

The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

March 2010

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Meeting March 30th

“My other hobby:” for show & tell please bring in things other than bottles that you have collected . These items could include unusual finds from digging expeditions as well as examples from other categories you have sought to collect.



Potomac Bottle Collectors Vice President Al Miller could not be with us at the February meeting, but he still won “Digger of the Year.” See contest results on next page.

Club History by Mike Cianciosi

20 years ago: The March 1990 issue of the *Pontil* had a message from the club president (Betty Jordan) thanking club member Roland Longerbeam for displaying a number of his “Old Mason Jars.” She also thanked club member Mike Jordan for his program on purple glass, which included instructions on how to construct a “purpling box”. There was also a 2 page article by Dick Fulton about purple glass, which led to some confusion as to whether the title of “Mr. Purple” should go to Mike or Dick. There was a contract included for members to fill out and turn in if they wanted to sell bottles at the club’s 18th annual show, scheduled for May 13th at the Occoquan-Woodbridge-Lorton (OWL) Fire Department in May.

The issue also had a bottle cleaning hint from the Washington Post: “1/2 cup of sudsy ammonia, 1 pt. of common 70% isopropyl rubbing alcohol, 1 tspn of liquid dishwashing detergent & enough water to make a gallon total. Use sparingly to avoid streaks & spots. Wipe afterward with a damp towel.”

Generations In Glass at Glenview Mansion, Rockville, Maryland, March 28-April 27

The City of Rockville will host the National Capital Art Glass Guild (NCAGG) show at Glenview Mansion Art Gallery, Rockville Civic Center Park, 603 Edmonston Drive. The exhibition features diverse forms of glass art, including kiln-worked, stained, flame-worked and blown glass. An opening reception will take place Sunday, March 28, at 1:30 p.m. The Glenview Mansion Art Gallery is open to the public Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m., and Tuesday and Thursday, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. For more information see www.NCAGG.org/show.htm.

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



Annual Contest Winners:

Collector of the Year was won by Bob Ford (above right) for this wasp-waisted cobalt Phoenix Brand bottle.

Al Miller won Digger of the Year with an R. Riddle soda from a Baltimore privy.

Bob Ford won Go-With of the Year with a wooden box of Pure Syr. Squills bottles from Gilbert Brothers & Co., Baltimore.

Mark Benbow (above left) won Shard of the Year with the remains of a Father Matthew bowl, which had been made for the temperance movement.



Sherwood Distillery and the Family Feud

By Jack Sullivan

[Special to the Potomac Pontil]

On January 16, 1902, seven jurists of the Maryland Court of Appeals in Annapolis heard a case that pitted quarreling members of a wealthy family and their high powered attorneys disputing over the operation and future direction of the Sherwood Distillery. The family feud had been the “talk” of local society for months. The dispute, however, ultimately had no affect on the rich legacy of bottles to be collected from that now defunct whiskey-maker.

The story begins in Cockeysville, Maryland, about 17 miles north of Baltimore on the road to York, Pennsylvania. The town was named after the Cockey family who built a hotel around the time of the Civil War and convinced the Baltimore and Susquehanna Railroad to locate a station there. The presence of a rail line drew businesses, among them a distillery operated by partners John J. Wight and William Lentz. They called their liquor Sherwood Pure Rye (Fig. 1), named after the nearby Sherwood Episcopal Church.

