

# The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

## May 2009

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### Meeting May 26th

Flasks will be the theme of our April meeting. Please bring in your favorite flasks for show & tell.

### April Meeting Photos



Cure Bottles were the theme of the evening, but several members also brought in other bottles and jars for show & tell.

Bob Ford is pictured at right displaying some of his favorite cures.



# Outerbridge Horsey: A Blue-Blood and His Booze

By Jack Sullivan

Special to the Potomac Pontil

If there was a social and political aristocracy in the United States during 18th and 19th Centuries, the Horsey family of Maryland certainly had to be counted among it. What then could have compelled the scion of the family, a youth with the unlikely given name of Outerbridge, to decide upon turning 19 that the passion of his life would be to make good whiskey?

Outerbridge Horsey was a direct descendant on his mother's side from Charles Carroll, a Maryland signer of the Declaration of Independence and one of the state's most famous citizens. His grandfather, Thomas Sim Lee, twice had been governor of Maryland. His father, the first Outerbridge Horsey, was a U.S. Senator from Delaware and earlier its Attorney General. The blood lines ran blue.

The family also was wealthy. Governor Lee had established a plantation of 2,000 acres in Frederick County, Maryland, in the shadow of the Blue Ridge Mountains (Fig. 1), near the present town of Burkittsville (Fig. 2). On it he built a mansion he called "Needwood" (Fig. 3). With his death the land was divided among his children, one of them Eliza (aka Elizabeth). After she married Senator Horsey they built their own large home on her portion. They called it Needwood II. The youngest of four children, Outerbridge II was born there in 1819.



1. The Blue Ridge



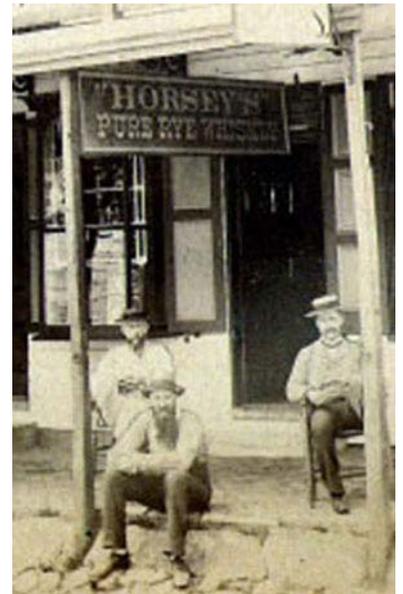
2. Burkittsville sign



3. Sketch of Needwood Mansion

## Civil War at Needwood

It was the Needwood property that Outerbridge inherited at an early age. About 1839 he determined not only to farm it, but to establish a distillery there. His initial operations appear to have been small with mainly local whiskey sales, in keeping with the Maryland farmer-distiller traditions of that era. Shown here is a Horsey sign at a store in neighboring Boonesboro (Fig. 4).



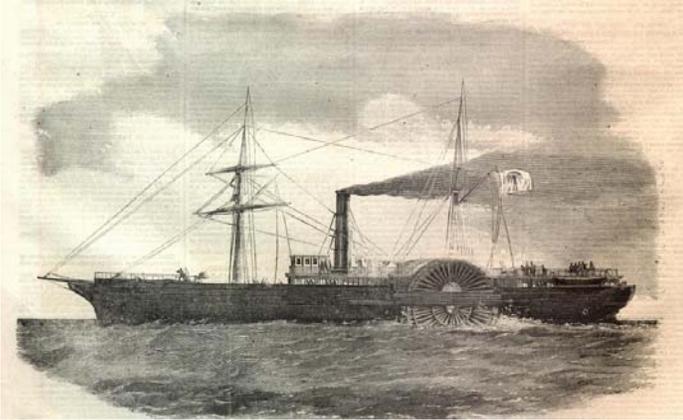
4. Boonesville store with Horsey sign

With the outbreak of the Civil War, perhaps to avoid military service in the Union Army, Horsey decamped to Europe for the duration of the fighting. During his absence Needwood became a battleground. On September 13, 1862, Confederate cavalry under General J.E.B. Stuart occupied Burkittsville. Two days later the forces of the Union and Confederate armies clashed at the Battle of Crampton's Gap. In the process Horsey's distillery was destroyed and whiskey he had stored was consumed by thirsty combatants.

Despite these setbacks, Horsey remained passionate about making whiskey. He made the most of his sojourn in Europe to visit Scotland and other European distillery sites to glean as much knowledge as possible on how to produce high quality liquor. Returning home after the war, he set about rebuilding his operation and eventually claimed it as "the first Eastern pure rye distillery of the U.S."

