

The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

July-September 2009

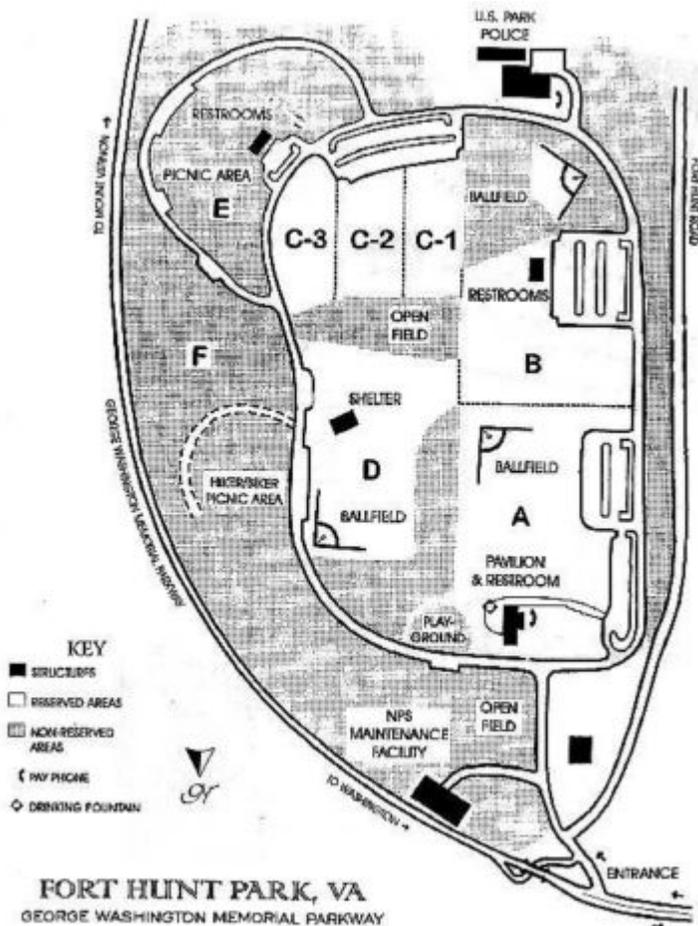
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Welcome to Herbert William Goldfrank, born September 11, 2009. Herbert is shown here with big sister Samantha and their father, club president Andy Goldfrank. Andy reports that Herbert came into the world at a whopping 9 pounds, 10 ounces and that he was born 102 years to the day after the paternal great-grandfather for whom he is named.

Picnic September 26th
(Picnic Takes the Place of Regular
September Meeting)



Please join us at 1 PM on Saturday, September 26th 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. If you happen to have a large number of guests coming, please contact Jim Sears so that we make sure we have enough food for everyone.

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.

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

W.C. Fields: The Tippler as an Icon

By Jack Sullivan

Special to the Potomac Pontil

The American comedian W. C. Fields (**Fig. 1, below**) has been a favorite of mine since grade school. From movies like "My Little Chickadee," and "The Bank Dick," to his radio sparring with Charlie McCarthy, Fields' wit and ability to create a distinctive image have never failed to engage my attention – and that of millions of others. Much of his humor revolved around drinking, a personal obsession of Fields that ultimately would lead to his death. In life, however, he made it a prime source of his humor. Some examples:



"Always carry a flagon of whiskey in case of snakebite and furthermore always carry a small snake."

"Once ... in the wilds of Afghanistan, I lost my corkscrew, and we were forced to live on nothing but food and water for days." (My Little Chickadee)

"How well I remember my first encounter with The Devil's Brew. I happened to stumble across a case of bourbon— and went right on stumbling for several days thereafter."

"So long as the presence of death lurks with anyone who goes through the simple act of swallowing, I will make mine whiskey."

"When life hands you lemons, make whisky sours."

"The advantages of whiskey over dogs are legion. Whiskey does not need to be periodically wormed, it does not need to be fed, it never requires a special kennel, it has no toenails to be clipped or coat to be stripped. Whiskey sits quietly in its special nook until you want it. True, whiskey has a nasty habit of running out, but then so does a dog."

