

# The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

## February 2007

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### Meeting February 27th at 7:30 PM

Winners of our annual club contests will be announced at the February meeting. This will be our annual dinner. The club will provide sandwich fixings and soft drinks as well as plates and utensils. Member contributions (such as a pie from Roland) would be most welcome, but members should not feel obligated to bring food.



Collector of the year entries



**Future Meetings:** We will meet at 8 PM on the last Tuesday of the month unless otherwise announced. Upcoming meetings will be **April 24<sup>th</sup>** and **May 29<sup>th</sup>**. Please contact Andy Goldfrank or Al Miller with ideas for programs or themes for our future meetings.

Digger of the year entries (at left)

### Dues are Due

Annual dues are \$10 per individual or family. This is the final newsletter being mailed to past members who have not renewed for 2007. Dues may be paid at club meetings or mailed to Jim Sears, 8008 Eastern Drive, Apt. 101, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910



These shards and "go-withs" were displayed at the January meeting. Winners will be announced at the February meeting and will be featured in our March newsletter.

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, PH: 301/588-2174) & Andy Goldfrank (email: amg\_sticky@yahoo.com, PH: 202/588-0543)  
Web Site: www.potomacbottlecollectors.org Maintained by Peter Rydquist: pehraug@aol.com

# Check the Book

By Richard Lilienthal

At the Nov '06 club meeting, I brought in a bottle of unknown content. It was a 10.5 in tall, round, clear glass (turned SCA) bottle with a tapered neck and small opening, embossed "32 OZ/CARTER'S/ WASHINGTON, D.C./U.S.A." Some members thought that it was a master ink, although no one had heard of Carter's inks being associated with Washington DC. Some members thought it was a barber bottle, containing some form of hair product. The discussion ended with no decision.

Afterwards, I thought to check the club's book to see if another Carter's was listed. On page 146, in the Miscellaneous Chapter, I found "8 OZ, CARTER'S LUX-L, CARTER LABORATORIES INC, WASHINGTON, D.C. U.S.A., 7 inch, round with tall neck (contents unknown)." Who had provided the listing for the book? The embarrassing admission – me.



The photograph shows the two bottles. The similarity of shape, as well as the similarity in the embossing of Carter's (letters increasing in size towards the middle), convinces me that they represent the same company. Since the smaller bottle is embossed "LUX-L," it seems reasonable to conclude that both bottles held some sort of hair product (i.e., it doesn't sound like an ink product).

## Upcoming Area Bottle Shows

### MARCH 4 - BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

The Baltimore Antique Bottle Club's 27th Annual Show & Sale (Sun. 8 AM - 3 PM) at the Physical Education Center, Essex Campus, Community College of Baltimore County, 7201 Rossville Blvd (I-695, Exit 34, Baltimore, Maryland. Info: **BOB FORD**, PH: (410) 531-9459, E-mail: [bottles@comcast.net](mailto:bottles@comcast.net); Website: [www.baltimorebottleclub.org](http://www.baltimorebottleclub.org).



### MARCH 11 - TYLERSPORT, PENNSYLVANIA

The 13th Annual Buck-Mont Antique Bottle Show & Sale (9 AM - 2 PM; Early Buyers 8 AM) at the Tylersport Fire Co., Route 563, Tylersport, Pennsylvania. INFO: **DAVID BUCK**, PH: (215) 723-4048 or **GREG GIFFORD**, PH: (215) 699-5216.

### APRIL 1 - MILLVILLE, NEW JERSEY

South Jersey Bottle & Glass Club's Annual Show & Sale (9 AM - 3 PM) at the Elks Lodge of Millville, 1815 East Broad Street, Millville, New Jersey. INFO: **MERRIE KERNAN**, PH: (856) 451-8904 or **BOB TOMPKINS**, PH: (856) 691-5170.

