

The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

August-September 2006

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Picnic September 30th

(Picnic Takes the Place of Regular September Meeting)

Please join us at 1 PM on Saturday, September 30th for our club picnic at 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

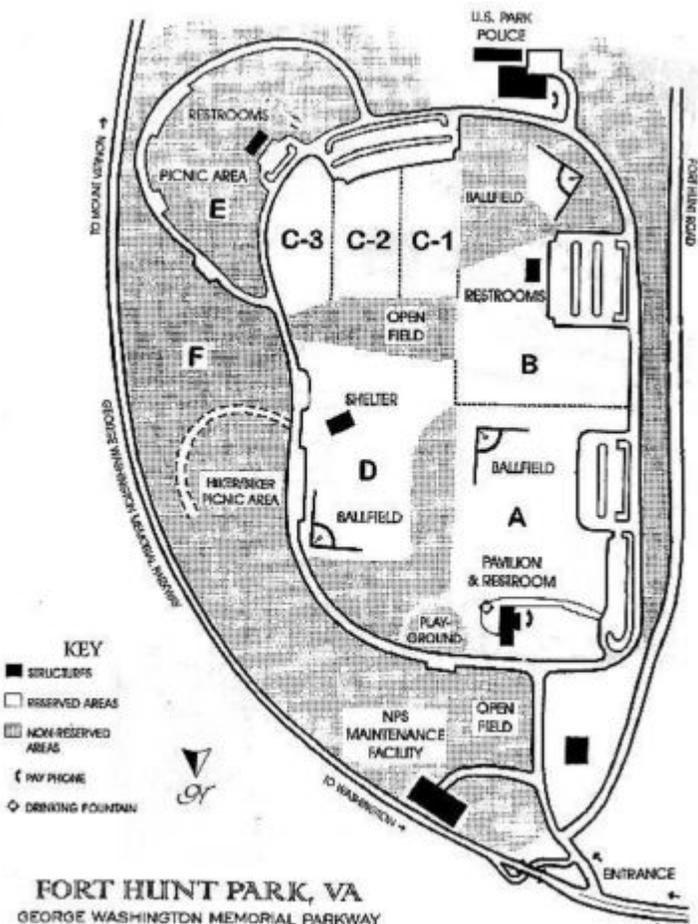
ca_drm1n@yahoo.com. Please let us know how many people you plan to bring and whether you prefer hotdogs, hamburgers, or have other suggestions for the grill. Those without email can contact Lee Shipman at (301) 229-2005. Lee is planning to bring the grill, but this is a difficult chore for her. If someone else can bring a grill, please let Lee know by phone or by emailing her at plannerlee@earthlink.net. Richard Lilienthal notes that he owns a grill but not a truck for transporting it.

To minimize confusion, we are scheduling the picnic for the same time and place as last year's picnic. 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 14th 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.



Early DC Bottlers

by Mike Cianciosi

Since I've been collecting DC soda bottles, I've often wondered who the first bottler in Washington DC was. I was hoping that I could get a clear answer by searching through old DC directories on microfilm; unfortunately my answer was murky. This article discusses the Washington DC bottlers of soda (or "mineral water" as it was called) that show up in directories prior to 1860.

The DC directories starting at 1860 had businesses listed by category, so I can jump right to the "bottlers" or "mineral water" sections and find exactly what I'm looking for. But the directories before 1860 are tougher to search because they're not categorized, i.e. they simply have all businesses and individuals listed alphabetically by last name. To make things even more challenging, the names are not always in correct alphabetical order, and there are lots of misspellings and mistakes. The only pre-1860 directories I know of are from 1858, 1855, 1853, 1851, 1850, 1846, 1843, 1834, 1830 (Georgetown only), 1827, and 1822. The 1843 directory was missing the first microfilm sheet (last names A-N), and Georgetown isn't included in the 1850, 1846, 1843, 1827 and 1822 directories.

Despite the challenges, I found 6 names that are listed as bottlers of mineral waters in these pre-1860 directories.

Arny & Shinn (listed in the 1855 and 1858 directories)

Charles W. Arny (b. c.1832 in Washington DC), and Riley A. Shinn (born c.1826 in NJ) owned a bottling establishment at 57 Greene Street in Georgetown, which they sold to Palmer & Green. This was discussed in the May 2006 issue of the Potomac Pontil, where I speculated that the bottling establishment started in 1843. But the only directory listings I could find prior to 1860 with Arny & Shinn are from 1855 and 1858. It's possible that the bottling establishment started as "Maack & Arny" – I haven't found any directory entries with that name but there is a bottle listed in the club book with that name. **Figure 1** shows some "Arny & Shinn" bottles; the one on the left is pontiled.



