

# The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

## August-September 2005

In this issue:

Baltimore Whiskey – Super-Sized by Jack Sullivan.....	page 2
Potential Dig Site in Alexandria by Richard Lilienthal.....	page 5
Upcoming Area Bottle Shows.....	page 6
Some Views from Our Show.....	page 7



Peter Rydquist offers bottles at our June 26 Show

## Picnic September 24<sup>th</sup>

**(Takes the place of our regular September meeting)**

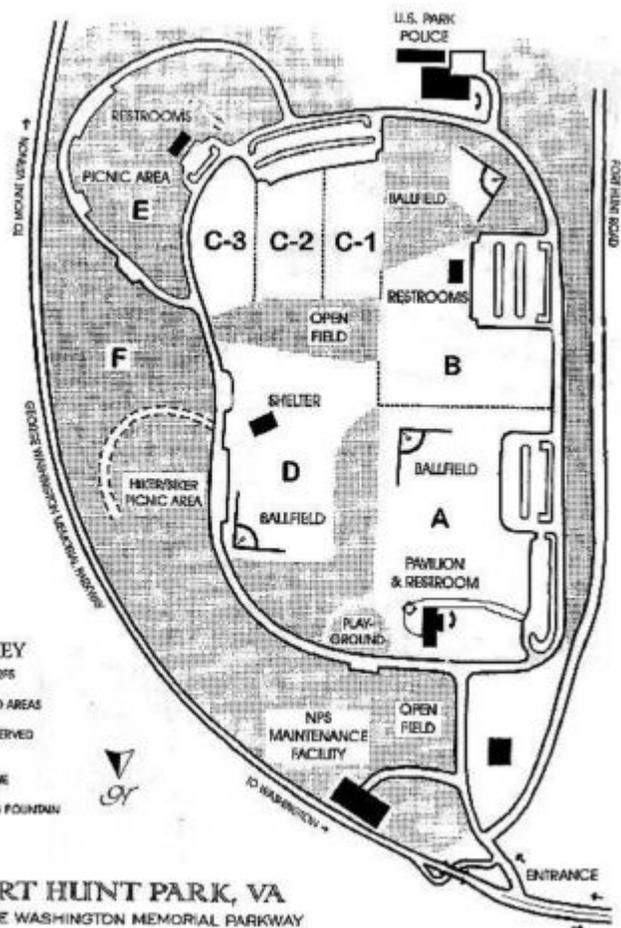
Please join us at 1 PM on Saturday, September 24<sup>th</sup> for our club picnic at Fort Hunt Park in Alexandria, Virginia. The club will provide hamburgers, hotdogs, and soft drinks. Members are encouraged to bring a dish to pass, but everyone is welcome regardless of whether you have food to contribute. We would enjoy seeing any visitors and guests who wish to join us. In order to help us plan how much food to bring, we would appreciate if those planning to attend would email Al Miller at [ca\\_drmln@yahoo.com](mailto:ca_drmln@yahoo.com). Please let us know how many people you plan to bring and whether you prefer hotdogs, hamburgers, or have other suggestions for the grill. Those without email can contact Lee Shipman at (301) 229-2005. Lee is planning to bring the grill, but this is a difficult chore for her. If someone else can bring a grill, please let Lee know by phone or by emailing her at [plannerlee@earthlink.net](mailto:plannerlee@earthlink.net). Richard Lilienthal notes that he owns a grill but not a truck for transporting it.

In the past we have had difficulty finding one another at Fort Hunt Park. This time we will meet promptly at 1 PM in the picnic area marked E on the map at right. Please note that this map is a bit unusual in that north is at the bottom.

We do want to see bottles at the picnic. Members are particularly encouraged to bring along summer finds for show & tell.

### Directions

Fort Hunt Park is located 5 miles south of Old Town Alexandria along the George Washington Memorial Parkway (parts of which are also called Mount Vernon Highway and Washington Street) in Fairfax County, Virginia. To reach this road from Washington, DC, cross the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge south toward Virginia, and take the exit for Mount Vernon/National Airport. To reach it from the Beltway in Maryland, take the very first exit after the Wilson Bridge. To reach it from the Beltway in Virginia take exit 1 North, go to the first traffic light and take a right on Franklin Street; go about 3 blocks and take a right on South Washington Street.



