

The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

February 2011

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Meeting – February 22nd

New meeting location: St. Mark's Orthodox Church

7124 River Road, Bethesda, MD 20817

Enter through the lower level door on the side of the church.

We will have our annual dinner and announce the winners of our annual club contest. We will aim to meet at 7:30 and eat at 8. The club will provide soft drinks and sandwiches. Members are encouraged to bring a dish to pass. Guests are welcome. Please bring bottles for show and tell.

Baltimore Antique Bottle Show – March 6th

We look forward to seeing everyone at the Baltimore show.



Show and Tell at the January meeting



Meetings: 8:00 PM on the last Tuesday of each month January-June, October-November; picnic in September.

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

George Troug: Artistry in Barware

By Jack Sullivan
[Special to the Potomac Pontil]

Just as Louis Comfort Tiffany is hailed as the America's premier artist in crafting glass into lamps and shades, so a Maryland artist in glass should be recognized as the top creator of etched barware, including those much-collected pre-Prohibition shot glasses. His name was George Troug (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1: George Troug

Troug was born in Verona, Italy, in 1861. After attending school in Switzerland, he emigrated to the United States in 1883. He found his way to Cumberland, Maryland, which at the time was a thriving center for glass production. Troug worked at several glass manufacturing plants, all the time saving his money and planning to found his own company. In 1893 his dream materialized and he opened the Maryland Glass Etching Works. His letterhead shows a substantial operation (Fig. 2).

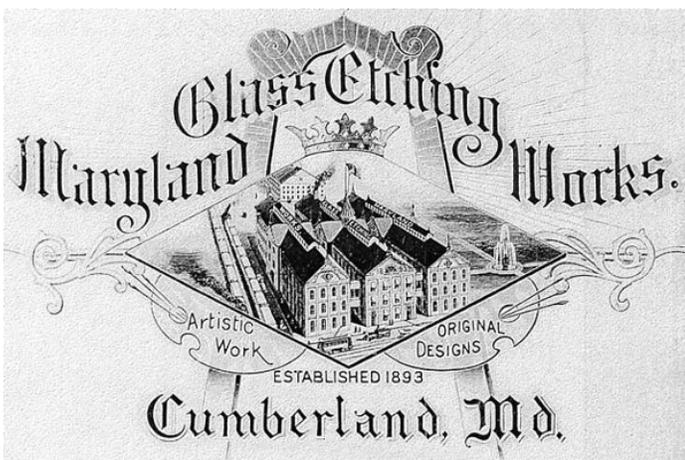


Fig. 2: Maryland Glass Etching Works letterhead

Within a few months Troug was advertising in trade journals as able to provide fine and fancy etched glassware for brewers, distillers and innkeepers (Fig. 3). He claimed among his customers two prestigious Milwaukee breweries, Pabst and Schlitz.



Fig. 3: Troug mark in glass

While many Maryland Glass Etching Works products remained unsigned and thus unrecognized as Troug designs, some glassware was graced with his "G T" initials (Fig. 4). His mark frequently is small and hard to find. Yet another way of identifying Troug products is through his sketchbook, parts of which have been salvaged. It is interesting to see his original drawings as they ultimately took shape on round surfaces.



Fig. 4: Maryland Glass Etching ad

Distiller Sam Alschul of Springfield, Ohio, was a master at merchandising his several whiskey brands. Thus he turned to Maryland Glass Etching for shot glasses for his Old School Rye. Trough obliged with a drawing (Fig. 5) and turned it into a superior etched glass (Fig. 6). Notice, however, his misspelling of “school” in the drawing. Another example is Trough’s initial design of Stag Whiskey barware for E. Eising Co. of New York (1880-1906) (Fig. 7). Although the basic design is similar, the typography used for the shot glass is significantly different (Fig. 8). The drawing has “Stag” in plain letters and “Whiskey” in fancy ones. The finished shot glass shows just the opposite.