### APRIL 29 - HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA

The Historical Bottle-Diggers of Virginia's 36th Annual Antique Bottle & Collectible Show & Sale (9 AM - 3 PM) at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds, (US Rt. 11 South, Exit 243 off I-81), Harrisonburg, Virginia. INFO: **SONNY SMILEY**, PH: (540) 434-1129 or E-mail: [lithiaman1@yahoo.com](mailto:lithiaman1@yahoo.com).

### MAY 4-5 - GRAY, TENNESSEE

The State of Franklin Antique Bottle & Collectibles Association's 9th Annual Show & Sale (Sat. 8 AM - 2 PM, Free Adm.; Early Buyers & Set-up, Fri. 9 AM - 6 PM, Adm. \$10 ) at the Appalachian Fairgrounds in Gray, Tennessee (Johnson City - Bristol, Tennessee area). 150 Tables Available. INFO: **MELISSA MILNER**, PH: (423) 928-4445 or E-mail: [mmilner12@chartertn.net](mailto:mmilner12@chartertn.net).

### MAY 20 - BRICK, NEW JERSEY

The Jersey Shore Bottle Club's 35th Annual Antique Bottle & Post Card Show (Sun. 9 AM - 2 PM) at the Brick Elks, 2491 Hooper Ave., Brick, New Jersey. Limited amount of tables. INFO: **RICHARD PEAL**, PH: (732) 267-2528 or E-mail: [manodirt@msn.com](mailto:manodirt@msn.com).

### JUNE 1- 2 - LUMBERTON, NORTH CAROLINA

The Robeson Antique Bottle Club Annual Bottle, Coin & Collectible Show & Sale (Fri. 3 - 9 PM; Sat. 9 AM - 1 PM) at the Expo and Farmer's Market, 1027 US 74 East, Lumberton North Carolina. INFO: **MITCHELL McCORMICK**, PH: (910) 628-6245 or **BRET LEE**, E-mail: [dex@intrstar.net](mailto:dex@intrstar.net)

# Whiskey Tokens

By Jack Sullivan  
Special to the Potomac Pontil

My interest in pre-Prohibition whiskey distilleries and brands has taken new directions from time to time and so it did while I was writing an article on Baltimore's Monticello Rye for the April 2006 Pontil. A Monticello "coin" came up for sale on Ebay and I bought it (Figs. 1 & 2). Ensuing research opened up to me a whole new collecting world – whiskey tokens.



Figure 1: Monticello Rye - front



Figure 2: Monticello Rye - back

The Montecello token is known by collectors as a spinner. It was kept on the bar for patrons to spin or flip to decide who would pay for the next drink. The idea was to suggest to the contestants to make that drink a Montecello Rye. An Old Granddad spinner left nothing to chance: "Heads" has the familiar depiction of the old timer and the legend "Head of the Bourbon Family." (Fig. 3). "Tails" is blank.

