

The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

June 2009

In this issue:

White House Poker and Bottled in Bond by Jack Sullivan.....page 2

Upcoming Area Bottle Shows.....page 5

Meeting June 30th

This will be our last meeting before the summer break. Lee Shipman, who likes architectural themes, proposed that we bring in cathedral pickle bottles for show & tell in June. If you do not have any cathedral bottles, feel free to bring in other food bottles.

May Meeting Photos



Flasks were the theme of the May meeting. Roland Longerbeam shows a flask that he purchased at a local auction (above).

The two flasks at the forefront of the photo above left are Union ovals dug by Andy Goldfrank. The other items in this photo are some of Andy's recent finds. Tales of Andy's digging adventures were a highlight of the May meeting.

The photo at right shows a variety of show & tell items including local flasks displayed by Peter Ryduist.



Save the Date: September 26th Picnic

The Potomac Bottle Collectors annual picnic is scheduled for Saturday, September 26th. Details will follow in the next 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: 609/472-5473)

& Andy Goldfrank (email: amg_sticky@yahoo.com, PH: 202/588-0543)

Web Site: www.potomacbottlecollectors.org

Maintained by Al Miller: www.potomacbottlecollectors.org/contact.php

White House Poker and “Bottled in Bond”

By Jack Sullivan
Special to the Potomac Pontil

Shown here is the label of a DC whiskey brand call Oakland that proclaims boldly that the contents of the blown-in-a-mold glass container have been “bottled in bond” (Fig. 1). The same term has been used on countless whiskey bottles, labels, and ads for more than a century. According to an account that may be apocryphal, those words might never have appeared except for a late night poker game at the White House with the President of the United States.



Fig. 1: Oakland Whiskey label

Democrat Grover Cleveland (Fig. 2) was a “lame duck” President early in 1889, having lost his election to Republican Benjamin Harrison the previous year. An avid poker player, one evening before leaving office Cleveland was playing cards with a group of friends that included Senator John Carlisle of Kentucky. Carlisle (Fig. 3) was a champion of his state’s bourbon industry and in Congress had been responsible for legislation that changed the way distillers were taxed on their stored whiskey.

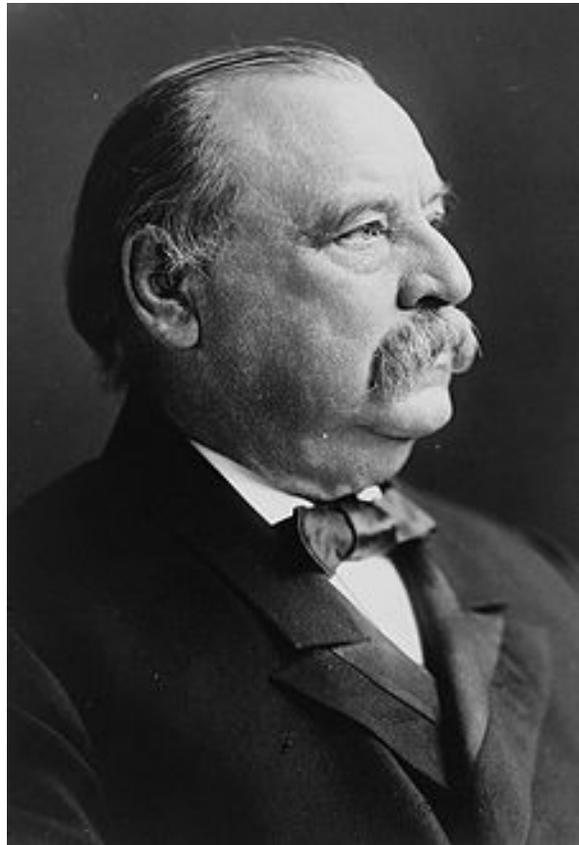


Fig. 2: Grover Cleveland



Fig. 3: John G. Carlisle

During the game, Carlisle, renowned in the Nation’s Capital as a poor poker player, won a large pot from Cleveland and his cronies by drawing four kings. “Take the money,” Cleveland is alleged to have bellowed. “If I am President again you shall be Secretary of the Treasury. But don’t you make that

four card draw too often.” Four years later Cleveland was reelected and, true to his word, appointed Senator Carlisle to the Treasury post.

The new appointee had whiskey on his mind. Kentucky distillers in particular were suffering from the adulteration of their product. All manner of substances were being mixed by shady characters, put into bottles or sold over the bar and called fine bourbon. Carlisle pressed for legislation that would allow marketing whiskey that would be sealed and sold under proprietary names with a guarantee of integrity from the United States Government. After a Congressional investigation uncovered massive counterfeiting and adulteration, the Bottled in Bond Act was passed in 1897 to protect the drinking public. President Cleveland, whose drink of choice is said to have been champagne, signed it.

“Bottled in bond” or “bonded” whiskey was (and still is) whiskey that was produced according to the guidelines set forth in this more-than-century-old statute. The requirements are: 1) Whiskey has to be stored in a federally bonded warehouse like this Maker’s Mark facility **Fig. 4**). 2) It must be legally defined straight whiskey and distilled in a single season by a single distillery. 3) It has to be stored for at least four years before bottling. 4) It must be bottled at one hundred proof (50% alcohol). The government then certifies that the whiskey was bottled at this proof; it also vouches for the aging period. The federal guarantee is symbolized by sealing the whiskey with a green strip stamp on each bottle. In exchange for meeting all these requirements, distillers qualify for tax relief – they do not pay taxes on their whiskey until it is bottled and removed from the warehouse for sale. Treasury agents are assigned to insure the rules are followed.



