

The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

December 2005

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No Meeting in December

Happy holidays to all. We will see you in the new year.

Future Meetings

Our January 31 meeting will feature our contest for best items collected during 2005. Unless you have just joined the club during the last few months, annual dues are due of \$10 per individual or family are due at the January meeting. Dues can also be mailed to the Potomac Bottle Collectors, care of Jim Sears, 4211 N. 2nd Rd., Apt. 1, Arlington, VA 22203. The February 28 meeting will start promptly at 7:30 for our annual banquet.

Jugs such as this one advertised that whiskey was pure. Jack Sullivan's article beginning on page 2 explores the controversy about the meaning of purity.

Announcements

We congratulate our members who have recently had children.



Samantha Elsa Goldfrank was born November 26th. Although her mother is holding her in the photo on the left, her father also has his hands full. If anyone would be willing to take over as president of our club, they should let Andy Goldfrank or Jim Sears know.

Patrick Thomas Fasano was born on October 29th and is shown in Halloween garb in the photo at right. Additional photos are on the web at www.xecu.net/mikee. Patrick's father Mike is a past president of our club.

Washington Power Brokers & the Meaning of “Whiskey”

by Jack Sullivan
Special to the *Potomac Pontil*

We whose lives revolve around Washington, D.C., are acutely aware that national policy-making is a decidedly messy business. But sometimes we forget that this is not a new phenomenon. Recounted here is a century-old incident – how “whiskey” came to be defined. It reminds us that power brokering has been going on in the Nation’s Capital for a very long time. The story features fiercely contending lobbyists, Congressional bombast, protracted hearings, controversial decisions, the intervention of a President, and more than a hint of a tragic ending.

Standard accounts of the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906 (the Centennial is upon us) discuss at length the causes and effects of the law in terms of adulterated foods and harmful patent medicines. Collectors of cures and bitters bottles are well aware of the impact of that law on their fields of interest. Seldom, however, is attention paid to the important decision about the definition of whiskey in this first-ever consumer protection legislation.

The story begins in the late 1800s when the United States had virtually no laws regulating the safety of meat, fish, vegetables or beverages bound for the country’s dinner table. Nor was there any way to regulate the outrageous claims made for patent medicines and other nostrums of the times. Bad food and phony drugs were taking a toll on the Nation’s health. The concern that our country needed a “pure food law” had been around for decades. By 1902 some 190 versions of a bill had been introduced into Congress. But none had ever come to a vote on the House or Senate floor, having effectively been killed in committee at the behest of the meat lobby and other special interests.

With the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, however, the concept of the government protecting the people against adulterated and harmful food and drugs got a strong boost. In his message to Congress of 1905 the “Rough Rider” President exhorted lawmakers to act promptly and a bill was introduced once again. This time pressure groups like the American Medical Association, women’s clubs and other consumer organizations turned up the heat. Articles in popular magazines had exposed unsanitary conditions existing in the nation’s slaughterhouses and the harmful substances often found in over-the-counter cures.

Although many in the food and beverage business opposed the legislation, major distillers supported Roosevelt’s initiative strongly. Key among them was Colonel Edmund H. Taylor, Jr., whose “Old Taylor” brand is still an American favorite. Colonel Taylor had considerable support from his distilling colleagues who constantly faced competition from inferior products or from unscrupulous distributors who refilled bottles of their good liquor with adulterated substitutes.



E. H. Taylor, Jr.
Originator of
OLD TAYLOR



Above are front and back views of E. H. Taylor, Jr.’s “OLD TAYLOR” Whiskey jug.

Another part of the whiskey trade, however, was less enthusiastic. Those were the “rectifiers,” the folks who took raw spirits out of the backyard stills and by virtue of adding other whiskeys and sometimes ingredients like turpentine, came up with presumably more palatable, if sometimes poisonous, products. During a debate on the subject, one Kentucky congressman who espoused the distillers’ cause held up a quart of rectified alcohol on the House Floor and told his colleagues: “It will eat the intestines out of a coyote. It will make a howling dervish out of an anchorite. It will make a rabbit spit in a bulldog’s face,... and, when it gets into a man, it is pure hell.”