Fig. 5: Trough Drawing: Old School Rye

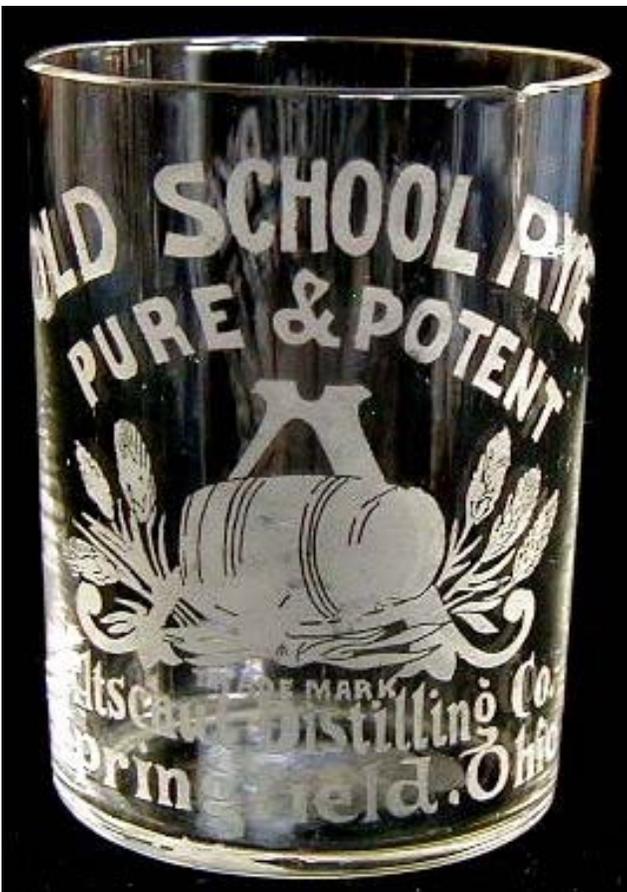


Fig. 6: Old School Rye shot glass



Fig. 7: Trough Drawing: Stag Whiskey



Fig. 8: Stag Whiskey shot glass

Another clue to Trough-inspired glasses are designs copied on to tissue paper for later transfer to metal production plates, illustrations that have been collected by Trough fans (Fig. 9). Among the images shown on these scraps is one for a “Belle of Anderson” shot glass. The item itself shows the realized design (Fig. 10), commissioned by Eisen Brothers Co. of Kansas City (1906-1916).

Another sketch depicts Jed Clayton Old Whiskey from Rheimstrom Bros. of Cincinnati (1876-1917). This image too is somewhat altered both in a Trough ad (Fig. 11) and the actual shot glass (Fig. 12). Other identified Trough-designed glasses include the “Regulator” for a St. Louis mercantile company, a fanciful pig, and the flowery, “My Regards (Figs. 13-14).



Fig. 9: Shot glass sketches



No. 112. Shell Whisky.
Capacity. 2 1/2 oz.