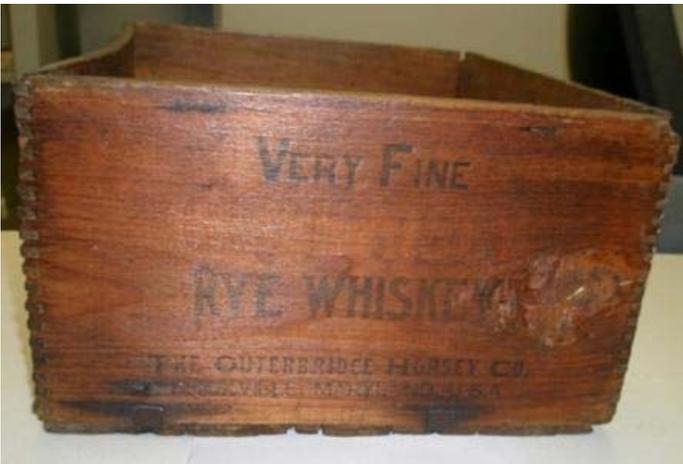
## Whiskey Around the Horn

Horsey's method of aging his whiskey was unusual for the times and brought fame to his operation. Routinely he sent barrels via ship, like the vessel shown here (Fig. 5), around Cape Horn to San Francisco and then by railroad back to



5. Ocean-going steamship

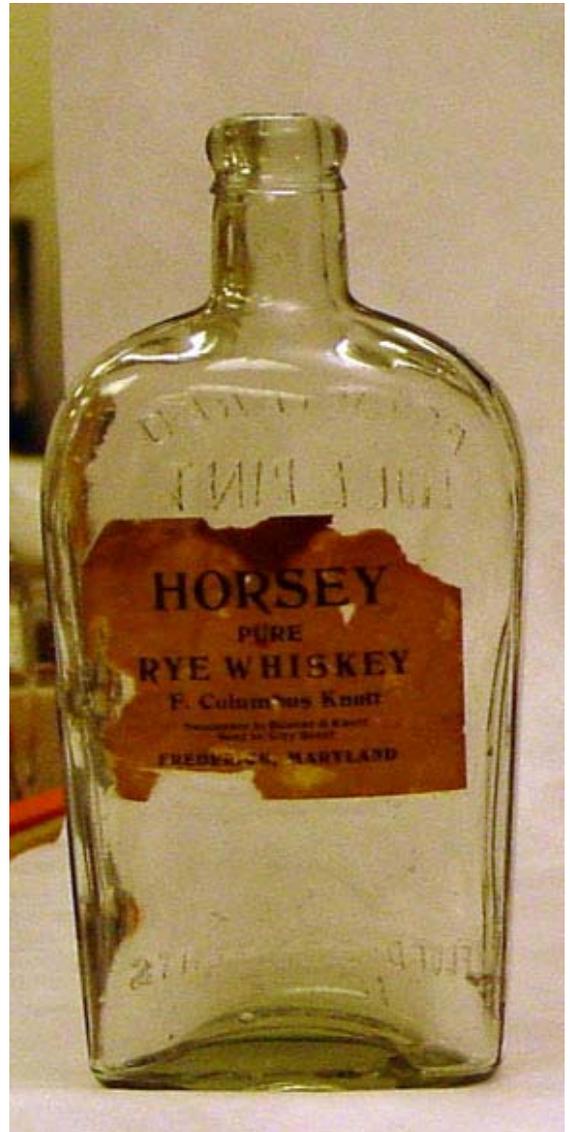
Maryland for bottling. His theory was that sloshing around inside barrels on the high seas mellowed and aged the whiskey in beneficial ways that sedentary storing in warehouses failed to do. He marked crates containing Horsey Rye with the message: *“This whiskey was shipped by sea to San Francisco per S.S. \_\_\_\_\_, thus acquiring a unique and most agreeable softness.”* (Fig. 6).



6. Horsey crate

Horsey marketed his whiskey in bottles with fancy labels (Fig. 7), established dealers in nearby towns (Fig. 8), and opened an office for the Outerbridge Horsey Distilling Co. at 20 Light Street in Baltimore. An 1880 directory of Washington area merchants carried a promotion for a Georgetown storekeeper named A. H. Bradt *“who makes a specialty of the celebrated ‘Horsey Whiskey’...This is kept in stock and has an age of six years...this is purely a straight rye whiskey of superior quality and flavor.”* Bradt also stocked a second Horsey brand, called “Golden Gate,” possibly because it had been to San Francisco and back.