Meetings: 8:00 PM on the last Tuesday of each month in the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer, 6201 Dunrobbin Dr., Bethesda, MD 20816.  
President: Andy Goldfrank Vice President: Al Miller Secretary: Jim Sears Treasurer: Lee Shipman  
Pontil: Jim Sears (email: [searsjim@usa.net](mailto:searsjim@usa.net), PH: 703/243-2409) & Andy Goldfrank (email: [amg\\_sticky@yahoo.com](mailto:amg_sticky@yahoo.com), PH: 202/588-0543)  
Web Site: [www.potomacbottlecollectors.org](http://www.potomacbottlecollectors.org) Maintained by Peter Rydquist: [pehraug@aol.com](mailto:pehraug@aol.com)

## Baltimore Whiskey – Super-Sized

By Jack Sullivan  
Special to the *Potomac Pontil*

“Do you want to super-size your order?” None of us escapes being asked that fast food question in the new Millennium. In the whiskey trade, however, super-sizing was the norm in the 19th and even into the 20th Century.

The practice began in the 18th Century when whiskey was dispensed by merchants to customers who brought their own containers, usually jugs, to be filled. In those days bigger was better. It meant fewer trips to the store for replenishment. So whiskey often was taken away in one, two, three and more gallon jugs. If it could be lifted when full, that was all that counted.

In the 19th Century the practice of bringing one’s own jug faded as merchants began putting their liquors in their own containers, usually with their name attached and sometimes with a statement of ownership so that the customer was obliged to bring it back for a refill. These jugs also tended to be quite large. In the latter part of the 1800s, however, the merchandising of whiskey changed. Glass bottles began to replace stoneware jugs. Containers got smaller. Customers gravitated to quarts and even smaller sizes.

Some distillers and whiskey distributors, however, continued to sell their products in “super-sized” quantities. Among them were two Baltimore outfits – The Triaca Company and Samuel Bass.

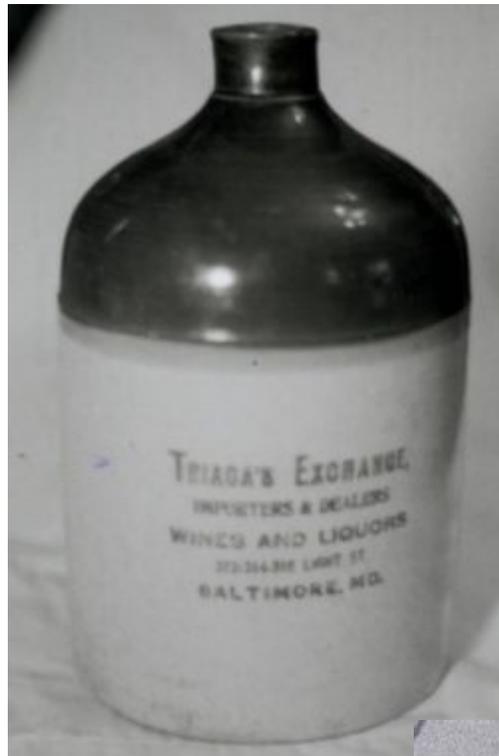
The name Triaca first appears in Baltimore directories in 1882 under the name of its founder, Marcello Triaca. At that point the company was identified as a wine and liquor distributor, located at 98 Light St. Wharf and 1 Camden. By 1890 the firm address had changed to 300 Light Street and 5 W. Camden. In 1898, Marcello’s name had been dropped and the firm became Triaca’s Exchange, located at 312-318 Light Street. Another name change occurred in 1906 when it became the Triaca Company. About 1909 the firm moved to the southwest corner of Pratt and Light Sts. All these locations were in the vicinity of the Baltimore wharves where steamboats regularly plied up and down the Chesapeake Bay and beyond, carrying passengers and consumer goods, whiskey included.

Self-described as “importers and dealer,” in liquors and wine, the Triaca Company had a strong advertising presence and at least a regional and even a national market for its multitude of brands. They included Old Triaca Club Whiskey, Special Reserve

Celebrated Rye, Old Shoreman, Old Pardex, and Old Nestor. Gin brands were Old Orchard and Tipperary Dry.

Triaca consistently featured its whiskey super-sized. Gallon jugs were the norm. Shown here are a beehive gallon jug, 10 and 1/2 inches high, (Fig. 1) and a shoulder jug of about the same size. (Fig. 2). Both are from Triaca’s Exchange, which dates them as originating between 1898 and 1906. Triaca is still super-sizing into the 20th Century, as evidenced by the later Triaca Company jug (Fig. 3) that once again is a gallon.