Fig. 11: Jed Clayton Old Whiskey ad

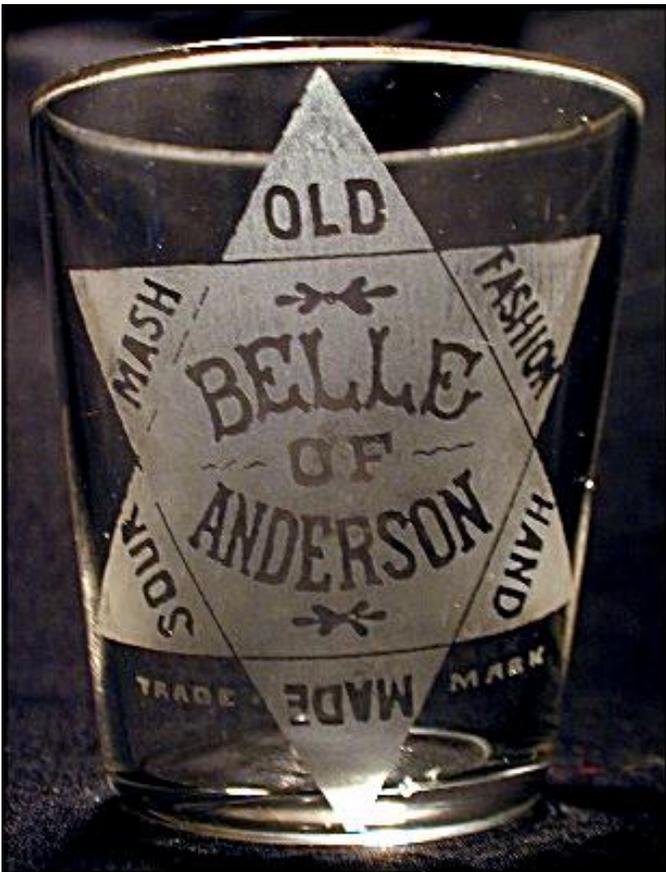


Fig. 10: Belle of Anderson shot glass

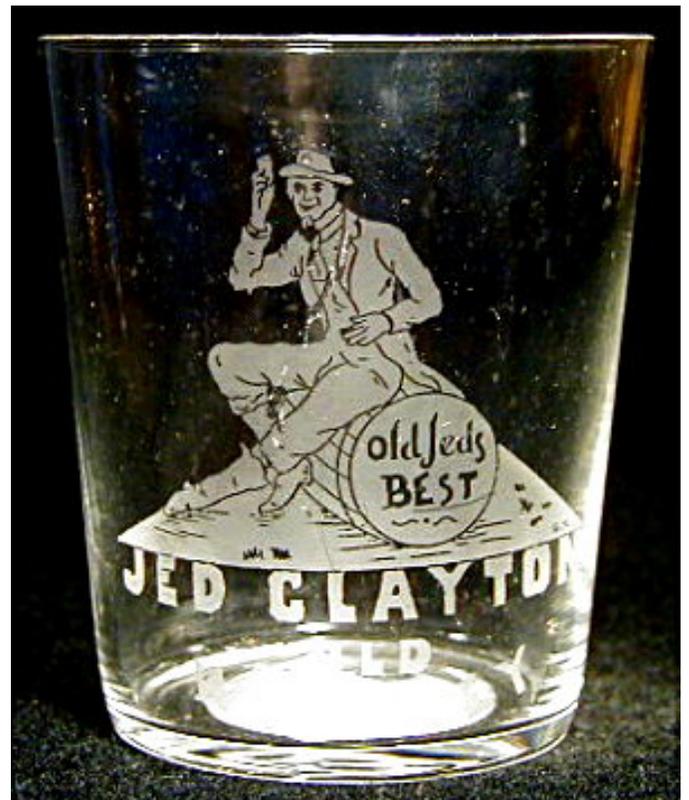


Fig. 12: Jed Clayton shot glass



Fig. 13: Regulator dose glass

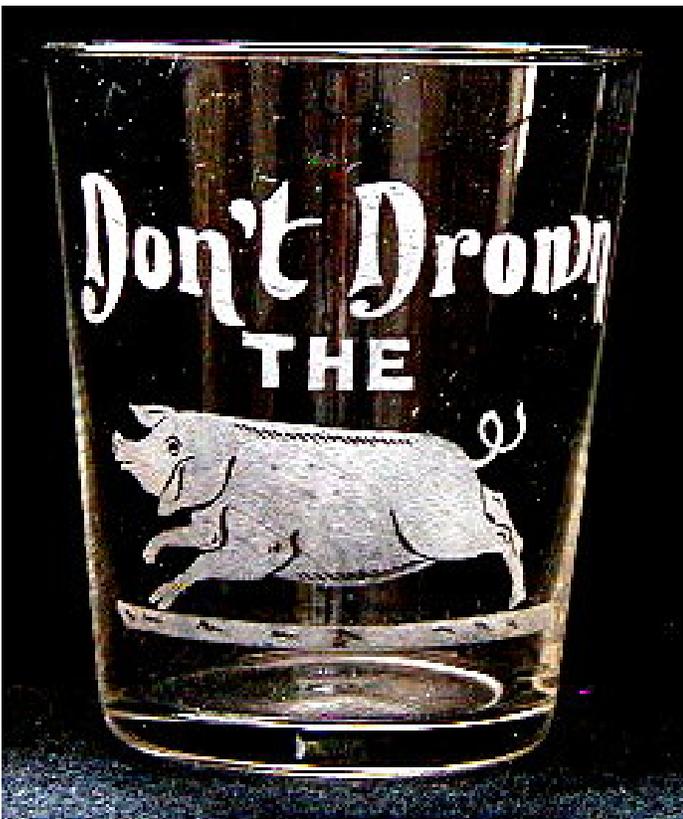


Fig. 14: "Don't Drown the Pig" shot glass

As Maryland Glass Etching Works reputation grew during the late 1800s and early 1900s, so George Trog became a wealthy man. Known for his spendthrift habits, at the height of his career he purchased a simple late 19th-century residence and in 1903 contracted with a well-known local architect, Wright Butler, to undertake an extensive and lavish remodeling at the astonishing (to his Cumberland neighbors) cost of \$44,000.