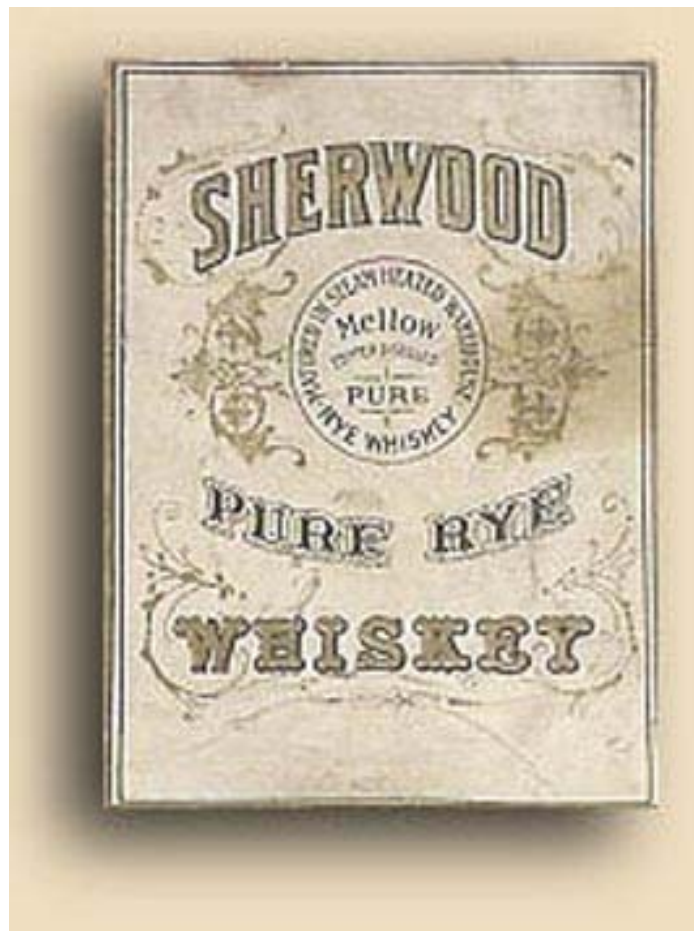


Fig. 1: An early Sherwood label

In 1868 the distillery was bought by a pair of New York City whiskey distributors. One of them was Edward Hyatt, the son of a Baltimore grocer. The new ownership greatly expanded the facilities, increased production, and marketed its whiskey aggressively. By 1878 the Army Medical Purveying Depot in New York was stockpiling Sherwood Rye for its hospitals.

In 1882, the partner departed and Hyatt incorporated the firm, with assets of \$30,000, as the Sherwood Distilling Company. He became president. Despite selling majority ownership, John J. Wight had married Hyatt's sister and remained active in the distillery. His son, John Hyatt Wight, from youth also was involved in the business. All three men owned stock in the privately held company.

The distillery sold its Maryland rye in a range of bottles, including flasks, pints and quarts (Figs. 2-4). Some are found with the name embossed (Fig. 5). Sherwood Distilling adopted as its logo a recumbent barrel and used the image frequently in its advertising, such as an 1891 ad shown here (Fig. 6), and on its outdoor signs (Fig. 7). Throughout the 1800's the business continued to prospered. A sales office was opened in Baltimore. By 1897 the Maryland Department of Revenue estimated the taxable value of Sherwood whiskey at \$308,920, several millions in today's dollar.



Fig. 2: A Sherwood labeled flask (left)

Fig. 3: A Sherwood labeled pint (right)



Fig. 4: A Sherwood labeled quart

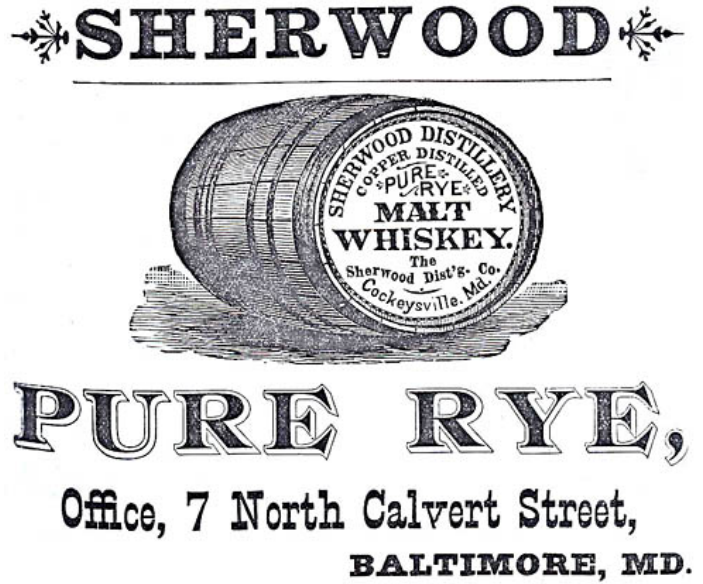


Fig. 6: 1891 Sherwood ad



Fig. 7: Sherwood outdoor sign



Fig. 5: Embossing detail

The trouble began when John J. Wight died. His estate transferred most of his stock to his son, John Hyatt Wight, who became secretary and treasurer of Sherwood Distilling, with his uncle remaining as the president. In 1894, Edward Hyatt died. John Hyatt Wight was made trustee over his uncle's estate and became president of the company. His Aunt Charlotte, Hyatt's widow, within a couple of years married a man named William Dailey. In 1899 she filed a lawsuit against her nephew, accusing him of fraud.