Supported by this kind of hyperbole by one of their friendly legislators, American distillers were able to convince responsible officials in Roosevelt’s administration that all rectified or blended whiskeys must be prominently labeled as “imitation” whiskey. Only the straight variety rightly could be merchandised as whiskey. Manufacturers of straight whiskeys traditionally had looked down on rectifiers and their blends. In fact they tended to disparage any kind of blended product, even if it were made legitimately. The very fact of blending was to them sufficient evidence of a lack of purity. In that era many a whiskey container and advertisement, as shown here, proclaimed the purity of the product.

Colonel Taylor and his colleagues were right in wanting to outlaw some of the rotgut that plagued their industry, but they conveniently ignored the reality that Scotch and Irish whiskies, whose legitimacy was never in question, have always been blended spirits. All scotch whisky is created by skilled professionals who mix combinations of “single malts” to blend into a desired taste. Why couldn’t a decently made, blended American product be considered whiskey just like its “straight” counterpart? For a number of years that question plagued federal officials trying to enforce the Pure Food and Drug Act. Rectifiers and blenders, no strangers to how things are done in Washington, hired a distinguished former U.S. ambassador to Great Britain, Joseph Choate, to lobby for their cause on Capitol Hill and at the White House.



Joseph Choate

Their objective was to reverse the Roosevelt Administration's decision that their products had to be labeled "imitation whiskey," a decision that backed up the law with fines and even jail time. With the accession of Cincinnati-born William Howard Taft to the Presidency in 1909, the rectifiers saw an opportunity and petitioned for a hearing to overturn Roosevelt's decision. Even though he had been in office only a few days, Taft took on the whiskey question immediately, holding a meeting with both sides present in the White House. Ambassador Choate was spokesman for the rectifiers; the esteemed Colonel Taylor represented the distillers. Subsequently Taft asked his Solicitor General, Lloyd W. Bowers, to revisit the issue and to hold formal hearings. After taking months of testimony amounting to more than 2,000 pages, the Solicitor General reaffirmed the earlier decision, ruling that blends were not considered genuine whiskey by most consumers and thus were an imitation.



President Howard Taft

The President was not satisfied. Weighing in at more than 300 pounds – the Nation's heaviest Chief Executive ever – Taft knew a lot about food and drink. Although his favorite libation was said to be a champagne cocktail, he also knew the taste of bourbon and rye. He had to be aware that his home town, Cincinnati, was a hotbed of whiskey rectifiers and blenders. In an historic decision – one that literally seemed to come from his expansive gut – Taft proclaimed that it was a century-old American tradition that all liquor distilled from grain was known simply as whiskey, regardless of the details of its manufacture. For this President, whiskey purely and simply was whiskey. Based on that notion, both blended and straight products passed the legitimacy test within the meaning of the Pure Food and Drug Act. At Taft's behest three cabinet members with regulatory powers over whiskey joined in a executive memo affirming his decision.

The first head of the Food and Drug Administration, Dr. Harvey W. Wiley, in an article entitled "History of a Crime Against the Food Laws," later denounced Taft's actions. He stated that Solicitor General Bowers had called him to indicate that the President's decision had left him feeling "as if he had been spanked." Bowers abruptly retreated from the Nation's Capitol. Within three weeks he was dead – of a "broken heart" Dr. Wiley suggested. Truly this was a classic Washington saga.



In his book *The Social History of Bourbon*, Author Gerald Carson asserts: "The Taft decision, spelled out in more detail and phrased in more precise language, is substantially in effect today." And thus it was that "imitation whiskey" became as obsolete as the buggy whip. Moreover, today few people worry about the "purity" of the spirits they drink. We have grown accustomed to knowing that the bottles bought from our local liquor store may hold a headache or two if over-imbibed, but will not bring on typhoid or the mange.