As a result of this close identification of Fields with drinking, he has been depicted numerous times on spirits bottles, jugs, beer steins and mugs. In this mode, he is following in the line of a famous English souse generally known as "Toby Filpott." (**Fig. 2**). While Toby's origins are disputed, his face and body have been caricatured for more than four centuries in England as an icon of the tippler. Character jugs, such as those shown here, very often are referred to even today as "Toby Jugs." Fields in contemporary times has played the same role as Toby – the 20th Century image and icon of the drinking man. I have a whiskey decanter/ jug from the Turtle Bay Distilling Company of Lawrenceburg, Kentucky, called W.C. Fields Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey (**Fig. 3**). It dates from about 1970. In this case, Fields' head is filled with whiskey. It is accompanied by a water pitcher with a similar face (**Fig. 4**). Although neither item has a pottery mark, they are attributed to the McCoy Pottery Company of Roseville, Ohio.



Fig. 2: Toby Filpott character jug (above)



Fig. 3: Turtle Bay Distillery decanter jug (at left)



Fig. 4: Turtle Bay water pitcher



Fig. 6: Paul Lux Fields decanter jug - top hat

The David Sherman Corp. (DSC), more recently known as Luxco, issued at least three Fields decanters for their whiskey. They depict Fields with the typical top hat (Fig. 5), a tam from his golfing spoofs (Fig. 6) and as a uniformed guard from the movie, "The Bank Dick" (Fig 7). In each case the hat is removed to decant the spirituous contents. These ceramics were issued during the mid-1970s. Each jug bears the name of Paul Lux, a founding partner of DSC in 1958 and, by 2004, the CEO of the firm. Lux is assumed to be the designer of these bottles. The St. Louis based organization owned at least 60 liquor brand names and produced these Fields bottles for its network of distributors, wholesalers and retailers.



Fig. 5: Doulton Fields character jug



Fig. 7: Paul Lux Fields decanter jug - tam

England's Royal Doulton Pottery, famously the largest producer of Toby Jugs, made Fields the subject of a character jug, one that emphasized his florid face and red bulbous nose (**Fig. 8**). A piece of his walking stick serves as the handle. The jug was issued in 1982 as part of the pottery's Celebrity Collection and included on the base a line from the Fields movie "Never Give a Sucker an Even Break": *"I was in love with a beautiful blonde once. She drove me to drink. That's the one thing I'm indebted to her for."*



Fig. 8: Paul Lux Fields decanter jug - bank dick



Fig. 9: Sigma the Tastesetter Fields water jug

Two other Toby-like jugs, perhaps designed as bar water pitchers, appear to have come from Japan. The first shows Fields in a straw boater hat with a more benign look than is usual (**Fig. 9**). On the base a mark identifies this item as a creation of "Sigma the Tastesetter," This was a Japanese-based organization. A second jug (**Fig. 10**) has no attribution but the appearance of the item also seems a product of Japan.



Fig. 10: Black Hat Fields water jug

Fields also has been a popular figure for beer steins and mugs. One dated 1971 appears to be a hand-thrown artisan creation. The comedian, in bas relief, appears to be struggling to emerge from the vessel (**Fig. 11**). A more conventional beer stein, unmarked, emphasizes Field's top hat and swollen nose (**Fig. 12**). Finally, dated 1982, is a mug with a carnival glaze (**Fig. 13**).



Fig. 11: Artisan-made beer mug



Fig. 12: Fields beer stein



Fig. 14: McCoy Pottery cookie jar



Fig. 13: Carnival Glaze mug



Fig. 15: Wheaton Glass decanter

Although the Fields image most often appears on items linked to drinking, the McCoy pottery also used his face as the motif for a ceramic cookie jar (Fig. 14). He also makes appearances on a number of glass objects, including shot glasses, drinking glasses and decanters, such as a 1980 manufacture of the Wheaton Glass Company (Fig. 15).

Question is, how long will W.C. Fields be recognized as the American icon of the tippler? Note that many of these items were made years after his death in 1946. Because his movies will continue to be available to generations down through the years, my guess is he will be remembered for a long, long time and artifacts bearing his face will continue to be collected. But recalling that Toby Filpott is working on his fifth century, it would appear that Fields still has a long way to go.