7. Horsey quart bottle



8. Horsey pint bottle

### Horsey Rye Goes National

The whiskey got other free advertising from a popular 1887 novel of the Civil War entitled *“Katy of Catoctin.”* Author George Alfred Townsend, a neighbor of Horsey’s, had one character declaim: *“Here’s a flask of old Needwood whiskey I know I can recommend.”* An 1897 San Francisco guidebook subtitled *“Good Things to Eat and Drink and Where to Get Them”* also touted Horsey Rye. As Jim Bready, the guru of Maryland distilling, has put it: *“For many years, this funny name whiskey from an obscure coil somewhere in the outback, this hundred-proof Maryland marvel, ‘rich in all the qualities that epicures require,’ had a Massachusetts-to-California clientele--at hotels and clubs, not corner saloons.”*

Establishments carrying Outerbridge’s brand were given an attractive bar ornament – a metal horse about four inches high (Fig. 9). On one side the base read *“The O. Horsey Co.”* and on the other, *Burkittsville*. Made by a Cincinnati manufacturer, the Homan Silver Plate Co., a Horsey horse recently sold on eBay for \$331.



9. Horsey pewter horse

With the profits from his whiskey and his farm Outerbridge and his wife, Anna, also a descendent of Charles Carroll, bought a house in Washington, D.C., where the couple spent winters and were active in local high society. Horsey also was the Democratic National Committeeman for Maryland for many years and served on the boards of several major companies.

With a daily capacity less of than 400 bushels of mash, production from Horsey’s distillery put it almost squarely in the middle of Maryland’s whiskey makers. Taxable revenues from the operation stayed steady at around \$25,000 for many years. During his 60 years in distilling, Horsey steadfastly emphasized maintaining quality over increasing quantities of his whiskey.

“Old Horsey” and Quality Declines

At the advanced age of 83 Outerbridge died in 1902. He apparently never disclosed why an heir “to the manor born” as he was would be so passionate about making good whiskey. His obituary in the New York Times emphasized his political connections, adding as an afterthought that he also was a distiller.

Horsey’s aristocratic family apparently had no interest in running the distillery and shortly after his death they sold it. Under new management production doubled in value by 1907. The name of the whiskey was changed to “Old Horsey” and was marketed more vigorously to a wider drinking audience. An etched shot glass exists from this period (Fig. 10).



10. Old Horsey shot glass

In addition to rye, the Horsey name was applied to a straight whiskey (Fig. 11). The product no longer was traveling around Cape Horn, however, and the brand (Fig. 12) instead was being touted for the quality of its water. The distillery’s supply came from sweet tasting springs on South Mountain. What it returned, according to a 1914 government report on stream quality, was 6,000 gallons of discharge daily from spent mash into Middle Creek, a tributary of Broad Run that runs through Burkittsville.



11. Old Horsey pint bottle (left)



12. Old Horsey quart bottle (right)

With the advent of Prohibition, operations at the Horsey Distillery Co. came to a screeching halt. Meanwhile, the Sherwood Distilling Co., originally of Cockeysville, Md., survived by selling medicinal alcohol. Upon Repeal in 1934 its management bought Horsey Distilling, shut down the plant and kept the well recognized brand name. Sherwood later moved operations to Westminster, Md., but the distilling and bottling may have been done at the Foust Distillery in Pennsylvania.

In the process, a match cover (Fig. 13) from that era discloses, Horsey Rye had been transformed from a quality brand, aged six years in barrels that had spent weeks on the sea, into a two-year-old cheap whiskey for the bargain booze trade. If he had been alive Outerbridge would have been outraged.



13. Post-pro match cover

Today the distillery and brand name he built are only a memory. The distillery structures long since have been razed. Burkittsville itself has achieved recent national attention as the purported site of the "Blair Witch" low budget horror movie. The name Outerbridge has continued to be applied down the Horsey family tree. One of them became U.S. Ambassador to the former Czechoslovakia. Among the harder parts of his job, he told Time Magazine, was explaining his name to people.

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**Notes:** This article was derived from a number of printed and Internet sources. A major source was Jim Bready's article on Maryland whiskey that appeared in the Winter 1990 issue of the *Maryland Historical Magazine*. Another key resource for information and illustrations was the EllenJaye website on whiskey, as well as Robin Preston's pre-pro.com site.