Dailey vs. Wight was a much-discussed case in the Maryland courts. Because considerable amounts of money were at stake, both sides hired high profile, high priced lawyers. Aunt Charlotte was represented by Charles J. Bonaparte (Fig. 8), a grandnephew of Napoleon Bonaparte and a former Attorney General of the United States, appointed by Theodore Roosevelt. Wight's chief attorney was W. H. deCoursey Wright, a similarly well known and well placed lawyer in

Maryland. His father had been a Maryland Supreme Court judge and his mother the daughter of a prominent Confederate general and congressman who had settled in Baltimore after the war.



Fig. 8: Photo of Charles J. Bonaparte

As Maryland's social set looked on with intense interest, Bonaparte, Wright, and their respective clients did fierce battle before Judge Albert Richie in the Circuit Court of Baltimore. Aunt Charlotte made a range of scurrilous charges against Wight, accusing him of "cooking the books" of the corporation, concealing distillery profits, and lining his own pockets at her expense. When Judge Richie disagreed and threw out her petition, she appealed. In 1902 The Maryland Appeals Court agreed with Judge Richie and affirmed his decision. In its opinion, the Appeals Court totally dismissed Aunt Charlotte's charges, commenting that "trifles as light as air" had become for her "confirmation as strong as proofs of holy writ."

John Hyatt Wight continued to run Sherwood Distillery successfully until Prohibition. Maryland tax records show a steady increase in the value of the whiskey produced to almost \$400,000 by 1909. One merchandising method Wight particularly favored was giving away back of the bar bottles to saloons and other favored customers. All prominently advertised Sherwood's whiskey. At least five different varieties of these bottles can be found (Figs. 9-13).



Fig. 9: Back of the bar bottle (left)

Fig. 10: Back of the bar bottle (right)



Fig. 11 and Fig 12: Back of the bar bottles

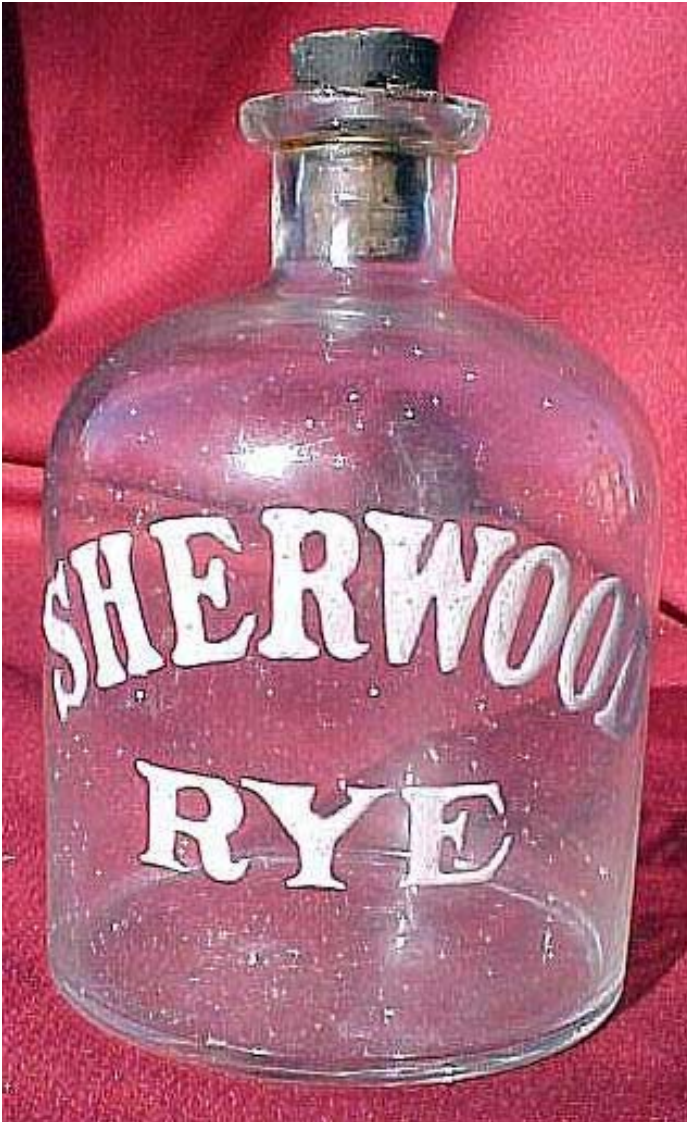


Fig. 13: Back of the bar bottle

Prohibition closed the original Sherwood distillery in Cockeyville and the buildings were demolished as early as 1926. A Wight family member and the brand name both survived Prohibition remaining in the whiskey trade -- but on separate tracks. Frank L. Wight, most probably John Hyatt Wight's son, after Repeal organized the Cockeyville Distilling Company and in 1946 built a facility right down the street from where the original distillery had stood. It operated until Frank's death in 1958.