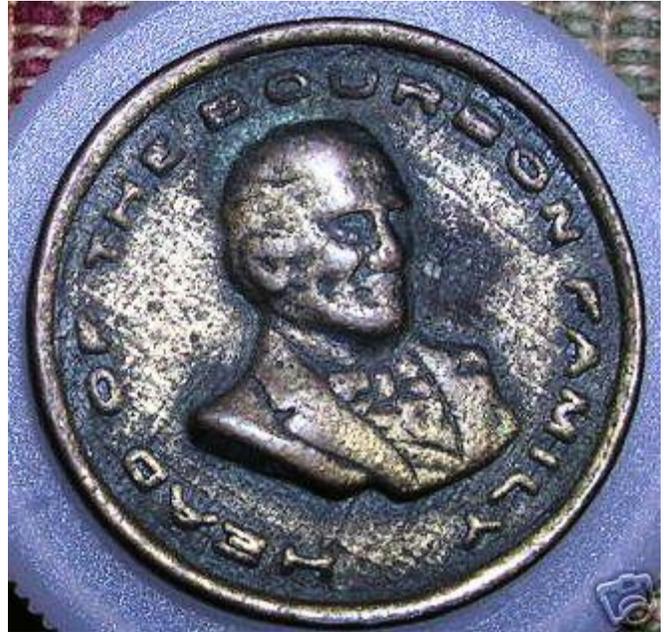


Figure 3: Old Grand Dad - front

Spinners are just one variety of whiskey token. More common are those issued by whiskey distillers, distributors and saloons that could be redeemed at the bar for a free or discounted drink. Bonnie & Co. of Louisville KY promised a shot of its Big Rock Whiskey to anyone presenting its token (Fig. 4) and assured the barkeep the company would redeem it. The Palace Saloon in Austin TX would give the bearer a free drink without restriction. Its token featured "Parole," a famous race horse of the period that nevertheless finished out of the money in the 1876 Kentucky Derby (Fig. 5).



Figure 4: Big Rock - front



Figure 5: Parole - Texas Saloon - front & back

Other tokens were given away by whiskey merchants to be kept as pocket charms. Judging from the large numbers that come up on auction sites, Green River Whiskey must have distributed thousands. (Fig.6) The token featured a horseshoe, a four leaf clover and a wishbone – all familiar symbols of good luck. It also carried the assurance that: “It’s lucky to drink Green River Whiskey.” Not uncommonly charm tokens were fashioned around real coins -- the idea being that the holder was never without money as long as the token reposed in his pocket . That was the idea of Tioga Rye and its Indian head penny. (Fig. 7). Tioga was a brand of Raphael and Zeugschimdt of Pittsburgh PA (1886-1918).



Figure 6: Green River - back



Figure 7: Tioga Rye - front & back

The back of the Old Prentice Whiskey charm today would be highly politically incorrect. It is dominated by a swastika – at that early time considered an Indian good luck sign (Fig. 8). The motto around the rim reads: “Membership Emblem of the Don’t Worry Club.” It would not be long until the swastika gave lots of people lots to worry about. Old Prentice was registered as a brand name by J.T.S. Brown & Sons of Louisville in 1906.



Figure 8: Old Prentice - back

Another form of whiskey token was meant to be worn as medallion on a watch fob or other exterior chain. Frequently these had a hole in them and sometimes a loop. Bagpiper Whiskey is characteristic of the type (Fig. 9). Post-prohibition, I.W. Harper issued a token with a hole as a replica of one of four gold medals it had been awarded. As recently as 1995 Jim Beam issued a medallion that memorialized its 200 years in the whiskey business. Although it has no hole, the striking Old Government Whiskey token shown here (Fig. 10) appears to have been a type of medallion. The brand was federally registered by Wm. Wolff & Co. of San Francisco in 1897. City directories indicate that this firm went out of business by 1910. The brand name appears to have been perpetuated until Prohibition by the Rathjens Mercantile Co. of San Francisco (1909-1918).



Figure 9: Bagpiper – front



Figure 10: Old Government - front

Other whiskey tokens have such various uses as poker chips (Jack Daniels), Mardi Gras coin tossed from a float (Old Crow), and wooden nickel (Old Drum). Mount Vernon Whiskey, about which I have written for the Pontil as recently as the January issue, in 1950 distributed an aluminum token that featured a bottle and the slogan “Tastes good all the way down.” (Fig. 11). On the reverse side was a list of Cincinnati Reds baseball home games.