**Triaca gallon jugs: Figure 1 at top, Figure 2 bottom left, Figure 3 bottom right**

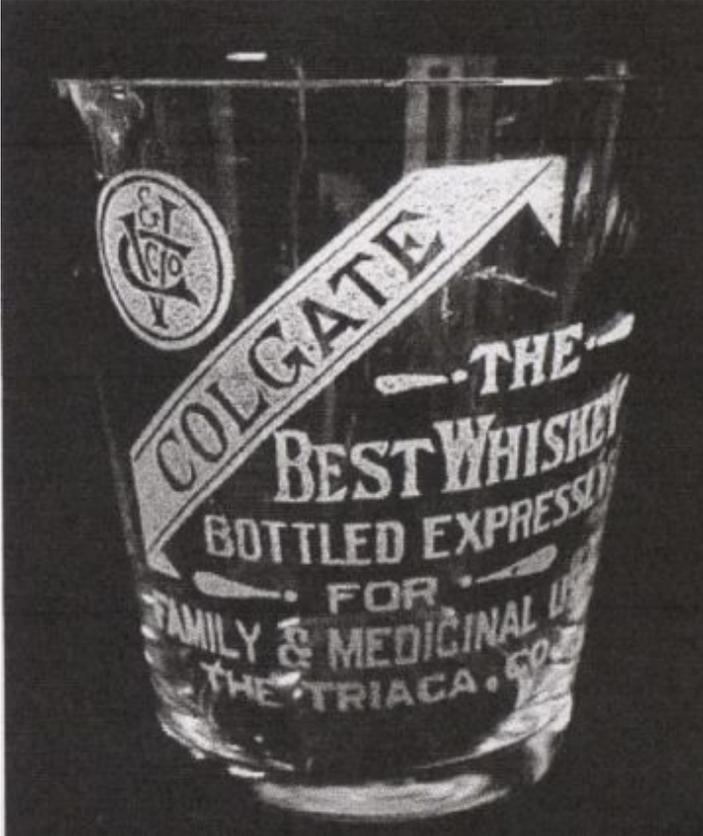


Even as late as the 1915, when most dealers were putting their liquors into quart glass bottles, Triaca continued to advertise its brands in large stoneware containers. Shown here (Fig. 4) are three of Baltimore Triaca’s gallon (or more) jugs from an advertisement of that year. It touts Old Shoreman, Special Reserve Rye, and Old Pardex. Some Baltimore collectors, however, question whether



these jugs actually existed outside of the ads since no matching actual ceramics have been found. But who knows what might turn up in some future dig?

