

# The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

*November 2010*

In this issue: **Virginia Barware: Tidewater to the Appalachians**  
by Jack Sullivan

## Meeting November 30th

Please join us at 8 PM on Tuesday, November 30<sup>th</sup> at the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Bethesda. Please note that we are having some difficulty with our meeting location. An AA group has that also meets at the church had grown so large that it spilled over into our usual meeting area in October. If we have a similar problem this month, we will go to one of the small classrooms at the back of the church. We are working to secure more reliable accommodations for future meetings.

## No December Meeting

We will not attempt to meet in December because we are all very busy at the holidays. We will meet again on January 25<sup>th</sup> for our annual collecting contest.



Scott Gordon displayed a restored punch bowl at our October meeting, which he had dug in pieces.



Steve Charing (center) struggled to determine which was the chamber pot and which was the punch bowl.

# Virginia Barware: Tidewater to the Appalachians

By Jack Sullivan

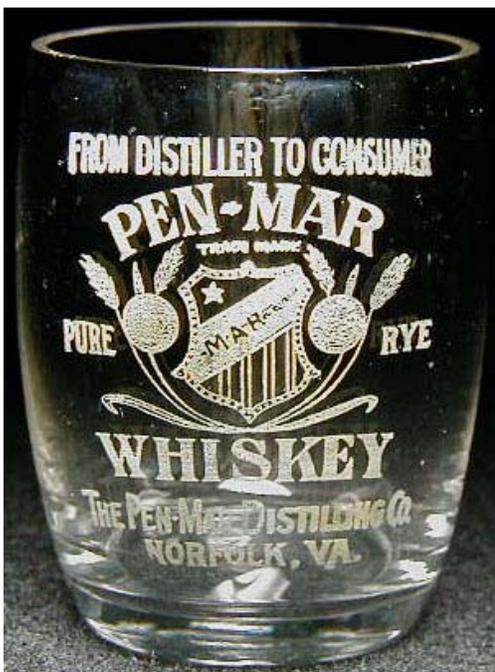
[Special to the Potomac Pontil]

A wide range of glass objects, many bearing advertising, have long been part of the saloon environment. As distillers, brewers and distributors vied for customers during the late 1800s and early 1900s, they often employed the artifacts of imbibing to get their message out. Barware included shot glasses, tumblers, and back of the bar bottles. Glass companies enjoyed a brisk trade in these pre-Prohibition items.

In January 2008 my *Pontil* article presented a sample of the most elaborate vintage shot glasses to be found around the Commonwealth of Virginia. In the more than two years since then, a number of other spirits glasses have appeared that also merit collector attention. They take us from the Tidewater through the Piedmont to the Appalachian Mountains.

## Traipsing through Tidewater

Our first stop is Norfolk and two items advertising the Pen-Mar Distilling Company. The first is an elaborately etched shot glass that includes a frosted shield with a medallion flanked by shocks of grain (**Fig. 1**). It is identified as the product of the Pen-Mar Distilling Co. The second item is a flask-shaped bottle embossed with the company name, probably a back of the bar bottle (**Fig. 2**).



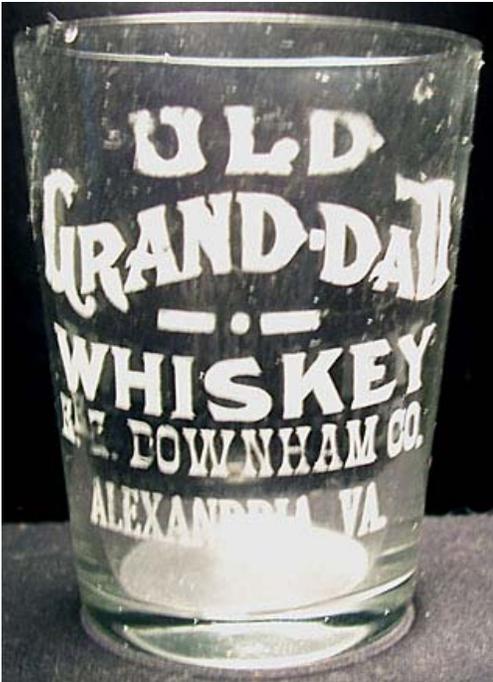
1. Pen-Mar shot glass



2. Pen-Mar back-of-the-bar bottle

The name “Pen-Mar” seems unusual for a Virginia business since it usually is an abbreviation for Pennsylvania-Maryland. In this case, the Norfolk operation was a branch of a company located in Hagerstown, Md., with a distillery in Waynesboro, Pa., and thus the name. The Norfolk operation began in 1899, located at two addresses on East City Hall Avenue. It survived until 1916 when the Commonwealth went dry. The Pen-Mar company subsequently opened a branch in Baltimore. With the advent of National Prohibition the company closed down in 1920.

