efforts were not impressive because the fill used by the previous diggers was not all dirt but rather a mix of anything they could get their hands upon to fill this massive hole. Carpets, plastic bottles, an air conditioning unit, roofing materials, and gobs of other modern trash made for slow digging. It was not until after noon that we finally hit a pocket of undisturbed and not previously dug privy dirt; to our dismay, this contained a couple of broken machine-made Bauerschmidts. Thus, we were almost 10 feet deep in an outhouse and yet we were still finding bottles that dated from just prior to Prohibition. Buddy looked like he was about to pass out from heat exhaustion and Dodd was stunned that after our many hours of efforts the bottles were not any older than in your typical farm dump.

At that point, Phil and I realized that an experienced digger was required in the hole because we needed to move dirt at a faster pace otherwise we were going to be digging our pit well into the dark when the neighborhood’s open air drug market went into full swing. Being in the midst of strung-out addicts and trigger-finger dealers was not somewhere we desired to be located; into the hole I went for the next 5 hours. About twenty minutes later, the last of the back-filled debris was removed from the privy and we were into fresh, undug material. Immediately out of this layer was a neat machine made Gin-Gera soda embossed with image of a bear holding a tray of drinks. Thereafter, the bottles kept appearing and as we dug out the next 10 feet of the hole, we produced about a bucket of bottles for every half a foot of depth in the outhouse.

The machine made crown top beers and sodas soon gave way to blown crown top beers and then we made the transition to blob and Baltimore loop steamers and beers. There was an excellent variety of blob and loop top bottles along with embossed medicines, strap-sided flasks, local pharmacy bottles, and inks. As the bottles continued to pour out of the ground we slowly went back into the early 1890s. We pulled out a couple of neat variants of blob beers by Kuszmaul with embossed ram’s and goat’s heads, some



fancy Eigenbrot Adonis blob beers, and even some plain but rare Columbia and Berger blob top beers. A Moffett embossed flask graced our pile of intact bottles, as did a handful of J.C. Hummer, Posner and Gilbert pharmaceuticals. At that point, I patted the hole and heard





a hollow sound indicating that there was still a few feet left. Phil and I started commenting that it would be great to break into the 1880s and beyond, perhaps even into the pottiled bottle era. But it was not to be, as the bottom two feet consisted of the same assemblage of bottles and pottery, perhaps from the late 1880s yet more likely from the early 1890s, as evidenced by the turtle, cylindrical and cone inks we extracted. After flipping the last bit of dirt in the bottom of the privy, in my delirious and physically-drained state my first inclination was to climb out of the 20 feet out of the hole but soon wised up and requested the chain ladder to extract myself from the pit.



totaling almost 40 bottles, a dozen local pharmacy bottles, another dozen and a half medicines such as Jaynes; Expectorant, Radway, Rubifoam for the Teeth, Panopeton, Armour & Co. Digestive, Piso for Consumption, Insectine. There were also perfumes, fruit jars, Bromo Seltzers and the dozens of cool little trinkets one finds in outhouse ranging from golf ball-size glazed clay marbles to intact statutes and pitchers. By the time we filled the hole, packed the trucks, and changed for our ride home, darkness was had just arrived. Although we all wished the pit had gone into an older time period (especially Phil and me), there was no doubt in any of our minds that we had made the right choice to finish this outhouse. The novice privy diggers, Buddy and Dodd, were evidently exhausted beyond belief but also exhilarated with their part in this 20 foot privy dig. We had dug for almost 14 hours, found hundreds of blown bottles, and shared in a Baltimore bottle digging adventure – this is about as good as it gets in Baltimore.



All told, our bottle count was over a hundred even when we removed the common machine-made crown top beers. There were 22 different blob or loop beers and sodas



Upcoming Area Bottle Shows



Editor's Note: We need to choose a date for our club picnic, to be held this fall or late summer. We will attempt to find a date that does not conflict with any shows listed here.

JUNE 27 – CHEVERLY, MARYLAND

The Potomac Bottle Collectors Annual Show & Sale (Sunday 9 AM to 3 PM) at the

American Legion Post 108, 3608 Legion Drive, Cheverly, MD 20785. Info: **JIM SEARS** 4211 N. 2nd Rd., Apt. 1, Arlington, VA 22203. PH: (703) 243-2409, email: searsjim@usa.net; **LEE SHIPMAN** PH: (301) 229-2005, email: plannerlee@earthlink.net; **ANDY GOLDFRANK** PH: (202) 258-2389 email: amg_sticky@yahoo.com