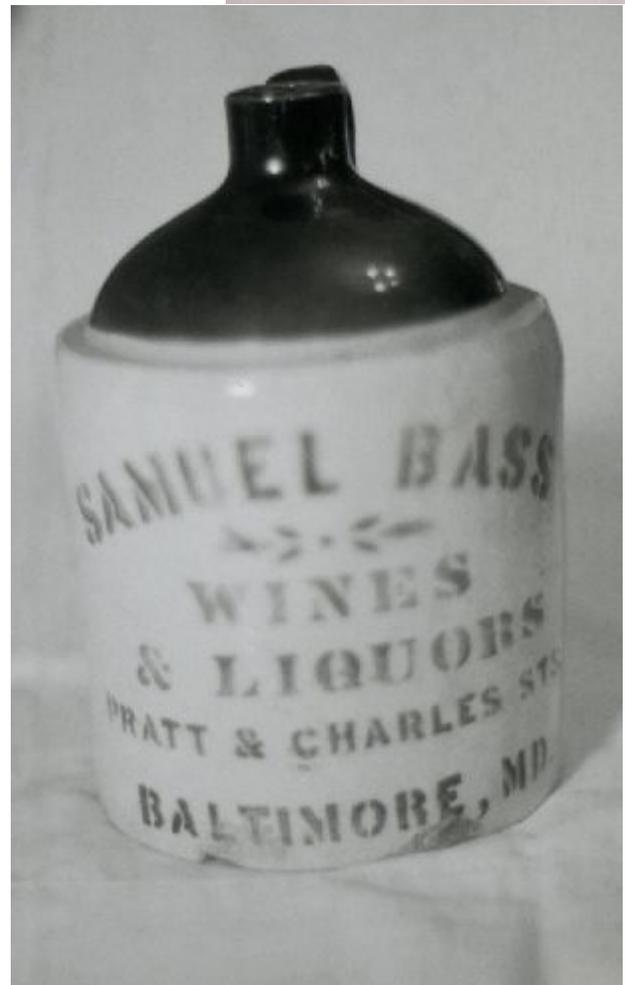
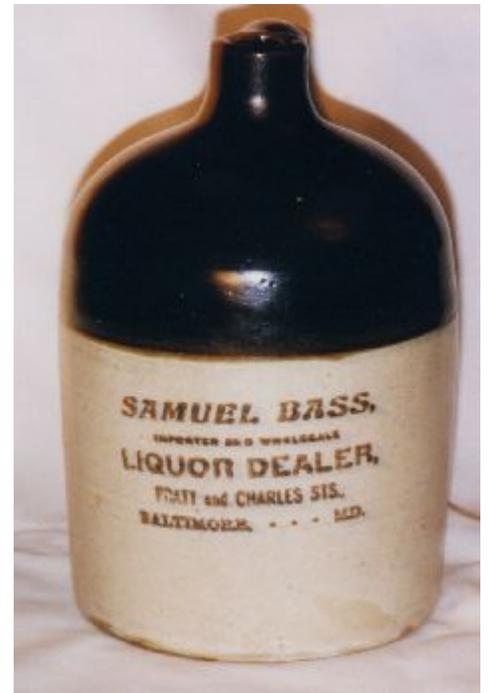
Triaca Company had a close relationship with another Maryland whiskey distributor, Ciotti & Vincenti Co., and often advertised its products along with its own. Among these were Old Troy Maryland Rye and Colgate brand, which Ciotti & Vincenti registered in 1907. A shot glass (Fig. 5) ties them together. The glass touts Colgate as the “best whiskey bottled expressly for family & medicinal use.” It has the C&V monogram in the upper left of the glass and “The Triaca Company” on the bottom.

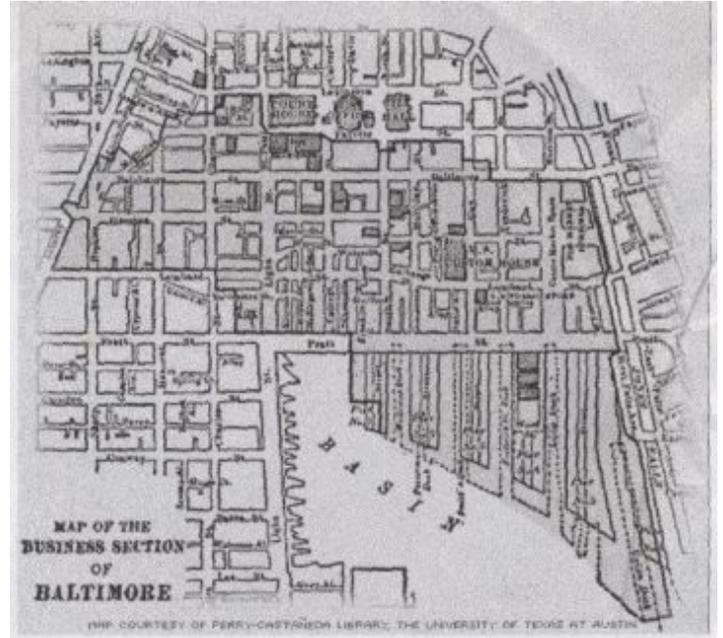
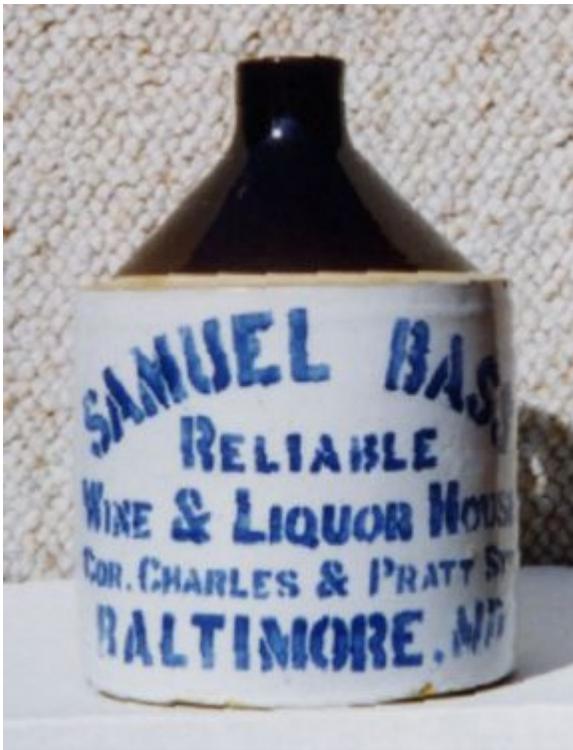