Figure 1- Arny & Shinn Bottles

John McKeon (listed in the 1855 directory)

There is a "J. M. McKeon" (b. 1820 in Ireland) listed in the 1860 DC Census as a "disabled soldier", that may be our John. One of the most coveted DC bottles is the green McKeon torpedo that is depicted on the cover of our club's book, and reprinted as **figure**

2. Our book also lists a cobalt blue torpedo with "McKeon and McGrann" embossed on it. I wasn't able to find "McKeon & McGrann" in any of the directories, but the 1850 directory lists a Tavern owner named James McGrann.



Figure 2 - McKeon torpedo (photo courtesy of Richard Lilienthal)

P. McKean (listed in the 1853 directory)

P. McKean is not listed in the DC census, so I don't know when he was born or even his first name. McKean is listed in an 1853 directory as a Mineral Water Manufacturer at "s side B n btw 2 and 3 w". If this address seems cryptic, you have to realize that DC directories before 1855 didn't have street numbers, so addresses were described as either on the corner of two streets, or on one street between 2 other streets. I don't know anything about "P. McKean", and our club book doesn't list any bottles with his name on them. I wonder if his name was actually misspelled and if he's somehow related to John McKeon?

A. Favier (listed in the 1843, 1846, 1850 directories)

Agricola Favier (b. 1802 in France) might have been the first bottler of mineral water in DC. His 1843 ad is the oldest one I found for a mineral water bottler, and being born in 1802 makes him older than any of the other bottlers I found. The 1843 directory has a full page ad that lists a dozen medical doctors that certify his water. It also touts his corking apparatus, and mentions that his bottles can be sent to any part of the District. **Figure 3**

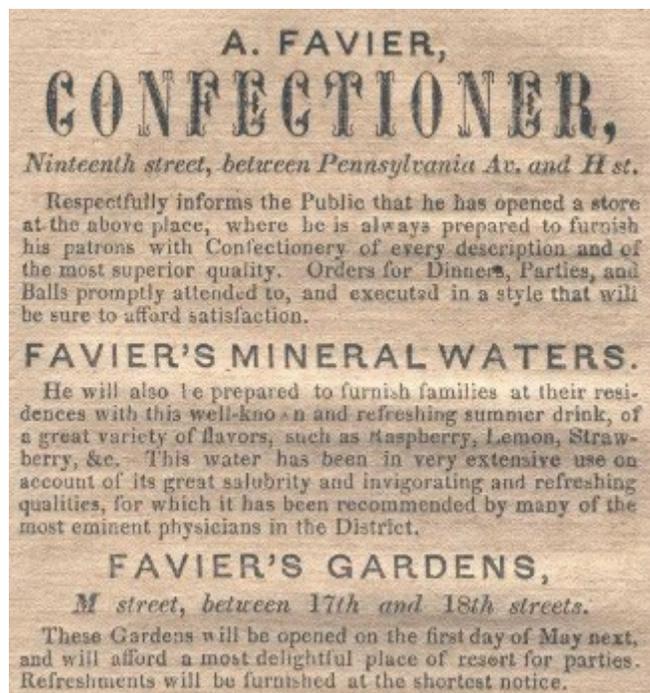


Figure 3 - A. Favier add from 1846 directory

shows a half-page ad for Faviers Garden from the 1846 directory, which lists his mineral water flavors, including “Raspberry, Lemon, Strawberry, &c.”.

William Bosse (listed in the 1858 directory)

The only William Bosse I could find in the census was a guy born 1825 in Germany, but he is listed as a wheelwright in 1860. Maybe he changed occupations? The 1858 directory lists Bosse as a bottler of ale, porter and mineral water at 428 4½ street West. Our club’s book lists 3 different Bosse bottles, and only 1 is pontiled, so I’m thinking he continued to be a bottler after 1858 and was not the same guy who was listed as a wheelwright.

Figure 4 shows a stoneware William Bosse Bottle from Richard Lillienthal’s collection.



Figure 4 - Wm Bosse Stoneware bottle (photo courtesy Richard Lilienthal)

William N.H. Maack (listed in the 1855 directory)

William N.H. Maack (b. 1822 in Germany) was listed in the 1855 directory as a bottler of mineral water at 426 4½ West. In 1858 he was listed as an “agent” at 428 4½ West, which was the address for William Bosse’s bottling establishment. In later years,

Maack was at 428 4½ West as both a bottler and a beer brewer. Maack shows up in DC directories on and off until 1891. Old bottles listed in the club’s book include a pontiled “Maack and Army” and a torpedo “Henke & Maack”, so Maack most likely started bottling prior to 1855. **Figure 5** shows some William Maack bottles.