Butler's exterior design features a recessed entrance with an arcade of Gothic arches, corner bay windows on the second floor and roof cresting (Fig. 16). Inside, additions included a ballroom with a pool table that converted into an upholstered sofa and an elaborate self-contained water system. The house exhibited Trog's artistic skills, featuring etched, engraved, stained, colored and painted glass of his design, as well as other ornate features. The expense may well have been Trog's downfall. He was forced to sell the house in 1909 and two years later put his company into bankruptcy. Trog is said to have died destitute.



Fig. 16: George Trog house, Cumberland MD

During the 18 years that Maryland Glass Etching Works was in business, however, George Trog was responsible for some of the most innovative and desirable pre-Prohibition barware known. His legacy is confirmed in the avid manner that shot glass collectors check fancy barware in the hope of finding a tiny "GT" etched somewhere on the surface.

Notes: The barware shown here are through the courtesy of Robin Preston of the *pre-pro.com* website, himself a collector of Trog shot glasses. For anyone wishing to know more about this designer, Dale Murschell, a Cumberland historian, has written a book entitled, *George Trog and His Art*. The Trog house still stands in Cumberland. For several decades it served as a funeral home. Today it has been converted back to a private residence but can be reserved for private tours.

Ernest L. Robey

by: Mike Cianciosi

Back in May I acquired a bottle from my hometown of Fairfax Virginia. The bottle is embossed "Ernest L. Robey / DRUGGIST / HERNDON VA. – FAIRFAX VA." (see figure 1). Above that it is embossed with "3i", which means 1-ounce. What looks like a "3" is actually a symbol that means "ounces", and the "i" is a Roman numeral for "1". I've since obtained similarly embossed bottles in 2 ounce and 4 ounce sizes, and I've been told that a 3 ounce size also exists. Figure 2 shows the 3 bottles I own – the 4-ounce one has a slight sun-colored amethyst tint.



Figure 1 - My First Robey Bottle



Figure 2 - My 3 Robey Bottles

I started some research to find out anything I could on Ernest Robey. My local library has a lot of old newspaper articles that had references to him. Here's what I found out:

Ernest Lee "Doc" Robey was born on August 8th, 1870 in Herndon Virginia. Ernest went to school at the old Herndon Seminary, and at age 16 he served as a clerk for a drug store in Falls Church VA. Later he worked at Wehrley's drug store in

Washington DC while learning to be a pharmacist. He passed his Virginia state pharmacy board examination before turning 21.

Ernest and his father, William Isaiah Robey, started a drugstore in Herndon called "Wm. I. Robey & Son" about 1888, and by November 1900 William left the drug store in the hands of Ernest. Ernest opened another drug store, this one in Fairfax, about 1902. Ernest managed the Herndon store himself and Dr. Harry L. Burrows managed the Fairfax store. In March of 1911, Robey opened a 3rd drugstore, this one in Washington DC at North Capitol and H Streets, NW. At some point the DC store was taken over by his brother, Frank A. Robey, who was also a pharmacist. In 1922, the Washington DC store became a People's drug store, and Frank opened up a new drugstore at 200 Upshur Street, NW.

Photo of advertisements, esp the one announcing opening of DC store

Dr. Harry L. Burrows, the manager of Ernest's Fairfax store, died on June 10, 1927. This caused Ernest to have to commute to Fairfax to run the store himself, so in September of that year, Robey sold the Fairfax store to T. Ramsay Taylor of Norfolk VA, although it appears that the building remained in the ownership of another of Ernest's brothers, attorney George B. Robey. Ernest had yet another brother, William I. Robey jr, who was a Doctor and a pharmacist, but it's not clear if he ever ran or worked at one of the Robey drug stores.