The shot glass may provide a slim clue as to where Triaca obtained its whiskey stocks for jugging and distribution. Colgate also was a brand name used by the Federal Distilling Company of Colgate, a Baltimore-area community. That distiller may have been at least one source for the spirituous liquids being purveyed by Triaca. Since Baltimore boasted many distillers, however, Triaca probably had little difficulty getting the raw supplies for its brands.

Compared to the name-changing, constantly moving, nationally advertising Triaca Co., another Baltimore whiskey super-sizer seems positively dull. That was Samuel Bass, self-described as an “importer and wholesale” liquor dealer. This outfit appears to have been content to make its market chiefly in Baltimore. The business strategy apparently worked. The Bass firm shows up first in city directories in 1894. Its address in that year was 2 W. Pratt St. and it remained under the same name and at that address for the next quarter century.

Sam Bass resembled Triaca in the preference for putting his whiskey into large jugs. The firm used a variety of containers with a range of labels. Shown here are three of his whiskeys (Figs. 6, 7, 8), tending toward the “large economy” gallon size. Note that the last jug touts the firm as “reliable.” Given its highly stable history, Samuel Bass does not seem to have been bragging.





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Both Triaca and Bass avoided one of the great disasters to have befallen the Baltimore whiskey trade – the Great Fire of 1904. From February 6 to 8 of that year, a major conflagration in the downtown and wharf area claimed 140 acres, more than 70 blocks. Destroyed were 1,526 buildings. More than 2,500 business were burned out. The guru of Baltimore whiskey, Jim Bready, notes that among them were many of the city’s liquor wholesalers and distributors. They had tended to cluster together, often side by side, along S. Gay Street, Exchange Place (300-400 block of Lombard) and Pratt St. Many of their offices, liquid inventories, and records went up in flames. Bready estimates that 48 of some 75 Baltimore wholesalers were burned out.

Material for this article comes from a variety of sources, including Baltimore city directories. A key source was Jim Bready’s article entitled “Maryland Rye: A Whiskey the Nation Long Fancied – But Now Has Let Vanish,” which appeared in the Winter 1990 issue of the *Maryland Historical Magazine*. The photos in Fig. 5 and 8 were courtesy of Robin Preston and Karen Gray, respectively.

Thus, it is common in Baltimore city directories to see major changes in locations for whiskey dealers in 1904 and 1905. Yet both Samuel Bass and the Triaca Company continued unabated at their addresses after the fire, although the fire may have been a close call for Triaca. A map of downtown Baltimore (Fig. 9), with the fire area shaded, reveals that while everything north and east of Pratt and Light burned, businesses like Triaca that were south and west on Light survived. Bass’s Pratt St. address also was outside the fire zone.



Neither firm, however, could avoid the disaster that Prohibition wrought on the whiskey industry in Baltimore and elsewhere. Both went out of business in 1919, never to reopen their doors. Whiskey super-sizing also disappeared with Prohibition. The largest container liquor is sold in today is the half-liter. Unless, of course, one ventures into the hills for a jug of moonshine.

Jack Sullivan created this very unusual display of hillbilly ashtrays for our show in June. It provided a very interesting follow-up to the hillbilly jugs that Jack displayed in 2004.