Figure 5 - William Maack bottles

So what’s my conclusion? I think the first bottler in Georgetown was whoever originally owned the establishment at 57 Greene Street – whether it was Army & Shinn, Maack & Army, or even Henke & Maack I don’t know. But I think the first bottler in Washington was Agricola Favier. Not only was his 1843 directory listing the oldest one I could find for a DC bottler, but the fact that it included a full page ad suggests that he may have been well established by 1843, and may have started well before that. If anyone has knowledge to the contrary, or knows of pre-1860 directory listings of DC bottlers that I haven’t listed, please contact me (chosi@cox.net).

Sources:

1. Various Washington DC directories on microfilm (from the Washingtoniana section of the Martin Luther King Jr. Library in DC)
2. Antique Bottles from the Washington DC Area by Potomac Bottle Collectors, 4th edition
3. The U.S. Census for various years, accessed via Ancestry.com

How Fairfax County Got (and Lost) its Distillery

by Jack Sullivan
Special to the Potomac Pontil

Fairfax County once was home to the most successful (legal) whiskey distillery in Virginia, thanks in small part to a Utopian dreamer and in large part to a dairy farmer from Kentucky.

The dreamer was Dr. Carl Adolph Max Wiehle. In 1886 at a tax auction he bought land in Fairfax County where the town of Reston now stands. Imbued with philosophical notions that community planning could result in ideal societies, Dr. Wiehle drafted plans for a Utopian town and gave it his own name. The town of Wiehle was incorporated in 1897. But the doctor’s fellow Americans failed to rally to his vision and the place was never built.

Enter Abraham Smith Bowman, a farmer from Kentucky whose family had originated in Virginia (Fig. 1). In 1927 Bowman bought 4,000 acres of the never-established town and started a dairy. He also grew corn and other grain, calling the operation Sunset Hills Farm. Bowman, like Wiehle, was bold thinker, but a more practical one. Almost immediately after the repeal of Prohibition in 1934, he built a distillery just north of the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad tracks that ran along his property (Fig. 2). He called his brand Virginia Gentleman Bourbon Sales begin in 1937.



Figure 1 - A. Smith Bowman in hunting attire



Figure 2 – The original Fairfax County Bowman distillery

Literally hundreds of new and revived distilleries that sprang up in the immediate aftermath of Repeal. Unlike most of them, however, A. Smith Bowman survived through the ruthless consolidation that extinguished hundreds of brands as well as the Great Depression when whiskey sales dropped precipitously. In its labeling and advertisements the brand touted its Virginia roots, including men in Colonial tri-cornered hats (Fig. 3) and fox hunting, a sport Bowman himself apparently fancied.

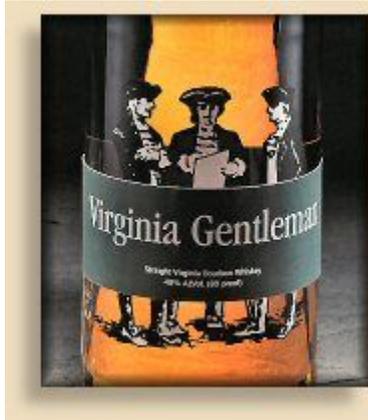


Figure 3 – A Virginia Gentleman Bourbon Label

The business eventually was put into the hands of Abraham's two sons, A. Smith Bowman Jr. and E. Delong Bowman (Fig. 4). As the profits of the distillery began to eclipse revenues for the dairy farm, the family added a second brand, Fairfax County Bourbon. A bottle is shown here with the photo of the distillery in the background (Fig. 5). Although sales of Bowman's brands were largely regional in Northern Virginia, it gradually began to attract a national customer base.



Figure 4 – A. Smith Bowman, Jr. (left) and E. Delong Bowman

While none of its containers date any earlier than 1937, Bowman Distillery bottles, particularly minis like the ones shown here (Fig. 6,7), are widely collected. David Spaid, who for many years produced the *Miniature Bottle Collector* magazine,



Figure 5 – Grouping including a bottle of Fairfax County Bourbon

has always been keen to obtain the latest miniature editions from Bowman. He also featured them in his now-defunct publication.



Figure 6 (left) and Figure 7 (right) – Two Virginia Gentleman Minis

Fairfax County lost its distillery in 1987 when A. Smith Bowman moved 60 miles south to Fredericksburg. In 1961 the Bowmans had sold all but the farm's main house and the distillery to Robert E. Simon, another Utopian visionary. He gave his initials to Reston and in a sense fulfilled Dr. Wiehle's dream. Simon's planned community was built and prospered. By the late 1980s the rapid growth of Northern Virginia had convinced Bowman's executives to relocate to less crowded climes.

