

The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

April 2008

In this issue:

How Mr. Duffy Outwitted Uncle Sam – and Got Rich by Jack Sullivan.....	page 2
U.S. Soldiers Home Dairy by Richard Lilienthal.....	page 5
Upcoming Area Bottle Shows.....	page 7

Meeting April 29th

Please join us at 8 PM at the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Bethesda. Visitors are always welcome, and we enjoy seeing antique bottles and related items for show & tell.

Allaband Bottles Sought

Nancy Buckingham writes, “My grandfather, Edgar Allaband owned several pharmacies in Washington, D.C. during the early 1900s up until around 1930s. I would love to find some of his old medicine bottles. How would I find bottles with the name Allaband on them?” Please email her at nsbuck@charter.net if you have any information.



Arlington bottles seen at our February meeting

Programs Needed for Future Meetings

Thank you to all the club members who have submitted materials for the *Pontil*. Over the past year, we have enjoyed articles by Jack Sullivan, Richard Lilienthal, Mike Cianciosi, Andy Goldfrank, and Al Miller. Please keep the submissions coming. Articles, letters, and photos may be sent to Jim Sears for inclusion in future newsletters. We would also like to see this same level of participation in the programs for future meetings. Please contact Al Miller or Andy Goldfrank with ideas for speakers or themes at our meetings.

How Mr. Duffy Outwitted Uncle Sam – and Got Rich

by Jack Sullivan
(Special to the Potomac Pontil)

“History does not teach lots of little lessons. Insofar as it teaches any lessons, it teaches only one big one: that nothing ever works out quite the way its managers intended or expected.” – Historian Gordon S. Wood.

Anyone who has worked in government for any length of time can attest to the validity of Wood’s theory on the inevitability of unintended consequences. Certainly Walter B. Duffy understood that big lesson. To the chagrin of numerous federal officials, he exploited the un-planned-for to his considerable financial benefit.

Duffy’s story begins in Canada where he was born in 1840, about two years before his father Edmund emigrated to Rochester, New York, and opened a cider refining business. It was a successful enterprise. Edmund eventually brought young Walter into the business and left it to him when he died during the 1870s. Walter, who in the meantime had served as an officer in the Union Army during the Civil War and had married in 1868, promptly expanded the business into other products. In 1881 the Rochester directory lists Duffy as a distiller and rectifier of alcohol, “French spirits,” and malt, wheat, rye and bourbon whiskeys. He also opened a second distillery in Baltimore.

The 1880s were a time when patent medicines began their meteoric rise in popularity by aggressive advertising and other ploys. Many whiskey makers began to advertise their wares as being “for medicinal use” without being specific as to the ills they were meant to remedy. Duffy took a different approach. He decided to straddle the divide between selling the 15 cent saloon shot and hawking his booze as a cure for specific diseases. Thus about 1885 – the year it was registered with the government – was born the Celebrated Duffy’s Malt Whiskey, which he advertised as the “greatest known heart tonic.” He also claimed that his product would cure consumption (tuberculosis), bronchitis, dyspepsia (chronic indigestion), and even malaria.

The very next year found Walter in financial hot water. On November 16, 1886, the New York Times headlined: “The Duffy Failure: Creditors Looking for Mr. Duffy and Looking in Vain.” A complicated financial deal had failed, one of Duffy’s partners was headed for Honduras, and he himself was lying low. Duffy’s distillery in Baltimore was in receivership, but Walter was still president of the Rochester Distilling Company, a name he would later change to the New York and Kentucky Distilling Company.

The success of Duffy’s Malt Whiskey as a cure almost certainly helped solve Walter’s bankruptcy woes. His claim that “malt whiskey” really was medicine even convinced some Temperance advocates. Duffy backed up his fiction by concocting a story that his remedy was made from “a formula worked out fifty years ago by one of the World’s Greatest Chemists.” The distiller featured a trade mark of a bearded scientist who apparently had discovered this wonder liquid. Shown here on the back of a giveaway hand mirror (Fig. 1), the old gent also appeared on Duffy’s trade cards (Fig. 2), promotion booklets (Fig. 3), blotters (Fig. 4) and in many newspaper ads.

