

The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

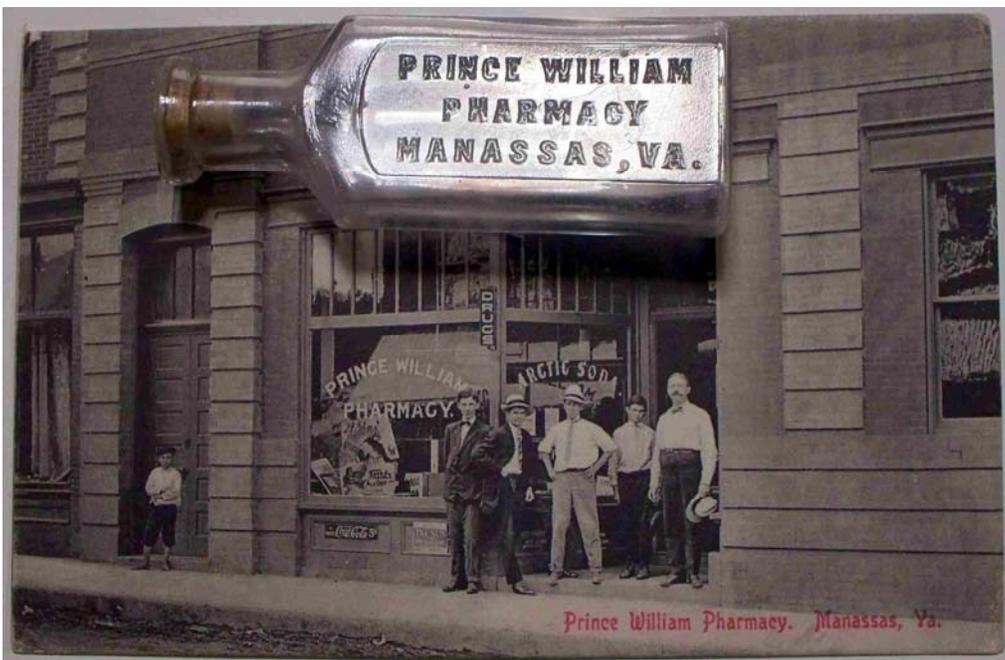
March 2011

In this issue:

Billy Foust and a Banana Full of Whiskey by Jack Sullivan.....page 2
Upcoming Area Bottle Shows.....page 7

Meeting – March 29th

We look forward to seeing everyone at 8 PM on Tuesday, March 29th at St. Mark's Orthodox Church, 7124 River Road, Bethesda, MD 20817. Please bring bottles for show and tell.



Congratulations to the winners of our annual contest.

Lee Shipman won collector of the year with the Dan Patch flask in the top right photo. Lee has been looking for this item for a number of years because it reminds her of her step father who was known as Dan Patch.

Peter Rydquist won shard of the year with the pot in the middle right photo. This pot bears a very unusual face design. The missing handle would originally have been the nose.

Mike Cianciosi won go-with of the year for the pharmacy post card and bottle shown above.

Phil Townsend won digger of the year with a SUPRE bottle from Cincinnati.



Scott Gordon displayed these 2000-year-old tear bottles at our February 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

Billy Foust and a Banana Full of Whiskey

By Jack Sullivan

[Special to the Potomac Pontil]

Shown here is a banana realistic enough to warrant peeling (**Fig. 1**). Don't try. It is ceramic and a whiskey flask. This banana once was filled with liquor from a distillery located less than 65 air miles from Washington, D.C., one whose containers have become a pricey favorite with collectors.

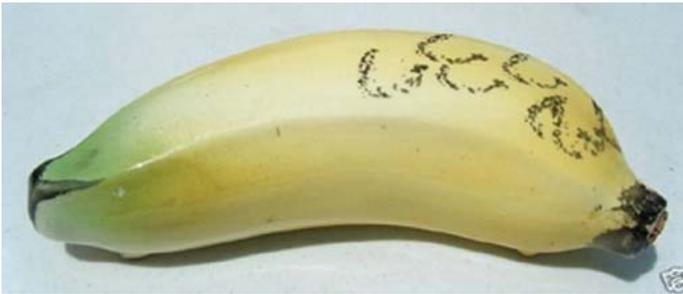


Fig. 1: The Foust banana flask

The story began about 1840 when a 31-year-old Pennsylvanian named John S. Foust decided to add a distillery to his farm near the small town of Glen Rock in York County. In both Maryland and Pennsylvania at that time the farmer-distiller was a familiar figure. John also appears to have been a horse breeder. His whiskey production was small as he continued to concentrate on farming his plot of bottom land.