## Potential Dig Site in Alexandria

By Richard Lilienthal

For the past several months, I've been watching two sites along Rt 1 South (N. Henry St) in Alexandria VA. The structures on the sites were being demolished and I waited to see if the developers would be excavating for basements, possibly exposing earth suitable for digging bottles. After the ground was leveled and fenced in, nothing happened for months. Heavy equipment appeared at one site, along with a sales office touting condominiums. But weeks passed and the equipment stood idle. Eventually, earth mounds appeared, evidence that excavation had begun. But the mounds didn't grow, as they would if the whole city-block area was being excavated. The developer put an impressive fence around the construction site – complete with covering to make it difficult to even see through it. However, one Sunday I found the construction entrance open. The heavy equipment had been used to remove about a foot of earth from the entire surface and to excavate the basement of what appeared to be a Colonial-era structure. On subsequent days I found archeologists working the site. You can identify archeologists by their use of trowels instead of shovels, as well as their detailed note taking and screening of excavated soil.

To learn more, I visited the Alexandria Archeology office located in the Torpedo Factory in Old Town Alexandria. The people there knew nothing about the site in question, not even that their own archeologists and volunteers were working it. I did find an article in a local newspaper that shed some light on the history of the property. In 1799, Alexandria merchant John Potts bought the land and built a towering mansion. In 1803, Potts sold the mansion to Jonathan Swift, another merchant. In 1834, Thomsen Mason, a former Alexandria mayor and the grandson of George Mason, moved into the mansion with his wife, four children, and two slaves. The excavation discovered a brick burial vault built by Mason in 1839. Historians believe that Mason's body was moved by William Smoot, a lumber merchant who moved in after the Civil War, but archeologists haven't verified this. In 1927, a tornado destroyed the house. In more recent times, a series of businesses occupied the land.

Photo 1 shows the major excavation, i.e., the mansion. Note the small but deeper square excavations – typical of archeologists. What is the circular object on the ground – a well?



Photos 2 & 3, taken in the major excavation, show the tops of two black glass bottles and a piece of wrought iron grate, possibly from a fire place.



Photos 4, 5, & 6 show interesting remnants located on the surface of the earth mound closest to the main house. The industrial-sized insulator (Photo 6) is there because a power substation located on one corner of the lot is being demolished. The other mounds, which contain mostly surface earth, show no interesting artifacts.





Photos 7 & 8 show other brick ruins under investigation. Again, note the archeologists' smaller square excavation in photo 8.



Photo 9 shows an interesting brick structure separate from the others. The area under the dome is divided in half by a brick wall. Is this a cistern (hot and cold, vanilla and chocolate)?



## Upcoming Area Bottle Shows

### September 17-21 – Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

All-Dairy Antiques & Collectibles 8th Annual Show & Sale, (Sat. 9 AM to 5 PM, Sun. 10 AM to 5 PM, Mon, Tus, & Wed. 8 AM to 4 PM), at the Farm Show Complex, 2300 North Cameron St., Harrisburg, PA. Info: **Charles A. Itle**, PH: (717) 423-6789 or **Lolly Leshner**, PH: (717) 787-2905.

### September 18 – Winchester, Virginia

The Apple Valley Bottle Collectors Club, Inc.'s 32nd Annual Show (Sun. 9 AM - 3 PM, \$3; Early Buyers, 7:30 AM, \$10; Seniors free. No smoking.) at the Hampton Inn, 1204 Berryville Ave. (Off I-81, Exit 315), Winchester, Virginia. Info: **Ginny Bowers**, 681 Coal Mine Rd., Strausburg, VA 22657; PH: (540) 465-3952.

## Upcoming Area Bottle Shows (continued)

### September 24 – Raleigh, North Carolina

Southeast Bottle Club's Bottle Festival (Sat. 8 AM – 3 PM) at the North Carolina State Fairgrounds, Raleigh, North Carolina. Info: **Reggie Lynch**, P. O. Box 13736, Durham, NC 27709, PH: (919) 789-4545, E-mail: [lynch@antiquebottles.com](mailto:lynch@antiquebottles.com), Website: [www.antiquebottles.com/raleighfestival/](http://www.antiquebottles.com/raleighfestival/).

### September 25 – Hammonton, New Jersey

South Jersey Antique Bottle and Glass Club Annual Glass & Bottle Show (9 AM to 4 PM) at Historic Batsto Village on Route 542 in Wharton State Forest. Info: Paul A. DelGuerico, PH: (609)567-4972.

### October 1 – Richmond, Virginia

The Richmond Area Bottle Collectors 34th Annual Show & Sale, (9 AM to 3 PM, early buyers 7:30 AM), at the Showplace Annex, 2003 Mechanicsville Turnpike, Richmond, VA. Info: **Ed Faulkner**, PH: (804) 739-2951, email: [faulkner@antiquebottles.com](mailto:faulkner@antiquebottles.com) or **Marvin Croker**, 4718 Twila Lane, Richmond, VA 23234, PH: (804) 275-1101.