Meanwhile the Sherwood brand name had been bought by Louis Mann during the 1930s. He re-created the Sherwood Distilling Company in Westminster, Maryland, about 25 miles north of Cockeyville. This outfit appears to have been blenders rather than distillers with much of its product coming from other whiskey-makers, such as the Foust Distillery of Glen Rock, Pennsylvania. Mann's operation apparently closed during the 1950s.

As a result of the rebirth of the brand name, Sherwood bottles and artifacts cannot all be assumed to be pre-Prohibition in vintage. Post-Repeal objects, however, often can be identified by a Westminster (Fig. 14) or other non-Cockeyville address.



Fig. 14: Sherwood post-Prohibition mini

Notes: Material for this article was gathered from a number of Internet and printed sources. Details of *Dailey vs. Wight* are found in the *Atlantic Reporter*, Volume 51, from the West Publishing Company, dated 1902. A particularly helpful source was John and Linda Lipman's article on the "Rye Distilleries of Maryland and Eastern Pennsylvania" from their www.ellenjaye.com website.

Upcoming Area Bottle Shows

APRIL 11 - TYLERSPORT, PENNSYLVANIA

The Bucks-Mont 15th Annual Bottle Show & Sale (9am - 2pm with early buyers in at 8am), at the Tylersport Fire Company, 125 Ridge Rd, Tylersport, PA. Info: **David Buck**, ph: (215) 723-4048 or **Greg Gifford**, ph: (215) 699-5216.



APRIL 25 - HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA

The Historical Bottle Diggers of Virginia's 39th Annual Show & Sale (9am - 3pm), at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds, US Route 11 (Exit 243 off I-81), south of Harrisonburg, VA. Info: **Sonny Smiley**, 1025 Greendale Rd, Harrisonburg, VA 22801, ph: (540) 434-1129, email: lithiaman1@yahoo.com

MAY 2 - BRICK, NEW JERSEY

Jersey Shore Bottle Club's 38th Annual Postcards & Local Memorabilia Show & Sale (8:30am - 2pm), Brick Elks Lodge, 2491 Hopper Ave, Brick, NJ 08723. Info: **Richard Peal**, 720 Eastern Ln, Brick, NJ 08723, ph:(732) 267-2528, email: manodirt@msn.com or www.bottleclub.org

MAY 8 - SALISBURY, NORTH CAROLINA

Piedmont Bottle Club's 4th Annual Bottle and Pottery Show & Sale (8am - 2pm), at the Salisbury Civic Center, 315 S Boundary St (AKA Martin Luther King Jr Ave), Salisbury, NC 28144. Info: **John Patterson**, ph: (704) 636-9510, email: ncmilks@carolina.rr.com or **Jimmy Wood**, ph: (704) 692-7888 or **Chuck Rash**, ph: (704) 732-0373. club website: www.antiquebottles.com/piedmont

MAY 16 - MILLVILLE, NEW JERSEY

The New Jersey Antique Bottle Club's Annual Millville Show & Sale (9am - 3pm), at the Elks Lodge, 1815 E Broad St, Millville, NJ. Info: **Joe Butewicz**, 24 Charles St, South River, NJ 08882, ph: (732) 236-9945, email: botlman@msn.com. This is an FOHBC Club

MAY 16 - WASHINGTON, PENNSYLVANIA

Washington County Antique Bottle Club's 36th Annual Show & Sale (9am - 2pm), at the Alpine Star Lodge, 735 Jefferson Ave (Exit 17 off I70), Washington, PA. Info: **Russ Crupe**, 52 Cherry Rd, Avella, PA 15312, ph: 724) 345-3653 or (412) 298-7831, email: heidirus@gmail.com

JUNE 3 & 5 - HERSHEY, PENNSYLVANIA

The National Association of Mile Bottle Collectors' 30th Annual Convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Grantville (Hershey), PA.

Info: **Penny Gottlieb**, 18 Pond Pl, Cos Cob, CT 06807, ph: (203) 869-8411

JULY 17 & 18 ADAMSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

The 9th Annual Shupp's Grove Bottle Festival, (Sat. & Sun from sun-up until ??, early buyers Fri. 5 PM), at the famous 'Shupp's Grove' in Adamstown, PA. Info: **STEVE GUION**, PH: (717) 371-1259, email: affinityinsurance@dejazzd.com.



Show & tell items at the February meeting



Steve Charing impersonates the absent Al Miller in order to get an award.