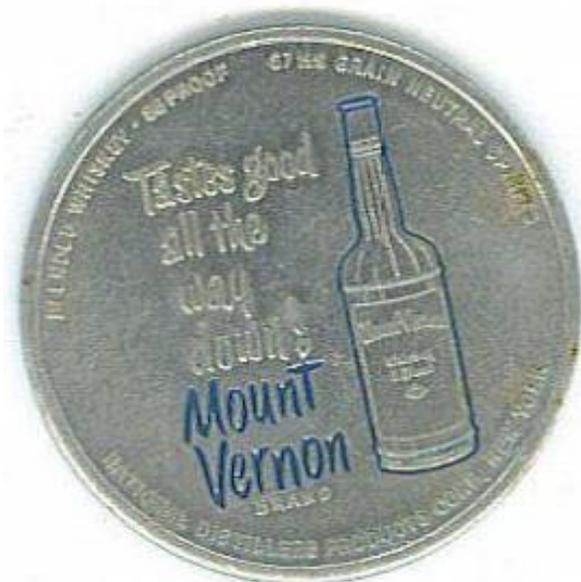


Figure 11: Mount Vernon 1950 - front

While bottle diggers may uncover one from time to time, scavengers with the metal detectors are the sources of most whiskey tokens. Those made of copper and other heavy metals often are deteriorated but an amazing number are recovered in good condition. Collectors tend to be linked with numismatists. While many such items sell modestly, rarities can fetch hundreds of dollars.

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**Notes:** The information and illustrations for this article are from a number of Internet sources. *United States Trade Tokens 1966-1889*, a book by Russell Rulau and published by Krause of Iola WI (1983), is very informative and includes a number of tokens, including those issued by saloons, from the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia.

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**BALTIMORE ANTIQUE BOTTLE CLUB**







**27<sup>th</sup> Annual Show and Sale**

**Sunday - March 4, 2007**  
8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.

Physical Education Center  
Essex Campus of the Community College of Baltimore County  
7201 Rossville Blvd. (off exit 34, I-696)  
Baltimore, Maryland 21237

*The largest one-day bottle show in the world—over 300 tables*  
*NEW 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of Baltimore Bottle Book on sale*

*Bottles, jars, advertising, stoneware, breweriana, small antiques*  
*Free bottle appraisals*

Admission \$3

Information:  
**Bob Ford - Show Chairman**  
Telephone: 410-531-9459 E-mail: [bottles@comcast.net](mailto:bottles@comcast.net)

[www.baltimorebottleclub.org](http://www.baltimorebottleclub.org)



Al Miller at January meeting: “Uh, I think this bottle is supposed to come apart in the middle.”

# Go West, Young Man!

By Al Miller

*"...I'd be safe and warm if I was in L.A.  
California Dreamin', on such a winter's day..."*  
- The Mamas & The Papas, 1965

This past weekend, pounding away at the 4-12" of solid ice still covering half of my driveway, these lyrics were running through my mind. In fact, just days ago, I was in L.A. – and up in Northern California for several days before that. While my wife and kids were stuck in Virginia to brave the first big snow and ice storm of 2007, a work trip had conveniently returned me to the state of my birth, and I'd managed to squeeze in a side trip to visit family in the San Francisco Bay Area. In a rare case of advance planning, I'd also pre-coordinated a day trip to Sacramento, to meet up with a fellow digger and take a shot at finding some western glass.

In my opinion, nothing has advanced this hobby of ours quite like the Internet. I first stumbled upon bottle digging and the Potomac Bottle Collectors during a search of the web in 2001. I've read amazing stories online of bottle clubs, auctions, and privy and dump digs across America, and a few years back, even joined a Yahoo mail group (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/privydiggerpit/>), dedicated to "...privies, dumps, cisterns, wells, bottles, artifacts, and all things related...". Through this virtual group, I've shared information and made online friendships with several diggers I would have otherwise never met. One such digger is Doug Abeel, who lives just a few miles from Sacramento.

Doug, like me, got the "bottle bug" late in life, and has only been digging for the past 5 years or so. Also like me, due to the late onset of these "symptoms", Doug never had the chance to dig in his home state – he's from Maryland and didn't start digging until he moved to California, while I'm from California and didn't start until I moved to Virginia. We've emailed back and forth, talking about our respective dig opportunities and sharing in the excitement of each other's finds. When I emailed Doug to see if he'd be willing to meet up and dig, he didn't hesitate, and offered to bring my Dad and me to a construction site that Doug and several others had been digging successfully for a few months.