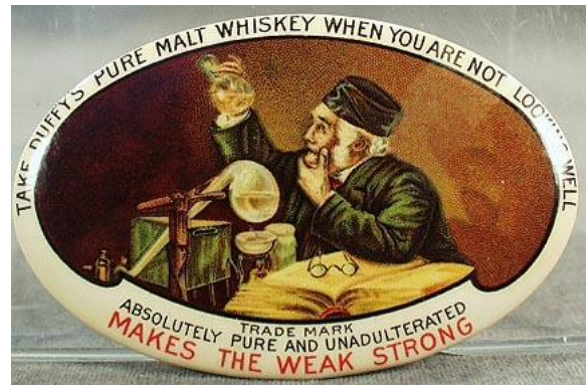


Fig 1: Duffy oval hand mirror

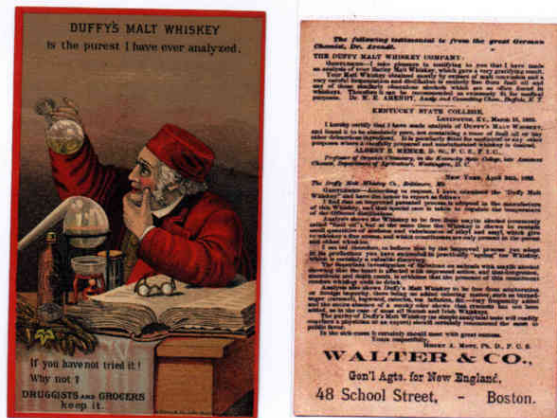


Fig. 2: Duffy trade card



Fig. 3: Back page of Duffy promotional booklet



Fig. 4: Duffy ink blotter

Duffy insisted that his product was protected from infringement by “low grade impure whiskey” by “the Patented Bottle – Round, Amber Colored, and with Duffy blown into the glass (Fig. 5). To validate his therapeutic claims, he gave away glass medicine spoons rather than shot glasses (Fig. 6).

Fig. 5: The Duffy Patented (1886) bottle (at right)



Fig. 6: Duffy glass dose spoon

Enter Washington, D.C. officialdom. In order to help pay the expenses of the Spanish American War, Congress had passed a special tax on patent medicines. On July 5, 1898, the Commissioner of Internal Revenue, N.B. Scott, wrote to the local collector of revenues in Rochester ruling that: “Duffy’s Pure Malt Whiskey, is by being advertised as a cure for consumption, dyspepsia, malaria, etc., liable to a stamp tax as a medicinal article....” A background memo elaborated that although Duffy’s contained nothing but distilled spirits, it was a patent medicine “by the manner in which it is presented to the public.” The ruling decreed a tax of two cents per bottle. We can imagine Commissioner Scott laughing about sticking it to Duffy as he signed the order.

In reality, the Feds did Walter two enormous, if unintended, favors. Estimates are that before it was repealed after the war, the stamp tax cost him about \$40,000, not an inconsiderable sum. At the same time, however, it exempted

him from hundreds of thousands in federal and state liquor taxes and allowed him to advertise with some legitimacy as “the only whiskey recognized by the Government as medicine” – a claim that turned out to be worth millions.

Even Samuel Hopkins Adams (Fig. 7), whose series of articles in *Colliers Magazine* in 1905-1906 led to the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act, admitted that Duffy was partially justified in his claim of Federal recognition of his whiskey as medicine. Nevertheless, this famous “muckraker” took particular aim at Duffy’s product, because of its claims to “cure” and its inferiority even as whiskey. He also exposed as phony newspaper testimonials to its healing effects by alleged clergymen and Temperance workers. Nevertheless, Adams’ revelations failed to dampen sales.



Fig. 7: Samuel Hopkins Adams

The first head of the Food and Drug Administration, Dr. Harvey W. Wylie in 1907 similarly took aim at Duffy – and ended frustrated with Washington bureaucratic foot-dragging: “I stated that Duffy’s Malt Whiskey was one of the most gigantic frauds of the age and a flagrant violation of the law, and that there was no necessity that we delay at all in the matter.” After his pleas for prosecution were ignored for two years, the doctor denounced the “determined efforts of my colleagues to protect Duffy’s Pure Malt Whisky from being molested either by seizure or bringing any criminal case against the maker.”

Duffy’s fellow Irishman, Patrick W. Cullinan, was the only official to win a case against the distiller. As the New York Commissioner of Excise, Cullinan in 1905 went to court claiming that Duffy’s was nothing more than sweetened whiskey and subject to state liquor taxes. The company countered with eleven physicians, four of them members of the Rochester Health Department, who swore their belief that the whiskey contained drugs that made it real medicine. The New York Supreme Court, however, ultimately supported Cullinan and made the drink subject to the liquor tax. This proved to be only a slight setback to Duffy: the money continued to roll in.

As a result of this soaring success, the formerly bankrupt Walter Duffy now was on his way to becoming a multimillionaire. His first wife, Theresa, had died in 1885 and in 1892 he married Loretta Putnam, a woman with an artistic bent and a taste for fine furnishings. She filled their fashionable

Lake Avenue (Fig. 8) mansion in Rochester – described as “palatial” –with a lavish assemblage of antiques and paintings. When some items went to auction in 1913, the auctioneer’s catalogue exclaimed: “What wealth!”