Foust did not become a major force in whiskey-making until 1858 when John's son, William "Billy" Foust, at the age of 22 took over the operation. He is seen here in maturity (**Fig. 2**). Billy rebuilt his father's still, constructed a six-story warehouse and added other ancillary buildings. He also greatly increased production. An engraving from the 1890s shows the original farm house surrounded by distillery-related structures (**Fig. 3**).



Fig. 2: Picture of William "Billy" Foust

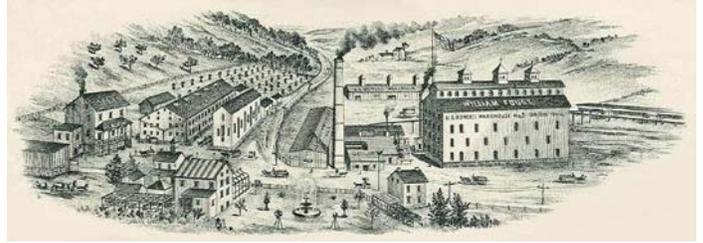


Fig. 3: Illustration of the Foust distillery

Billy Foust rapidly became known for his highly imaginative way of packaging his liquor. The York County Bottle Book counts some 15 figural glass and ceramic bottles attributed to the Foust distillery. They are attributed because their original paper labels have been lost and no other identifying markings are on the items. In addition to the realistic banana, the figural list includes a highly realistic salt-covered pretzel (**Fig. 4**). Other figurals are a ceramic ear of corn and partially peeled sweet potato (**Fig. 5**), as well as a glass billy club (**Fig. 6**). Among other figurals attributed to Foust' are a roast turkey, cigar, ham bone, clam shells, fish, pig and horn of plenty.



Fig. 4: Pretzel flask



Fig. 5: Corn and sweet potato flasks



Fig. 6: Billy club flask

More assured identification can be made of the interesting “giveaway” small ceramic jugs that Foust featured. They bear the name of the Wm. Foust, Distiller, sometimes in gold letters. The jugs are found with a number of designs, almost always bearing the inscription “compliments of.” They come in pint, half pint, miniature and intermediate sizes. One mini featured a bale handle (Fig. 7), another an interesting metal cap (Fig. 8). All are avidly collected.

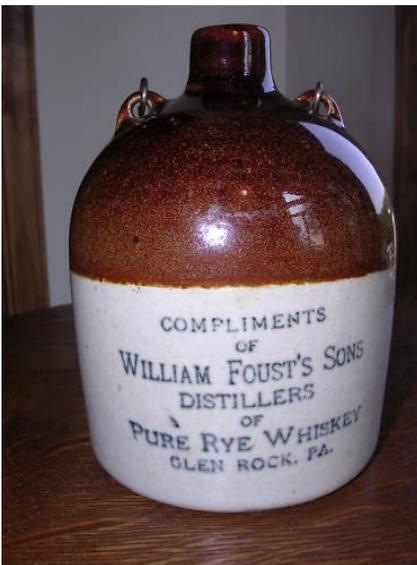


Fig. 7: Foust mini-jug



Fig. 8: Foust half-pint with metal top

Billy Foust also packaged his whiskey in glass, both clear and amber (Fig. 9). He provided saloons with a glass back of the bar bottle that advertised his whiskey (Fig. 10). His brands included Old Foust, Springfield Copper Distilled, and Glenrock Whiskey (Fig. 11).