Notes: This article is drawn from a wide range of Internet sources. Wikipedia has a detailed entry on W.C. Fields for those interested in learning more about him. Jack Sullivan now has a blog aimed at the collector community. It can be found at: <http://bottlesboozeandbackstories.blogspot.com>

FOAA Dig

by Mike Cianciosi

This past June I volunteered to work with the Friends Of Alexandria Archeology (FOAA). I went to an orientation on a Saturday, and the next Saturday I was out digging with them.

The orientation was at the George Washington Masonic temple (figure 1). That's because the dig site is on the grounds behind the temple. Half of the orientation was a crash course in archeology, and the other half was information about the dig site.



Figure 1: George Washington Masonic Temple

The Masonic temple was built on a hill called Shuter's Hill. In 1781 a large mansion was built on Shuter's Hill, overlooking the town of Alexandria and the Potomac River. Insurance papers from 1797 show an outline of the mansion. The papers also show two square outbuildings that were behind the mansion, labeled as a laundry house and a gardener's house. The mansion burned down in 1842 and was replaced by a brick house sometime around 1850. During the civil war, Fort Ellsworth was built on Shuter's Hill as part of the Union Army's defense of Washington. For more information on Shuter's hill, see the brochure available at <http://oha.alexandriava.gov/archaeology/ar-shuters.html>.

The mansion's remains are suspected to have been lost when nearby houses were built. The archeologists know exactly where the civil war fort walls were, but chose not to dig the fort at this time. They chose to dig an area that includes the foundation of the laundry house outbuilding from the 1781 mansion was, as well as the foundation of the circa 1850 brick house.

At the end of the orientation, they walked us out to the dig site and showed it to us. There had been a lot of rain

recently, so when they removed the tarp that covered it, things were pretty wet & muddy (figure 2). We could plainly see the 16-foot square stone foundation of the 1781 laundry house, as well as bits and pieces of the circa 1850 brick foundation. I could also see a shard of a bottle neck just lying on the ground, and I was dying to pick up and examine it, but I had to resist the temptation.



Figure 2: Foundation of 1781 laundry house

A few days later they sent out an email with a list of dates and times for digging, and I went for the first available date, which was the following Saturday.

I showed up for the afternoon (1:00-4:00 PM) shift. We got a brief introduction to where all the tools were kept in the van, we each filled out a time sheet, then we were ready to start digging. The area was arranged into squares, and I was extremely happy that I got assigned to a square that was described as the cellar of the 1850's house where trash had been dumped. Figure 3 shows my assigned square which actually contained 2 "levels". The levels are defined by the color of the dirt. We learned at the orientation that changes in the color of the dirt can indicate different time periods. We also learned that



Figure 3: Mike's digging square in cellar of 1850's house

different levels are not always on top of each other – in this case, the square had 2 levels side by side. My level was the area with the darker dirt which was extremely rich in artifacts – I could see bits of glass and metal sticking up out of it. I felt kind of sorry for the woman who got to dig on the other level of that same square – I think that all she found in 3 hours of digging was one or two bits of broken pottery.

We each had little bags that were marked with a number identifying our square and level within the square. I found so many artifacts that at one point I had to get a new bag. We dug with trowels, carefully scraping away the dirt. The digging was incredibly slow - in my 3 hours shift I only dug 2 ½ buckets full of dirt! One reason it took so long is because my level had so many artifacts (bits of broken glass, metal, pottery, etc), and I had to pick out each one and put it into my bag. I spent more time picking out artifacts than I did digging. We also had to sift our dirt and save every artifact, no matter how tiny.

Figure 4 shows a close-up of what my square looked like half-way through the dig. I was working on finding pieces of what seemed to be an ornate drinking glass - you can see the pieces piled up near the top left of the photo. If you have a sharp eye, you can also see the corner-edge of a bottle near the center of the photo. That bottle was unfortunately broken into 2 pieces – I found the bottom of it in a spot about a foot away. It was embossed “LARKIN / SOAP CO / BUFFALO / NY” (see figure 5). I later did some research, and decided that the bottle was from 1890-1910, which is what the archeologist in charge said was the expected age of the artifacts I was digging.