As my trip approached, I could barely contain my excitement over the planned Sunday dig. Doug had emailed pictures of some of the artifacts they'd already found at the site, including a pontilled green NY chemist, Sacramento sodas and whiskeys, a Log Cabin Bitters, an 1869 half dollar, even a bear tooth! The site had rewarded their efforts on several occasions, and he was convinced there was more to be found. All I was really hoping for was a California bottle, even turn of the century, as a memento of my first dig in the Golden State.

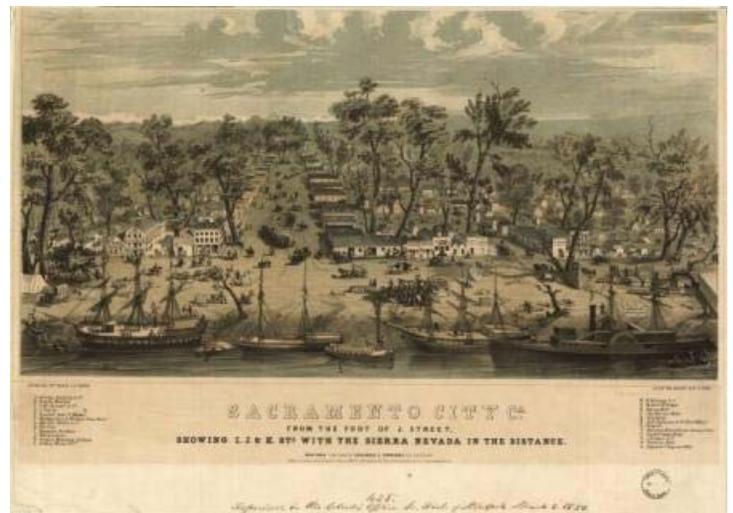
During my flight from Dulles to Oakland, I channel-surfed through the DirecTV offerings graciously provided by

JetBlue. I quickly found the Weather Channel, and noted with dismay that the Sacramento forecast for Friday-Sunday was rain, rain, and... rain – possibly up to 2 inches! I'd brought a set of grubby dig clothes and boots, and would borrow coveralls from my Dad, but I was more concerned about the dig being called off on account of too much standing water. Undaunted, I got directions from Doug, and Dad loaded up the shovels and gear on Saturday night and planned to make the 2-hour drive to Sacramento the next morning.

As we crossed the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge on Sunday morning, the grey overcast and drizzle gave way to patches of clear sky and (could it be?) sunshine! I called Doug to let him know we were on the way, and he mentioned that the sun was shining in Sacramento as well; "It's a good sign!", I exclaimed. We made great time to the construction site in downtown Sacramento, and Doug pulled up shortly after.

After some quick introductions (as this was the first time we'd met in person), Doug opened the trunk of his car to show us a box full of earlier finds from the site – great motivation! He also pointed out the areas they'd been digging, as well as what had changed since his last visit. We stood in an alley on the south side of the site. The site itself was fairly level, enclosed by a three-story brick building to the east, a sloping street to the west, a portion of remaining two-story structure in the northwest corner, and another street to the north. The majority of the site had been taken down to what would be the basement floor, a good 10-15 feet below street level on the west, north, and east sides, while most of the alley to the south was at the same (lower) level as the site.