Ernest was very active in Herndon business and politics. On November 5, 1909, he was elected as one of 9 directors to a new bank in Herndon, which he later became president of. Various newspaper articles list him as a director of the Herndon volunteer fire department (1928), VP of the Herndon Water company (1930), and president of the Herndon citizens association (1931). He served as clerk of the town council for 21 years, and even served a term as Mayor of Herndon.

By 1930 Ernest had left the drug store business, and worked as an Insurance Agent. On September 4th, 1938, Ernest died of heart disease.

The Herndon store was located at the corner of Station and Pine Streets, and the Fairfax store was located at the corner of Main Street and University drive. I find it interesting that the buildings that housed these 2 stores both exist today as Italian restaurants. The Herndon store is now the Zefferelli Restaurant, and the Fairfax store is now the Bellissimo Restaurant (see figures xx & xx).

A Robey bottle is listed in our club's book, #354 in the "Medicines, Drug Stores, Perfumes & Poisons" section. I believe that either the bottle or our book has a mistake, because our book describes the embossing as: "**ROBEY'S PHARMACY, NORTH CAPITOL & 8 STS NW, WASHINGTON DC**", but the correct address would have been "H" Street, not "8" Street. I don't know if that bottle was from Ernest Robey or Frank Robey.



Figure 3 - Zefferelli Restaurant in Herndon (site of Robey's Herndon Drug Store)



Figure 4 - Bellissimo Restaurant (site of Robey's Fairfax Drug Store)

Sources:

1. Book: "Antique Bottles from the Washington DC Area" by Potomac Bottle Collectors, 4th edition
2. The Washington Herald, 25-Apr-1909
3. The Washington Post, 29-Jun-1922
4. The Herndon Observer (various articles on various dates)
5. The Fairfax Herald (various articles on various dates)
6. Book: "Postcard History Series Fairfax County" by Trevor Owens
7. Book: "Herndon in Images" by Charles V. Mauro
8. Book: "Herndon: a town and its history" by Charles V. Mauro
9. The U.S. Census for various years (from ancestry.com)

Upcoming Area Bottle Shows



March 6, 2011 – Baltimore, MD

Baltimore Antique Bottle Club's 31st Annual Show & Sale (8am - 3pm) at Essex Campus of the Community College of Baltimore County, 7201 Rossville Blvd, Baltimore, MD. Info: Eric Ewen, ph: (410) 265-5745, email: Teresaanderic@comcast.net

April 16 (Saturday) – Salisbury, NC

Piedmont Bottle and Pottery Club's 5th Annual Show & Sale (8am - 2pm, 6:30am dealer setup at the Salisbury Civic Center, 315 S Martin Luther King Ave (formerly 315 S Boundary St), Salisbury, NC 28144. Info: John Patterson, ph: (704) 636-9510, email: ncmilks@carolina.rr.com.

April 17 – Harrisonburg, VA

Historical Bottle Diggers of Virginia 40th Annual Show & Sale, 9am-3pm Sun at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds, US Route 11 (Exit 243 off I-81), South of Harrisonburg, VA. Normally have 60-70 tables. Info: Sonny Smiley phone: (540) 434-1129, 1025 Greendale Rd., Harrisonburg, VA 22801, Email: lithiaman1@yahoo.com

May 15 – Millville, NJ

New Jersey Antique Bottle Club's Annual Millville Show & Sale (9am - 3pm) at the Elks Lodge of Millville, 1815 E Broad St, Millville, NJ. Info: Joe Butewicz, 24 Charles St, South River, NJ 08882, ph: (732) 345-3653, email: botlman@msn.com.

June 2-4 – Grantville (Hershey), PA

Milks: National Association of Milk Bottle Collectors 31st Annual Convention. Info: Penny Gottlieb, 18 Pond Pl, Cos Cob, CT 06807, ph: (203) 869-8411.

June 25 - 26, 2011 – Memphis, TN

Federation of Historical Bottle Collectors' Annual National Show & Sale at the Cook Convention Center, Memphis, TN. Info: R. Wayne Lowry, FOHBC Conventions Director, ph: (816) 318-0161, email: JarDoctor@aol.com.