Fig. 4: Maker’s Mark bonded warehouse

The law elicited almost no controversy since it did not affect the larger whiskey industry – only those who presumably were striving to make a quality product. Almost immediately after enactment, Chapin & Gore, a Chicago distributor of Kentucky whiskey, whose headquarters are shown here (**Fig. 5**), quickly cased in glass some 4,000 barrels of Old Heritage Bourbon purchased from the W.A.



Fig. 5: Chapin & Gore Bldg.

Gaines Company of Franklin County, Kentucky, and put the bottles on the market. Thus Old Heritage, seen here in a trade card from the era (**Fig. 6**), is reputed to be the first American bottled-in-bond whiskey.

Fig. 6: Old Heritage Whiskey

Soon other distillers began feature the term on their labels and advertising (**Fig. 7**) as in this 1909 James Pepper ad. It was employed on giveaways like shot glasses and matches (**Figs. 8,9**). While “bottled-in-bond” generally is considered a sign of whiskey quality, use of the term does not guarantee it. The statute says nothing about the quality of grain used, the strain of yeast, the sanitation of the plant or the skill or ethics of the distiller. But it gave those within the law a cudgel against the peddlers of fusel oil, carbonic acid and other ingredients as whiskey. The language on the back of the DC Oakland Whiskey quart contains a warning that anyone refilling the empty bottle – a common deceptive practice of the time – could be subject to a fine of up to \$1,000 and two years in prison.





Fig. 7: 1909 Pepper Whiskey ad

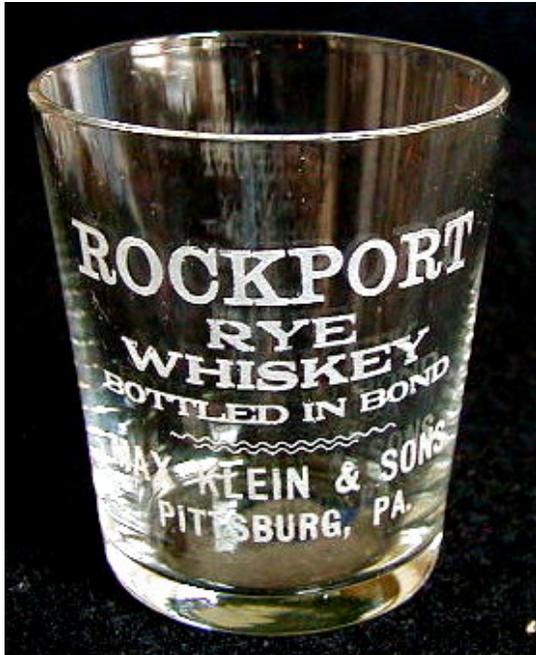


Fig. 8: Rockport Rye shot glass



Fig. 9: Glencoe Distillery match cover

Though the years, distillers have made their own decisions about using the “bottled-in-bond” attribute in their marketing. Milton Kronheim, for years DC’s premier liquor dealer, featured the term on his whiskey bottles (Fig. 10), this one with the embossed post-Prohibition “nasty words” that date it within the period 1935-1964. The Rittenhouse Rye fifth (Fig. 11) is hot off the liquor store shelf. Yet many distillers, apparently determining that “bottled in bond” has no merchandising value, disdain to put it on their labels. As a result, the term, whether embossed or on a paper label, has no real value in dating a bottle – except to indicate that it is post 1897.



Fig. 10: Kronheim's Bonded Whiskey (left)



Fig. 11: Rittenhouse Rye (right)

A final note: That green stamp the Government affixes to bonded bottles has had the same picture engraved on it for 102 years. It is none other than John Carlisle (Fig. 12). While Grover Cleveland largely has been forgotten, his Secretary of Treasury’s face is featured every day on every liquor store shelf in America. In a sense he is still drawing those four kings.



Fig. 12: Carlisle on the green strip stamp

Notes: The material for this article are from a number of published and Internet sources, a principal one "*The Social History of Bourbon*" by Gerald Carson (1963). Thanks to Dr. Richard Lilienthal for the pictures of the DC Oakland and Kronheim whiskeys. Robin Preston of the www.pre-pro.com website is the source of the images of the shot glass and matches.

Jack Sullivan has a new site on the Internet featuring shorter items aimed at the collecting community. It can be accessed through Google as "Bottles Booze & Back Stories Blog."

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 18 - 23 HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

The 12th Annual All-Dairy Antique & Collectibles Show & Sale, Fri. Sept. 18th, from 2 to 7 PM & Sat. to Wed. 8 AM to 5 PM), at the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex & Expo Center, Harrisburg, PA. Info: **CHARLES A. ITLE**, PH: (717) 423-6789 or **LOLLY LESHER**, PH: (717) 787-2905.

SEPTEMBER 20 WINCHESTER, VIRGINIA

The Apple Valley Bottle Collectors Club 35th Annual Show & Sale, (9 AM to 3 PM, early buyers 7:30 AM), at the Mount Carmel Baptist Church, Family Life Center, 1309 Opequon Avenue, Winchester, VA. Info: **RICHARD M. VENSCHOSKE**, 2038 Chestnut Grove Road, Winchester, VA 22603. 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.

NOVEMBER 22 - GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

The Southeast Bottle Club's Greensboro Antique Bottle, Pottery & Collectibles 8th Annual Show & Sale (Sun. 9 AM - 3 PM, Adm. \$1, Set-up 7 - 9 AM; No Early Adm.) at the Farmer's Curb Market, 501 Yanceyville St., Greensboro, North Carolina. Free appraisals, free bottles for kids, food available, 160 tables. INFO: **REGGIE LYNCH**, 4734 Pimlico Lane, Waxhaw, NC 28173, PH: (704) 221-6489, E-mail: rlynch@antiquebottles.com. Website: www.antiquebottles.com/greensboro.



At the May meeting Mark Benbow presented recent digging finds.