## Upcoming Area Bottle Shows

### JUNE 4-7 – GRANTVILLE (HERSHEY), PENNSYLVANIA

The National Association of Milk Bottle Collectors' 29th Annual Convention at the Holiday Inn in Grantville (Hershey), Pennsylvania. INFO: **PENNY GOTTLIEB**, 18 Pond Rd., **Cos Cob**, CT 06807, PH: (203) 869-8411, E-mail: gottmilk@msn.com. Website: www.milkbottlecollectors.com.



### JULY 18 & 19 ADAMSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

Shupp's Grove Bottle Festival, (Sat. & Sun 6 AM to dark, early buyers Fri. 5 PM), at Shupp's Grove in Adamstown. Info: **STEVE GUION**, (717) 626-5557 or **JERE HAMBLETON**, PH: (717) 393) 5175, email: jshdetector@webtv.net

### SEPTEMBER 20 WINCHESTER, VIRGINIA

Apple Valley Bottle Collectors Club 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Show & Sale (Sun. 9AM – 3 PM, \$3, Early Adm. 7:30 AM \$10) – at Mt. Carmel Baptist Church Family Life Center, 1309 Opequon Ave. (just off Pleasant Valley Road), Winchester, VA. INFO: **RICHARD VENS Koske**, PH: (540) 247-4429.

### SEPTEMBER 27 BATSTO, NEW JERSEY

New Jersey Antique Bottle Club (JABC, Batsto Annual Show & Sale, (9 AM to 3 PM), at the Wharton State Forest, Batsto, NJ. Info: **PAUL DELGUERCIO**, PH: (609) 352-7104 email: paulhavoc@comcast.net

### OCTOBER 3 - RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

Richmond Virginia Antique Bottle Show & Sale (Sat. 9 AM - 3 PM, \$3, Early Adm. 7:30 AM \$10) **NEW LOCATION** -at the Chesterfield County Fairgrounds, 10300 Courthouse Rd., Chesterfield, VA 23832, INFO: **MARVIN CROKER**, PH:

(804) 275-1101, E-mail: RichBottleClub@comcast.net or **ED FAULKNER**, PH: (804) 739-2951

*Note: The Richmond club has asked for our support in making their new show location a success. Please consider selling or displaying at Richmond this year.*

### NOVEMBER 1 ELKTON, MARYLAND

Tri-State Bottle Collectors and Diggers Club 37th Annual Show & Sale, (9 AM to 2 PM), at the Singerly Fire Hall, Routes 279-213, Elkton, MD. Info: **DAVE BROWN**, PH: (302) 738-9960.

## Is This for Real?

*Submitted by Andy Goldfrank*

Early this month, I received another remarkable email from Adam Woodward, a famed New York City digger, that is better characterized a true bottle riddle. Let's see if you can figure it out:

*Please forgive the dramatic lead up, but I don't get out into the fresh air much any more with the 3-week-old boy and all. In fact, I hadn't touched a shovel in ages but saw a site Friday walking my daughter to school that was beaming that high frequency pitch just outside the human range of hearing that very old glass makes when its disturbed (usually by heavy machinery).*

*Thereafter, I couldn't get the not altogether unpleasant ringing out of my ears the rest of the day and most of the night. Tough decision had to be made considering the responsibility of fatherhood (x2) and odds of getting permission being slim to none. Not being able to think about anything else until I find out what piece of old glass is laying in there making that racket is keeping me awake. So at 3 am I find myself being ripped from my domestic sanctuary, conversing with a permissive night security guard, and then finally tossing about into a cold dark hole.*

*Ahhhh, there's a happy ending for down in that crowded hole I run into the last "person" in the world I ever expected to see in New York City. This pretty lady was having a little get together with some of her friends from Louisville, New England and who-knows-where-else – a reclusive bitter old celebrity allegedly from Northern California! Liz Taylor? No. Better gams but harder to stomach.*

*Can you guess who I ran into?*

Now, I was a bit stumped and then it very faintly dawned on me. Noooo way. And then the pictures just blew me away. Take a gander on the next page.



around but like any good bottle, no matter how many there are, they seem to work their way into the woodwork. Still considered very rare, this example was part of the shipwreck cache and is one of the better ones found. After they were emptied (they were all found full) most were cleaned by a professional bottle cleaner. Unfortunately some didn't make it so the number of undamaged examples today, off the wreck or found in the U.S. is probably around 30.