These jugs all held rye whiskey that claimed to be pure

Material for this article was derived from numerous sources on the Internet and in histories of the era.

Kozel Brewery

by Richard Lilienthal

A few years ago, Andy Goldfrank dug the stoneware beer bottle shown in two photos here. Having nothing better to do with it, he gave it to me since I collect Washington DC bottles and he had dug this with other DC bottles. However, with no evidence that it was from DC, I put it aside.

Fast forward a few years and Mike Cianciosi sent me a web site (<http://www.kozel.net/>) listing a beer not in the club's latest book. Sure enough, it was the same John Kozel stoneware beer Andy had dug and I had boxed away in my basement.



A visit to the Washington DC city directories in the Library of Congress provides the following history on this brewery. Note the different ways of describing what may be the same address in the early years.

- 1862: John Kozel is listed as a brewer with his home at either 572 or 592 L St north
- 1864: John Kozel is listed as a brewer at the rear of N Capitol St between N & O Sts north
- 1865-1866: John Kozel is listed as a brewer at N St north of N Capitol St
- 1867: John Kozel is listed as a brewer at N St between 1st and N Capitol Sts
- 1868: John Kozel is listed as a brewer at N St north between 1st St west and N Capitol St
- 1869: John Kozel is listed as a brewer at N St north near 1st St west
- 1870: John and George Kozel are listed as brewers at 43 N St near 1st St northwest

- 1871: John and George Kozel are listed as brewers at 43 N St northwest
- 1872: John Kozel is listed as a brewer at 43 N St northwest
- 1873: John and George Kozel are listed as brewers at 43 N St northwest
- 1874-1875: John Kozel is listed as a brewer at 43 N St northwest
- 1876: John, George, & Charles Kozel are listed as brewers at 43 N St northwest
- 1877-1879: John and George Kozel are listed as brewers at 43 N St northwest
- 1880: John, George, & Charles Kozel are listed as brewers at 43 N St northwest
- 1881: John and Charles Kozel are listed as brewers at 43 N St northwest
- 1882: Christina Kozel, widow of John at 423 K St northwest
- 1882-1887: George F Kozel is listed under Saloons & Restaurants at 1813 14th St northwest
- 1888-1904: George F Kozel is listed under Saloons & Restaurants at 1827 14th St northwest
- 1897-1898: George F Kozel is listed under Saloons & Restaurants at 1829 14th St northwest

From this I conclude that the bottle is circa 1864-1881, although it may have continued to be used in George's saloon until 1904.

Upcoming Area Bottle Shows

January 14 – Allentown, Pennsylvania

The 6th Annual Pennsylvania Winter Antique Bottle, Breweriana and Advertising Show & Sale, (9:30 AM to 2:30 PM), at the Merchant's Square Mall, S. 12th & Vultee St., Allentown, PA. Info: **Mark Zeppenfelt**, 4881 Cypress St, Wescosville, PA 18106, PH: (610) 391-0271, email: uuubuy@rcn.com



February 5 - South River, New Jersey

The New Jersey Antique Bottle Club's 10th Annual Antique Bottle Show & Sale (Sun, 9 AM - 2 PM, \$3 adm.) at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 88 Jackson Street, South River, New Jersey. INFO: **Joe Butewicz**, NJABC, 24 Charles St., South River, NJ 08882, PH: (732) 238-3238 or E-mail: botlman@msn.com.

March 5, 2006 - Baltimore, Maryland

Baltimore Antique Bottle Club 26th Annual Show & Sale, (8 AM to 3 PM), at the Physical Education Center, Essex Campus Community College, 7201 Rossville Blvd, Baltimore, MD. Info: **Bob Ford**, PH: (410) 531-9459, email: bottles@comcast.net