Fig. 8: Postcard: Lake Avenue Mansions

At his death at the age of 70 in 1911, the New York Times called Duffy “one of Rochester’s best known business men and financiers” and listed the many companies on which he held executive and director positions. He also was a principal stockholder in a enterprise that owned hotels, including the Rochester Hotel (Fig. 9), and the Schubert Theater in New York City.



Fig. 9: Postcard: Rochester Hotel

After Walter’s death, his Duffy’s Malt Whiskey underwent change. Dr. Wylie had warned the patent medicine industry that using the word “cure” in advertising would subject products to particular scrutiny. As an ad (Fig. 10) from 1915 indicates, Duffy’s got the message. It makes no claims beyond being a “tonic stimulant” and a “household remedy.” Moreover, the name of the firm had been changed to the Duffy Malt Whiskey Company.

Prohibition brought still other alterations. The word “whiskey” now became anathema. So Duffy’s became a tonic. The distillery moved to Los Angeles and the name changed to Duffy’s Laboratory, Ltd. Even the depiction of the Old Chemist changed on the label of the bottles (Fig. 11) as did the

embossing (Fig. 12). The product itself appears to have remained essentially whiskey: The alcoholic content was listed as “not over” 40 percent. Forty percent alcohol is 80 proof, the same as bourbon.



Fig. 10: 1915 Newspaper Ad



Fig. 11: Duffy Tonic bottle (left)

Fig. 12: Embossing on Duffy Tonic bottle (right)

Whether the “Dry police” eventually caught up with Duffy’s is not clear but by 1926 the company that Walter built was forever out of business. Nevertheless, Mr. Duffy had gone from bankruptcy to riches, helped immeasurably by his ability to profit by the fumbblings of Uncle Sam.

Notes: The information in this article was drawn from a number of Internet sources, prominent among them the New York Times online archives. A compilation of Samuel Hopkins Adams’ articles on the patent medicine industry, called *The Great American Fraud*, similarly is available online.

U.S. Soldiers Home Dairy

by Richard Lilienthal

Another new Washington DC milk bottle has surfaced – a round quart embossed U.S. SOLDIERS HOME DAIRY in slug plate (figure 1). The bottle has a 42 on the bottom which probably represents the year of manufacture (1942).



Figure 1: Quart Bottle from Soldiers Home Dairy

A little web research turned up the following information of the Soldiers' Home and its dairy:

On March 3, 1851, President Millard Fillmore signed the law creating the Soldiers' Home. It provided benefits for "every soldier ... who shall have served or may serve honestly and faithfully twenty years ... who shall have suffered by reason of disease or wounds incurred in the service and in the line of his duty, rendering him incapable of further military service." The Home's Board bought the 198 acre

farm of George W. Riggs, founder of Riggs National Bank. That land purchase included the neighboring tract of Charles Scrivener, 58 acres called Mount Joliet.

The buildings of the "Army Asylum" were completed in 1857. The former Riggs farmhouse, located along Rock Creek Church Road near where Upshur Street intersects today, became a summer house for presidents who wished to escape the suffering humidity surrounding the White House. (That tradition ended with Grover Cleveland, who kept a summer house on the high ground across town, in an area that became known as Cleveland Park.)

In 1872, the Soldiers' Home purchased Harwood, the adjacent 191-acre country estate of William Wilson Corcoran, the former partner of George Riggs and founder of the Corcoran Gallery (see map at figure 2). The Soldiers' Home ran a dairy farm on the site of the Harwood estate, but the function ended in the 1950s when the land was given over to hospital construction and street extension. Today, that former dairy farm is the site of the Washington Hospital Center, the VA Medical Hospital, and some private housing.



Figure 2: map of Corcoran estate area

The former Riggs farmhouse, now referred to as the Lincoln Cottage, is open to visitors (\$12) and the adjacent information center (free) has an interesting display on President Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation, whose second draft he wrote at the cottage. The buildings at the Soldiers' Home are an interesting architectural mix, from historic 1800s (figures 3 & 4) to what I would describe as "government institutional" 1950s (figure 5). The milk bottle appears to be the only remaining physical evidence of the existence of the dairy as the current medical complex is quite complete (figure 6).



Figures 3 (top left) and 4 (above) show historic architecture at Soldiers' Home complex, while Figure 5 (below) appears institutional. Figure 6 (at left) shows the entrance to the medical complex.



Upcoming Area Bottle Shows

APRIL 27 - HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA

The Historical Bottle-Diggers of Virginia 37th Annual Antique Bottle and 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.



MAY 2-3 - GRAY TENNESSEE

The State of Franklin Antique Bottle & Collectibles Association's 10th Annual Show & Sale (Sat. 8 AM - 2 PM, Free Adm.; Early Buyers & Setup, Fri. 12 PM - 5 PM, Adm. \$10) at the Appalachian Fairgrounds (Johnson City, Tenn.-Bristol, Tenn. area), Gray, Tennessee. 150 tables available. INFO: **MELISSA MILNER**, PH: (423) 928-4445 or E-mail: mmilner12@chartertn.net; Website: www.sfabca.com.