The company purchased the former FMD Cellophane plant in Fredericksburg that had been vacant and deteriorating for years. Bowman restored the buildings, which held real architectural interest, and converted their use to making and merchandising whiskey (Fig. 8). The plant produces other kinds of alcoholic drinks like gin and vodka, as well as a higher quality, 90 proof bourbon. It is sold under the Virginia Gentleman label and is popularly known as The Fox (Fig. 9). That whiskey comes in a custom bottle with a fox's head molded into the glass and has won the distillery national recognition for quality.



Figure 8 (left) – The Bowman Fredricksburg facility
Figure 9 (right) – The Fox logo



When Bowman Distillery moved to Fredericksburg, it could boast that it was the oldest family owned bourbon distillery in America. In 2003, however, the operation was sold to the Sazerac Company of Frankfort KY. Its brands include Dr. McGillicuddy's Menthomint Schnapps, Tequila Herradura, and Buffalo Trace Kentucky Straight Bourbon. It too is a family owned enterprise and one of the few still remaining in the U.S.

Material for this article was drawn from a number of websites, including that for the A. Smith Bowman distillery. Illustrations are from the same sources, except for the photo of the Fairfax County distillery which is in the collection of the author.

Upcoming Area Bottle Shows

September 10 – Lewes

Delaware

Delmarva Antique Bottle Club
14th Annual Show & Sale, (9
AM to 3 PM, early buyers 7:30
AM), at the Cape Henlopen High
School, Lewes, DE. Info: **Peter
Beaman**, 28947 Lewes
Georgetown Hwy., Lewes, DE
19958, PH: (302) 684-5055,
email: oldngnu@comcast.net

September 15-20 – Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

The 9th Annual All-Dairy Bottles & Collectibles Show & Sale, (Fri. Sept 15, 2 to 7 PM, all other days 8 AM to 5 PM), at the Farm Show Complex, 2300 North Cameron Street Harrisburgh, PA Info: **Charles A. Itle**, PH: (717) 423-6789 or **Lolly Leshner**, PH: (717) 787-2905.



September 17 – Winchester, Virginia

The Apple Valley Bottle Collectors Club, Inc.'s 32rd Annual Show & Sale (Sun. 9 AM - 3 PM, Adm. \$3 Donation; Early Adm. 7:30 - 9 AM, Adm. \$10, Seniors 65+ Free) at the Hampton Inn, 1204 Berryville Ave. (I-81 Exit 313), Winchester, Virginia. Over 40 dealers in antique bottles, milks, Coca-Cola, White House vinegar, postcards & table top collectibles. Info: **Richard M. Venskoske**, 4496 Martinsburg Pike, Clear Brook, VA 22624, PH: (540) 247-4429.

September 24 – Hammonton, New Jersey

South Jersey's Antique Bottle and Glass Club Bottles & Collectibles Show & Sale, (9 AM to 4 PM at Batsto Village, Hammonton, NJ. Info: **Paul DelGuercio**, 548 Spring Road, Hammonton, NJ

October 7 – Richmond, Virginia

The Richmond Area Bottle Collectors 35th Annual Show & Sale (9 AM to 3 PM, Early Buyers 7:30 AM) at the Showplace Annex, 2003 Mechanicsville Turnpike, Richmond Virginia. Info: **Ed Faulkner** E-mail: faulkner@antiquebottles.com, PH. 804-739-2951 or **Marvin Croker** 4718 Twila Lane, Richmond, VA 23234, PH: 804-275-1101.

October 15 – Bedford, Pennsylvania

Bedford County Antique Bottle Club 29th 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 5 – Elkton, Maryland

Tri-State Bottle Collectors and Diggers Club, 34th Annual Show & Sale, (9 AM to 3 PM), at the Singerly Fire Hall, Routes 279 & 213, Elkton, MD. Info: **Dave Brown**, PH: (302) 738-9960.

November 12 – Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

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

November 19 – Greensboro, North Carolina

The Southeast Bottle Club's 4th Annual Show & Sale (Sun. 9 AM to 3 PM, Early buyers 7:30 AM) at 501 Yanceyville Street, Greensboro, North Carolina. Info: **Reggie Lynch**, PO Box 13736, Durham, NC 27709, PH: (919) 789-4545.

November 26 – Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

The Forks of the Delaware Bottle Collectors Association's 33rd Annual Bottle & Antique Show & Sale (Sun. 9 AM - 3 PM, Adm. \$1; Dealer & Display set-up 6 - 9 AM, Early buyers 7:30 AM) at the Bethlehem Catholic High School, Madison & Dewberry Ave. (2 miles South of Rt. 22, Center Street, Rt. 512), Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Info: **Bill Hegedus**, 20 Cambridge Pl., Catasauqua, PA 18032, PH: (610) 264-5945.