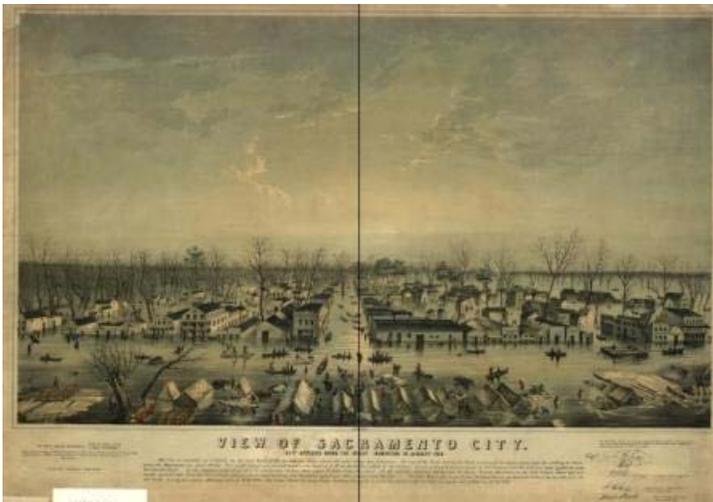
We began digging along the wall of the building to the east, as Doug mentioned he'd found numerous bottles here in a shallow trash layer. As we scratched away, we noted the brick wall kept going downward, another foot or two. It seemed odd that despite the depth of the excavation and demolition, we were not yet at the bottom of the wall; it turned out there was a very good reason.



Sacramento, looking east from the river, 1849. The main street running due east is J Street

In early 1848, the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill in nearby Coloma, CA, brought hordes of miners, entrepreneurs and developers to the Sacramento area, and spurred rapid expansion of the small town nestled between the Sacramento and American Rivers. The city's first buildings were erected right along the Sacramento riverfront, and subsequent development marched eastward from the river.

In January 1850, a great flood immersed much of the city under several feet of water; a second calamitous flood followed in December, and yet another came in 1852. In the years that followed, city officials built marginally effective levees and even discussed the prospect of raising the entire city by 10-15 feet to diminish the chances of another flood. The idea foundered, however, until 1862, when the worst flood in the city's history finally prompted action.



**Sacramento, looking east from the river, 1850. The main street running due east is again J Street**

This catastrophic event resulted in the decision to raise the entire city – levees, streets, sidewalks, storefronts, etc. – by 10-12 feet. This was accomplished, over a 13-year period, by the construction of brick retaining walls and the infusion of thousands of wagon loads full of dirt to bring the street levels up



**Original storefront and ground level; the girders above support the elevated present-day sidewalk**

New buildings were then constructed atop the existing brick to what would have been the roof level of a single-story building. Structures; the effort converted many of the original storefronts into basements, accessible in some areas by the tunnels created between the old and the new (elevated) sidewalks.

The west boundary of the site we were on had one of these tunnels. We didn't find anything of note along the east wall, and refocused our efforts to dig a fairly large (but completely empty) test hole in the center of the site, adjacent to the spot where Doug and several others had found a privy some weeks before. Unfortunately, a wide swath was covered in several feet of brick and other debris from the recent demolition on the site.

After about an hour, we wandered over toward the west side of the lot, and noticed a few holes left by other diggers. At

about the same time, a small pickup drove by, and Doug began talking to the driver. Although Doug didn't know him, he was a local digger named Mike, Vice President of the 49er Historical Bottle Association, and also had permission on the site. He told us quite a bit about the site, and mentioned that they'd been fairly successful in the area on the west side, beneath the elevated sidewalk. He pointed out where they'd broken through the concrete of the lower sidewalk area, and described the two pipes that ran beneath it. He explained that the older steel pipe had been replaced with a ceramic one, and that the fill dirt surrounding the two was littered with bottles, metal, and other trash. He suggested that until the rest of the site was excavated with heavy equipment, our best shot was probably over in the vicinity of the old sidewalk.

Mike left, and we immediately moved over into the area he pointed out. It was becoming clear to me that Doug was really a good guy; he'd invited us to a site that he could have easily kept all to himself, and he kept mentioning how he really hoped we could find something for me to take home. He shared the same excitement as me at even the newer and fairly common stuff found on digs that many others would leave behind; just the opportunity to be out with friends hunting for old glass was a reward in itself.