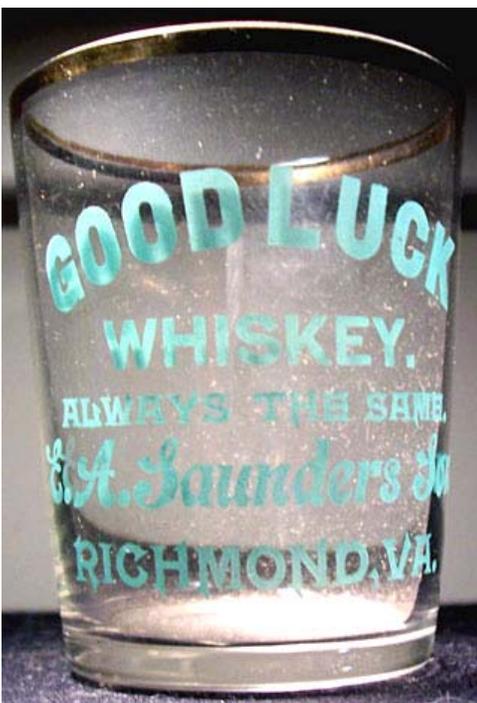
Since my article on E.E. Downham as an Alexandria liquor dealer appeared in the *Pontil* for May 2007, a drinking glass from his business advertising “Old Grand-Dad” whiskey has come to light (**Fig. 3**). This liquor was the product of a Louisville, Ky., distillery and still is available today. Downham, who later became mayor of the Alexandria, was noted for his giveaway items.



3. Old Granddad drink glass

#### Proceeding to the Piedmont

Richmond long has been a source for vintage barware. A shot glass advertising “Good Luck” whiskey (Fig. 4) was the product of E.A. Saunders & Son, who began dealing in whiskey in 1885. The company featured brands that also included “Deep Run Hunt Club,” “Pocahontas”, and “Rustic.” In addition to whiskey, the Saunders family also were large in the Richmond grocery business and in supplying to the Virginia tobacco industry. In 1905 they sold out their liquor interests to Phil. G. Kelly and afterwards concentrated on edibles.



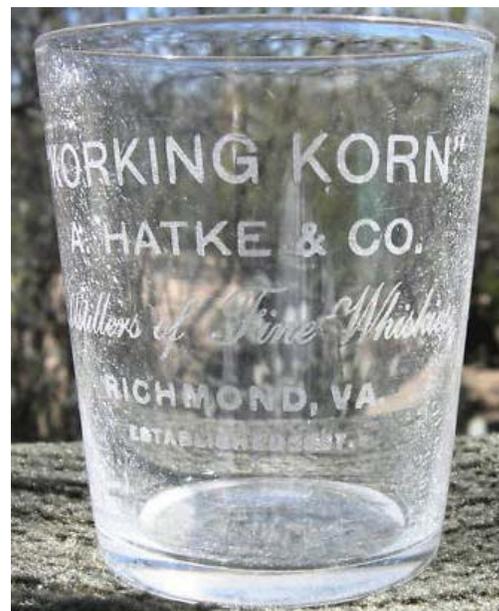
4. Good Luck whiskey shot glass

The name “Silver Leaf” shown here on a shot glass (Fig. 5) was a familiar Richmond brand of whiskey from a partnership called Miller (Frank) & Nicholas. They were in business first at 11-13 N. 14th St. (1879-1915) in Richmond and later at 1204 E. Main (1915). At some point the Virginia-Carolina Grocery Co. appears to have bought the Silver Leaf brand name. The latter firm reportedly was in business from 1903-1910, run by a man named Charles Lefew.