### October 8 – Allentown, Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania Antique Bottle, Breweriana & Advertising 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Show & Sale (Sat. 9:30 AM – 2:30 {M, early admission 8 AM) at the Merchants Square Antique Mall, 12<sup>th</sup> & Vultee St., Allentown, Pennsylvania. Info: **Mark Zeppenfelt**, 4881 Cypress St., Wescosville, PA 18106, PH: (610) 391-0271, Email: [uuubuy@rcn.com](mailto:uuubuy@rcn.com).

### October 9 – Bedford, Pennsylvania

Bedford County Antique Bottle Club 28th Annual Show & Sale, (9 AM to 1 PM, early buyers 7 AM), at the Bedford County Fairgrounds, 4H Building, Bedford, PA. Info: **Leo McKenzie**, PH: (814) 623-8019 or **Charles Hazlett**, PH: (814) 695-0128.

### November 6 – Elkton, Maryland

Tri-State Bottle Collectors and Diggers Club 33rd Annual Show & Sale, (9 AM to 3 PM), at the Singerly Fire Hall, Routes 279 & 213 (I-95 exit 109A), Elkton, MD. Info: **Dave Brown**, PH: (302) 738-9960.

### November 13 – Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Pittsburgh Antique Bottle Club's Annual Show & Sale (Sun. 9 AM – 2 PM, early admission 7 AM) at the Ice Garden, Route 51 North (I-70 exit 46B), Rostraver Twp., Pennsylvania. Info: **Bob DeCroo**, 694 Fayette City Rd., Fayette City, Pennsylvania 15438, PH: (724) 326-8741 or **Jay Hawkins**, 1280 Mt. Pleasant Rd., West Newton, PA 15089, PH: (724) 872-6013.

### November 20 – Greensboro, North Carolina

The 4th Annual Greensboro Antique Bottle, Insulator & Collectibles Show & Sale (Sun. 9 AM - 3 PM, Adm. \$1; Dealer setup 6-9 AM, early buyers 7:30 AM) at the Farmer's' Curb Market, 501 Yanceyville St., Greensboro, North Carolina. Info: **Reggie Lynch**, P.O. Box 13736, Durham, NC 27709; PH: (919) 789-4545; Website: [www.antiquebottles.com/greensboro](http://www.antiquebottles.com/greensboro).

### November 27 – Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Forks of the Delaware Bottle Collectors Association's 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Show & Sale (Sun. 9 AM – 3 PM, early admission 7:30 AM) at Bethlehem Catholic High School, Madison & Dewberry Ave., Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Info: **Bill Hegedus**, 20 Cambridge Pl., Catasaqua, PA 18032, PH: (610) 264-5945.

## Some Views from Our Show

Thank you to everyone who helped make our June 23<sup>rd</sup> show a success. The show photos in this newsletter come from Matt Knapp and are also available on his web site:

<http://www.mattsoldhouse.com/MC/bottles/BottleClub/2005Show/PBC2005.htm>



We very much appreciate the effort of Joan Goldfrank and her family in collecting admissions and selling our new club bottle book.



Andy Goldfrank managed to appraise bottles and help put up signs for the show as well as manning a sales table. Andy also reserved this convenient location for our show. Andy reports that the American Legion Post would be happy to have us back again next year. Start planning for June 25, 2006.



Mike Fasano, who is holding up a bag of bottles in the picture above, created the colorful display of barber bottles in the photo below.



Steve Charing (at left in photo above) and Bob Ford have been great supporters of our show as well as working very hard on the Baltimore show. Steve found Mike's display very inspiring in his ongoing effort to grow hair.

Al Miller's new son Jason and wife Stephanie (in picture at right, taken June 24th) were not really at our show. Congratulations to Al, but we missed you at the show.



Richard Lilienthal tries unsuccessfully to avoid looking at the fruit jars on Roland Longerbeam's table. Despite his inexplicable aversion to jars, Richard has proven very able at describing other types of glass. He deserves most of the credit for our club's new book.



Dodd Delph appears to be showing Lee Shipman the door, but he actually wanted all the customers he could get. Lee has done much of the work organizing our show for many years. She is already planning for next year's show with all eight-foot tables.