Jeff and Holly Noordsy's website once offered a Bryant's and stated that:

*Bryant's Stomach Bitters is one of the best known examples of this desirable Western bottle. The bottle is boldly embossed and blown in a clear shade of crude olive green glass. Fresh to the market from an old-time collection, this bottle was dug in the West many years ago and recently tumbled to near perfection. The bottle retains a pleasing exterior luster and it so far exceeds the appearance of the shipwreck examples as to make any comparison a moot point.*

In turn, John "Digger" Odell responded to a question from an Australian digger about a Bryant's Stomach Bitters opining:

*I wish I knew more about the Bryant's. The information around is mostly speculation to my knowledge and is suggested by the bottle being found in the Western United States. There is an Eastern bottle with similar embossing but no one has made a solid connection between them.*

Last, but not least, Bill Ham and Carlyn Ring wrote in their recent *Bitters Bottle Supplement* (2004) as follows:

*There is speculation that the smooth based examples were distributed mainly in the East, and the pontiled examples were distributed mainly in the West. In 1999 several cases of pontiled Bryant's Stomach Bitters were raised from a sunken ship off the coast of Brazil. The bottles were full and were heavily scaled. Approximately thirty-seven unbroken bottles were recovered. A "BRYANT'S CELEBRATED BITTERS" label was visible on some of the bottles. Many of these bottles have been professionally cleaned. These examples show the effects of heavy etching and cleaning. A number of broken examples with smooth bases have been dug in western Australia.*

Now Adam's recovery is pontiled and from the East Coast so his find seems to break the typical explanation.

Yup, a spectacular pontiled, *Bryant's Stomach Bitters* excavated in the heart of New York City in 2009! And rather than bore you with my many theories about this bottle, here are what the experts have said over the past couple of years. According to Jeff Wichman of American Bottle Auctions:

*It's a known fact in the bottle world that a dozen and a half of the lady's leg variants of the Bryant's Bitters were found off the coast of Brazil in tolerable condition. Six years later, there are still a few floating*

Ham also cites to a *New York Daily Times* advertisement for Bryant's from 1860. I figured this might lead me to the purveyor or manufacturer but the Ham advertisement was not locatable. Instead, I did pull up from the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, which was a contemporary of the *New York Daily Times*, a nice advertisement as is depicted. Perhaps coincidental, I located an advertisement from 1869 that offers California wines and brandy from the same South William Street produce depot noted in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* advertisement for Bryant's. Thereafter, I leave it to you to speculate but it does look like the

Bryant's may well have been a California product. Regardless, Adam did find a special bottle, don't you think? It sure pays to follow your digging intuition.

**MEDICAL.**

**BRYANT'S UNRIVALLED STOMACH BITTERS.**

**BRYANT'S UNRIVALLED STOMACH BITTERS.**  
**BRYANT'S UNRIVALLED STOMACH BITTERS.**

**A PURELY VEGETABLE TONIC!**  
**A PURELY VEGETABLE TONIC!**  
**A PURELY VEGETABLE TONIC!**

**CURES DYSPEPSIA.**  
**CURES DYSPEPSIA.**  
**CURES DYSPEPSIA.**

**CURES NERVOUS DEBILITY!**  
**CURES NERVOUS DEBILITY!**  
**CURES NERVOUS DEBILITY!**

Read what Dr. CHILTON says about it:

CERTIFICATE OF DR. JAMES R. CHILTON:

I have made chemical examination of a bottle of Bryant's Stomach Bitters, and have been confidentially informed by the maker of the exact formula by which he compounds it; the ingredients used in its preparation comprise, in my judgment, some of the best vegetable substances known as general tonics. It is an agreeable aromatic bitter, and does not contain any deleterious ingredients. I can recommend it to those who require the use of a gentle stimulant to give tone to the stomach. **JAMES R. CHILTON, M. D., Chemist.**  
 New York, April 22, 1859.  
 For sale everywhere. Depot No. 8 South William street, New York. ad2 3m\*

**CALIFORNIA WINES.**



**G. GRÖEZINGER,**  
*SAN FRANCISCO,*

Has constantly on hand, for EXPORT, a large and well assorted stock of  
 White, Red, Port, Angelica, Sherry and Muscatell

**WINES,**  
 AND  
**GRAPE BRANDY,**

Which he offers at the very lowest market rates.

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Have a full supply of the above named  
**NATIVE WINES AND BRANDY**

Always on hand, and sell them at California prices, excluding freight and other charges.



The Bryant's shown above is one from the Brazil wreck that was offered by American Bottle Auctions.