5. Silver Leaf shot glass

Another well-known Richmond whiskey dealer was A. Hatke & Co. representing itself as a “mail order liquor house.” It was located at 800-806 E. Cary St. in the state capital. In business from 1867 to 1915, this liquor dealer featured the brand “Richmond Rye” and marketed it in ceramic jugs. “Korking Korn,” advertised on a shot glass (Fig. 6), was among the



6. “Korking Korn” shot glass

Hatke’s cheaper brands. Although the Richmond Shriners were not a liquor company, one assumes that they consumed their share. An elaborately etched pre-Prohibition drink glass with Masonic symbols (Fig. 7) attests to their habits.



7. Richmond Masonic drink glass

Traveling on to Lynchburg, James Gorman was a whiskey distributor principally for the Wright and Taylor Distilleries of Louisville, Ky. The two brands advertised here on a shot glass (Fig. 8) “Old Charter” and “Ky. Taylor” were both registered nationally to Wright & Taylor. Old Charter survived Prohibition as a brand and is still sold today.

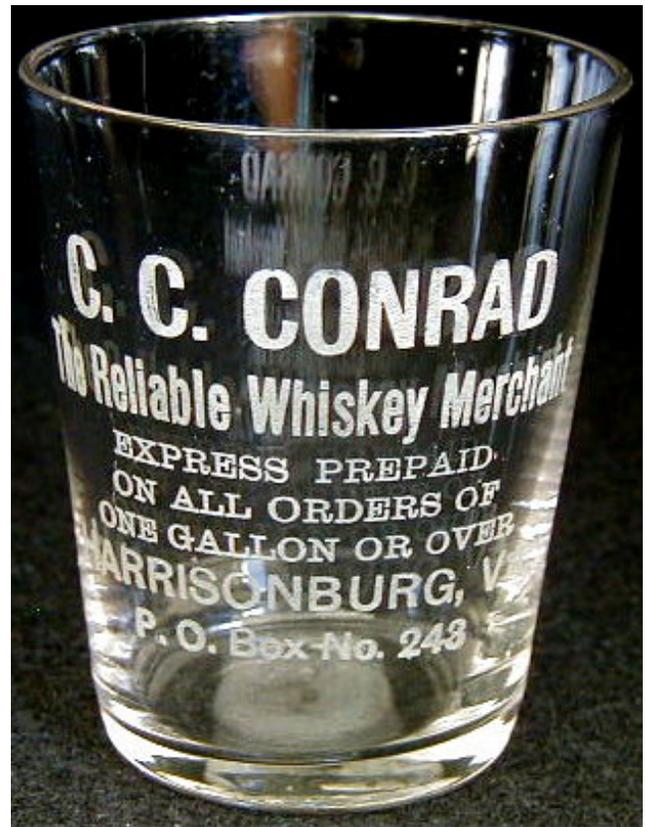


8. Old Charter shot glass

### Moving on to the Mountains

In Harrisonburg evidence is that C.C. Conrad was in the liquor business for almost a quarter century. He is reputed to have run a saloon in that town from 1895 until 1905 and then branched out as a dealer specializing in mail order sales, probably to West Virginia, which had gone completely dry in 1914.

Billing himself as “The Reliable Whiskey Merchant” on a shot glass (Fig. 9), Conrad provided only a post office box as an address, indicating that the shot may have been a giveaway to mail order customers. With the coming of Prohibition, Conrad left the liquor trade and opened a real estate office in Harrisonburg.