MAY 18 - WASHINGTON, PENNSYLVANIA

The Washington County Antique Bottle Club's 34th Annual Antique Bottle Show & Sale (9 AM - 2 PM, Donation \$3) at the Alpine Star Lounge, 735 Jefferson Ave. (From I70, Exit 17), Washington, Pennsylvania. INFO: **RUSS CRUPE**, 52 Cherry Road, Avella, PA 15312, PH: (724) 345-3653 or (412) 298-7831, E-mail: heidirus@gmail.com.

MAY 18 - BRICK, NEW JERSEY

The Jersey Shore Bottle Club's 36th Antique Bottle, Post Card & Local Memorabilia Show & Sale (Sun. 8:30 AM - 2 PM) at the Brick Elks, 2491 Hooper Ave (Old Hooper Ave) Brick, New Jersey. INFO: **RICH PEAL** 732-267-2528 or E-mail manodirt@msn.com.

JUNE 5-7 - GRANTVILLE (HERSHEY), PENNSYLVANIA

The National Association of Milk Bottle Collectors (NAMBC) Annual Convention (.) at the Holiday Inn, Grantville (Hershey), Pennsylvania. Displays, seminars, awards banquet, Sundae on Saturday ice cream social, auction. Registration necessary (\$10 for members, \$12 nonmembers). INFO: Penny Gottlieb, 18 Pond Pl., Cos Cob, CT 06807, PH: (203) 869-8411, E-mail: gottmilk@msn.com. More info available on website: www.milkbottlecollectors.com.

JUNE 6-7 - LUMBERTON, NORTH CAROLINA

The Robeson Antique Bottle Club's 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: **PAUL VALENTI**, PH: (910) 738-3074, 456 Boone Rd., Lumberton, NC 28360 or **MITCHELL McCORMICK**, PH: (910) 628-6245 or **BRET LEE**, Email: dex@intrstar.net.

JULY 19-20 - ADAMSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

The 7th Annual Shupp's Grove Bottle Festival (Sat.- Sun. 6 AM to dark; Fri. Dealer Set-up 2 PM followed by Early Buyers 5 PM) at Shupp's Grove in Adamstown, Pennsylvania. INFO: **STEVE GUION**, E-mail: sguoin124@comcast.net or **JERE HAMBLETON**, E-mail: jshdetector@webtv.net or PH: (717) 393-5175.

AUGUST 8-10 - YORK, PENNSYLVANIA EXPO

The 2008 FOHBC EXPO (Fri. Seminars and Specialty Meetings in AM; Set-up, Early Adm. 1 - 5 PM, Banquet 6:30 PM; Sat. 9 AM - 5 PM, Early Adm. 7 - 9 AM; Sun. 9 AM - 3 PM) at the York Fairgrounds, York, Pennsylvania. 600-800 tables capacity for the largest EXPO ever! For consignments, contracts and INFO: **R. WAYNE LOWRY**, 401 Johnston Ct., Raymore, MO 64083, PH: (816) 318-0161, E-mail: JarDoctor@aol.com

SEPTEMBER 21 - WINCHESTER, VIRGINIA

The Apple Valley Bottle Collectors Club 34th Annual Show & Sale (9 AM - 3 PM, Early Buyers 7:30 AM) at the Mt. Carmel Baptist Church Family Life Center, 1309 Opequon Ave, Winchester, Virginia. INFO: **RICHARD M., VENSKOSKE**, 2038 Chestnut Grove Rd., Winchester, VA. 22603, PH: (540) 247-4429.

NOVEMBER 2 - ELKTON, MARYLAND

The Tri-State Bottle Collectors & Diggers Club 36th Annual Show & Sale (9 AM - 2 PM) at the Singerly Fire Hall, Routes 279 & 213, Elkton, Maryland. INFO: **DAVE BROWN**, PH: (302) 738-9960.

NOVEMBER 9 - PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

The Pittsburgh Antique Bottle Club Annual Show & Sale (9 AM - 2 PM, Early Buyers 7 AM) at The Ice Garden, Rostraver Twp. (Exit 46B of I-70, 4.1 miles north) 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 30 - BETHLEHEM, PENNSYLVANIA

The Forks of the Delaware Bottle Collectors Assoc. 35th Annual Show & Sale (9 AM - 3 PM, Early Buyers 7:30 AM) at the Bethlehem Catholic High School, Madison & Dewberry Avenues, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. INFO: **BILL HEGEDUS**, 20 Cambridge Pl., Catasauqua, PA 18032, PH: (610) 264-5945.