JULY 17-18 – ADAMSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

Shupp's Grove 3rd Annual Bottle Festival (6 AM – dark Sat. & Sun.) at Shupp's Grove in Adamstown, Pennsylvania. Info: **STEVE GUION**, PH: (717) 560-9480 or **JERE HAMBLETON**, PH: (717) 393-5175, email: affinityinsurance@jazzd.com

AUGUST 14 & 15 MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

Federation of Historical Bottle Collectors Expo 2004, Sat. 9 AM to 4 PM & Sun. 9 AM to 3 PM, Early buyers Fri. 2 PM), at the Memphis Cook Convention Center, 255 N. Main St., Memphis, TN. Info: **GENE BRADBERRY**, PO Box 341062, Memphis, TN. 38184, PH: (901) 372-8428, email: expo2004@midsouth.rr.com

AUGUST 22 MOOREFIELD, WEST VIRGINIA

Potomac Highlands Antique Bottle & Glass Collectors Club 6th Annual Show & Sale, (9 AM to 3 PM), at the Moorefield Fire Co. Auxilliary Building, Jefferson St, Moorefield, WV. Info: **RODNEY FUNKHOUSER**, Rt. 1, Box 132, Baker, WV 26801, PH: (304) 897-6910, email: rfmfg@hardynet.com

SEPTEMBER 12 LEWES, DELAWARE

Belmarva Antique Bottle Club 12th Annual Show & Sale, (9 AM to 3 PM), at the Cape Henlopen High School, Lewes, DE. Info: **PETER BEAMAN**, PH: (302) 684-5055, email: oldngnu@siteone.net or **FERD MEYER**, PH: (302) 945-7072, email: jfmeyer4@cs.com

SEPTEMBER 19 WINCHESTER, VIRGINIA

The Apple Valley Bottle Collectors Club 30th Annual Show & Sale, (9 AM to 3 PM, early buyers 7:30 AM), at the Hampton Inn, 1204 Berryville Ave., (Off I-81, Exit 315), Winchester, VA. Info: **GINNY BOWERS**, 681 Coal Mine Rd., Strasburg, VA 22657. PH: (540) 465-3952.

SEPTEMBER 19 BRICK, NEW JERSEY

Jersey Shore Bottle Club 32nd Annual Show & Sale, (9 AM to 2 PM), at the Brick Elks, 2491 Hooper Ave., Brick, NJ. Info: **RICHARD PEAL**, 720 Eastern Lane, Brick, NJ 08723, PH: (732) 267-2528, email: boxcar1@worldnet.att.net

SEPTEMBER 26 HAMMONTON, NEW JERSEY

South Jersey's Antique Bottle and Glass Club, 'Batsto Village' Show & Sale, (9 AM to 4 PM), at the Batsto Village, Rt. 542, Batsto, NJ. Info: **PAUL A. DeLGUERCIO**, 548 Spring Road, Hammonton, NJ 08037, PH: (609) 567-4972, email: paulhavoc@msn.com

OCTOBER 2 RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

Richmond Area Bottle Collectors Annual Show & Sale, (9 AM to 3 PM early buyers 7:30 AM), at the Showplace Annex, 3002 Mechanicsville Turnpike, Richmond, VA. Info: **ED FAULKNER**, 4718 Kyleo Lane, Moseley, VA 23120, PH: (804) 739-2951, email: faulkner@antiquebottles.com or **MARVIN CROKER**, PH: (804) 275-1101, email: marvincroker@comcast.net

OCTOBER 10 BEDFORD, PENNSYLVANIA

Bedford County Antique Bottle Club 27th Annual Antiques and Bottle Show & Sale. (9 AM to 1 PM, early buyers 7 AM). at the Bedford County Fairgrounds, 4-H Building, Bedford, PA. Info: **LEO McKENZIE**, PH: (814) 623-8019 or **CHARLES HAZLETT**, PH: (814) 695-0128

NOVEMBER 7 ELKTON, MARYLAND

Tri-State Bottle Collectors and Diggers Club 32nd Annual Show & Sale, (9 AM to 3 PM), at the Singerly Fire all, Routes 279 & 213, Elkton, MD. Info: **DAVE BROWN**, PH: (302) 738-9960.

NOVEMBER 21 GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

3rd annual Greensboro Antique Bottle, Insulator & Collectibles Show & Sale (9 AM to 3 PM early buyers 7:30 AM), at the Farmer's Curb Market, 501 Yanceyville St, Greensboro, NC. Info: **Reggie Lynch**, PO Box 13736, Durham, NC 27709. PH: (919) 789-4545, or **David Jackson** PH: (336) 288-2677. Web: www.antiquebottles.com/greensboro