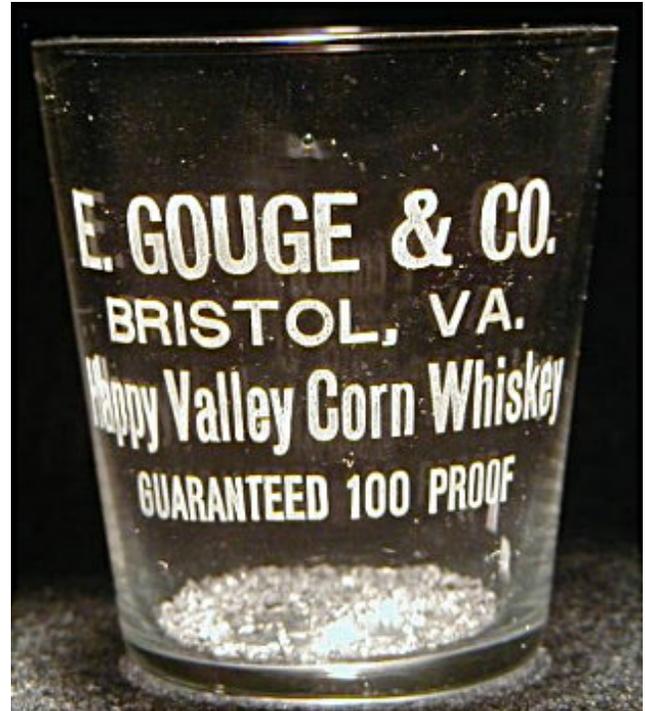
9. C.C. Conrad shot glass

Proceeding down I-84 to Roanoke, little information is available on two glasses shown here. The first, from the Virginia Wine and Liquor Co., features “Jameson’s Best,” (Fig. 10), a brand name that went unregistered and may have been appropriated from a famous Irish whiskey. This firm is reported to have had a branch office in Catlettsburg, Kentucky.

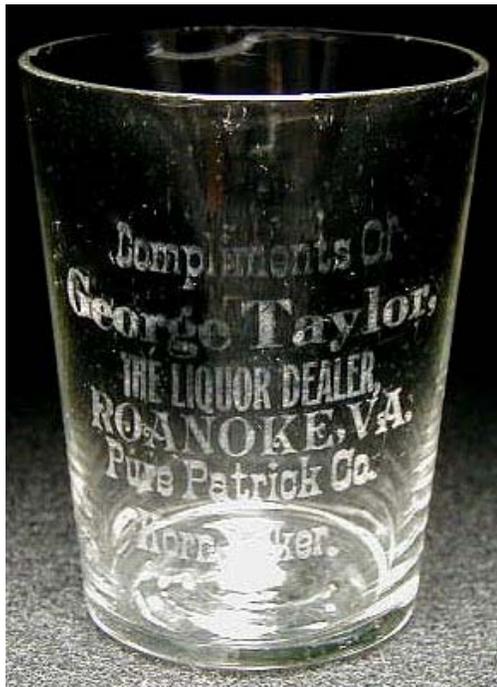
The second glass (Fig. 11) was a giveaway from George Taylor, a Roanoke liquor dealer in the pre-Pro era. His featured brand was “Pure Patrick County Korn Likker,” which likely meant it was aged a week or two longer than the moonshine available in the hills around the town.



10: Jameson's Best shot glass



12. E. Gouge & Co. shot glass



11. George Taylor shot glass

“Happy Valley Corn Whiskey” (Fig. 12) was a product of a Bristol organization, E. Gouge & Co. Gouge was a distiller and wholesaler who established his firm about 1880, with offices located at 826-828 Commerce St. Like other Virginia dealers, Gouge was heavily involved in mail order sales. Happy Valley was his flagship brand, a 100 proof whiskey selling for a mere \$2 a gallon in 1912. Another Gouge product was “Uncle Zeke’s 100 Proof Corn Whiskey.”

All these companies disappeared either when Virginia voted dry in 1916 or with National Prohibition in 1920. But they have left us their legacy in their advertising barware. All of the items are at least 90 years old and many are older. Because vintage barware is seldom marked, we unfortunately have no clue to the glassworks that produced them.

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**Notes:** The material for this article was derived from a variety of printed and Internet sources. Thanks go to Robin Preston for permission to use images of glasses from his [www.pre-pro.com](http://www.pre-pro.com) website.  
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## Upcoming Area Bottle Show

**NOVEMBER 28 -  
 BETHLEHEM,  
 PENNSYLVANIA**

Forks of the Delaware Bottle Collectors Association’s 37th Annual Show & Sale (9am - 3pm with early buyers 7:30am) at the Bethlehem Catholic High School, Madison & Dewberry Avenues, Bethlehem, PA. Info: **Bill Hegedus**, 20 Cambridge Pl, Catasauqua, PA 18032, ph: (610) 264-5945.