We started expanding the trench in the concrete started by the other diggers, and sure enough, shortly after Mike had left, I found a largely intact 1880s two-handled porcelain vase, and then, my first California bottle - a "Postel and Schnerr Sacramento Cal" hutch with "Capital Soda Works" embossed on the bottom... yahooooo! I was beside myself with excitement, as this find and the good time with Doug and my Dad had already surpassed any expectations I had for the dig. According to Doug's research of the city directories, Henry Postel ran a beer and mineral water business from 1883-88, then partnered with Constant Schnerr from 1889-1892, after which Schnerr took over the business and renamed it C. Schnerr.



The first bottle as found – bottom reads “Capital Soda Works”



Al with the Postel and Schnerr hutch

Always the innovator, Dad rustled up a 2-foot segment of cast iron pipe, which he used to chip away the concrete. We would break off some more of the concrete overhang, then tunnel beneath it, about a foot deep, to the bottom of the trash layer. When we found glass, we’d switch to a sharpened wooden shovel handle (Andy Goldfrank’s “patented” design) to avoid scratching or breaking anything. I found a few more bottles - a Dr Crossman’s Specific Mixture (1890s opium), a Mellin’s Infant’s Food Boston (1890s as well), and some slicks. Doug was working the other end of the shallow (about 1-foot deep) trench, and wasn’t having much luck, so I suggested we switch places. Sure enough, he found two local hutches: an earlier Henry Postel, 1880s, intact but unfortunately cracked, and a beautiful Hugh Casey Eagle Soda Works, 50 K St, Sacramento. The Casey bottle is likely one of the earlier hutches, as the Hutchinson stopper was patented in April 1879, and Casey was only at the 50 K Street address until approximately 1881.



Doug finds the Casey Eagle Soda Works hutch

In the same small area, Doug went on to find an intact amber Hostetters, a 9” green capers bottle and a 9” aqua pickle. We took turns working at the same area and found a barrel mustard and a few more slicks, a couple hand-made marbles and buttons, and a little later, I stumbled across an 1877 seated Liberty quarter! To our amazement, it was in excellent shape, with many details of the coin clearly visible.



1877 Seated Liberty Quarter, minted in San Francisco

The entire day was perfect – nearly 60 degrees and not a drop of rain. As darkness fell, we shot some final pictures with all the finds, and split things up for the ride home. I only took a few bottles home, but was thrilled with my share of the loot; the Postel & Schnerr hutch, the Dr. Crossman’s, the Hostetter’s (which Doug generously gave me since he already had one), and the 1877 quarter. Dad collected a few dozen 1860s-era bricks for use in a walkway next to his house, which will make for quite a neat story when it’s done.



Doug and Al with the day's finds

My first California bottle dig was an awesome experience, spending time with my Dad and a new dig buddy, doing something we all enjoyed. We talked about the opportunity for a "payback" dig when he travels east to see family, and hopefully we'll get together again on both coasts in search of more buried treasure.

Doug called me this weekend, as he'd been back to the site twice since our dig. Ironically enough, one of the things he uncovered was a broken base of a bottle embossed with the state seal ("Eureka!" – ancient Greek for "I have found it!").

I, on the other hand, finally found my driveway beneath all the ice. February can be a rough time for us east coast bottle diggers...

**References:**

*The Past Below*, by Cosmo Garvin, SN&R News Review, 17 Jul 2003  
<http://www.newsreview.com/sacramento/Content?oid=oid%3A15424>

Sacramento History Online  
[http://www.sacramentohistory.org/resources\\_timeline.html](http://www.sacramentohistory.org/resources_timeline.html)



The Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum, 105-107 South Fairfax Street Alexandria, Va, re-opened in November 2006. See <http://oha.ci.alexandria.va.us/apothecary/> for more information. (Photo credit Erik Kvalskvik)



Show & tell items from our January meeting.



American Bottle Auctions (<http://www.americanbottle.com>) will be auctioning these bottles and many others from the Bryan Grapentine collection beginning March 30<sup>th</sup>.