Mike's square midway through the dig

I found one other bottle that was almost intact. It was embossed with “FILTRENE / SEWING MACHINE / OIL” on the front and “CHESEBROUGH” on the side. I also found lots of nails, ceramic shards and stoneware shards. I'm a little curious to see what they do with all the artifacts I put into my little paper bag – maybe at some point I'll volunteer to help out back at the lab and find out. The lab is located at the Torpedo factory in old-town Alexandria.

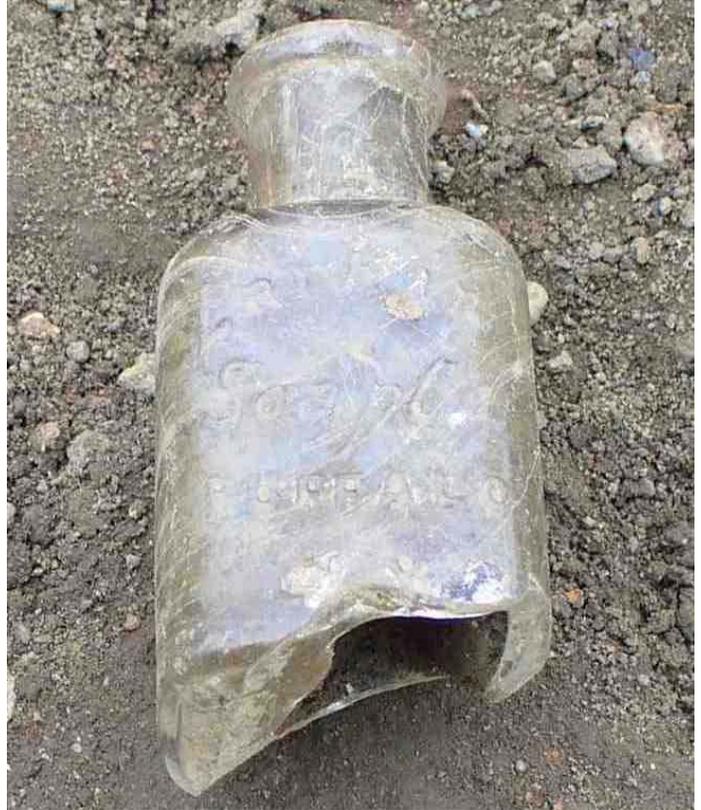


Figure 5: Larkin Soap Co bottle from Mike's square

All the other digging dates are booked up through August. Maybe I'll sign up again for September or October. I'd like to see what the bottles are like a few feet below where I dug. For more information about the FOAA, see <http://oha.alexandriava.gov/archaeology/ar-support-foaa.html>.



Mike Cianciosi displays one of his recent acquisitions (not from an Alexandria dig) at the June meeting. Thank you to Steve Charing for providing this photo. Since Mike takes most of our club pictures we seldom have one with him in it.

Upcoming Area Bottle Shows

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. VENSKOSKE**, 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

NOVEMBER 1 ELKTON, MARYLAND

Tri-State Bottle Collectos 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 8 OAKLAND, NEW JERSEY

North Jersey Antique Bottle Collectors Assn. 40th Annual Show & Sale, (9 AM to 2 PM, early buyers 8 AM), at the Oakland Elks Club, 33 Ramapo Valley Road, Oakland, NJ. Info: call **KEN** at (973) 907-7351 or **JIM** at (516) 454-8993.

NOVEMBER 8 PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

The Pittsburgh Antique Bottle Club Annual Show & Sale, (9 AM to 2 PM, early buyers 7 AM), at The Ice Garden, Rostraver Twp., Exit 46 B off I-70 to Rt. 51 North). 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 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.

NOVEMBER 29 BETHLEHEM, PENNSYLVANIA

Forks of the Delaware Bottle Collectors Assoc. 36th Annual Show & Sale (9 AM to 3 PM, early buyers 7:30 AM), at the Bethlehem Catholic High School, Madison & Dewberry Avenues, Bethlehem, PA. Info: **BILL HEGEDUS**, 20 Cambridge Place, Catasauqua, PA 18032, PH: (610) 264-5945.



Bob Ford displays food bottles at the June meeting.



Al Miller appears very serious about a cathedral pickle bottle at the June meeting.