Fig. 9: Foust bottles - detail

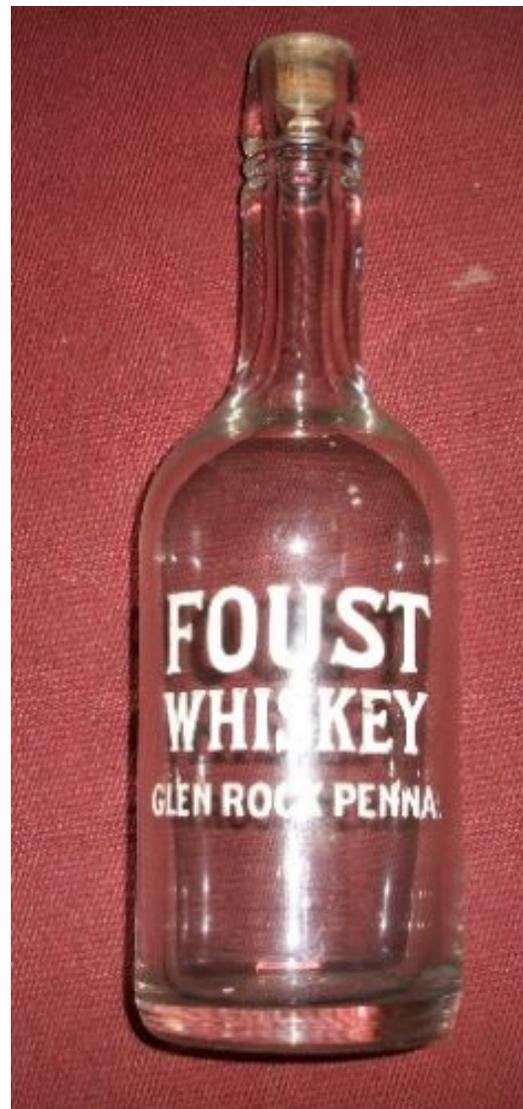


Fig. 10: Foust back of the bar bottle

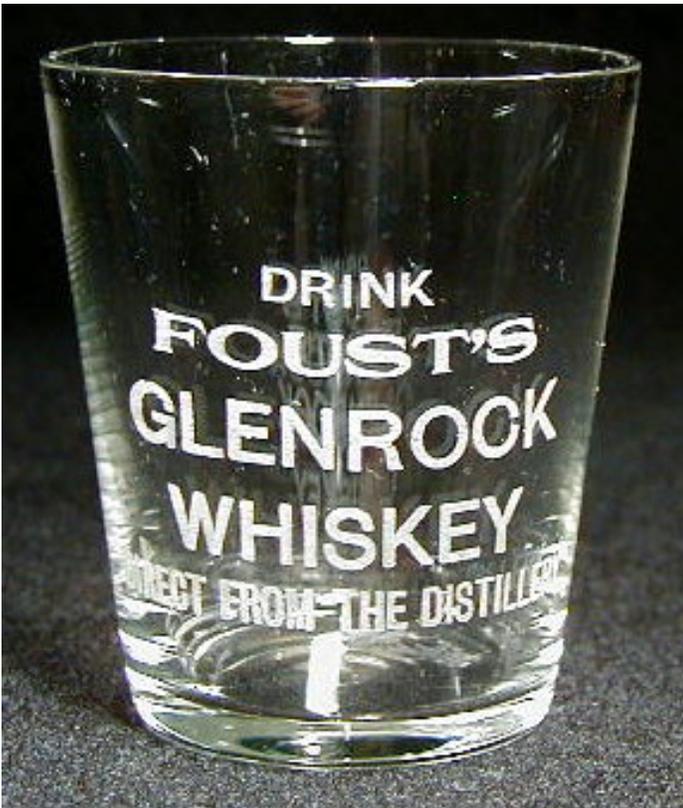


Fig. 11: Glenrock shot glass

By 1907 under Billy's leadership production was up to 3,000 barrels of whiskey a year. A small brick and stone village grew up around the spring-fed hollow that was the site of the distillery. The town had housing for the employees, a railroad station, a town square with a water fountain, as well as telephone service – rare for a rural location. The location became known as Foustown – causing confusion with another Pennsylvania community of the same name. Eventually the distillery grew to include a bonded warehouse and a “bottled in bond” bottling facility. To facilitate the transport of his whiskey by rail Billy also maintained an office in downtown Glen Rock.

In March 1859 Billy married Christina Bricker of York County. Seven surviving children were born to this marriage, five boys and two girls. Active in the Lutheran Church and his community, the elder Foust became a respected business leader, holding a number of positions of prominence in Glen Rock. An 1886 “History of York County” declared: “Few men are better known throughout York and adjoining counties than Billy Foust.”

In 1910 Billy retired. Four of his son took over the operation and changed the name to William Foust Sons Distillers. The Foust boys kept alive their father's tradition of attractive giveaways. Two shot glasses, including one with a label under glass in the base, indicate the continuing creativity of the family (Figs. 12,13). The sons' giveaways also included mini-jugs (Fig. 14) and a tin cup (Fig. 15). Emphasizing the fervor of Foust collectors, the tin cup recently sold on eBay for \$227.



Fig. 12: Label under glass shot glass

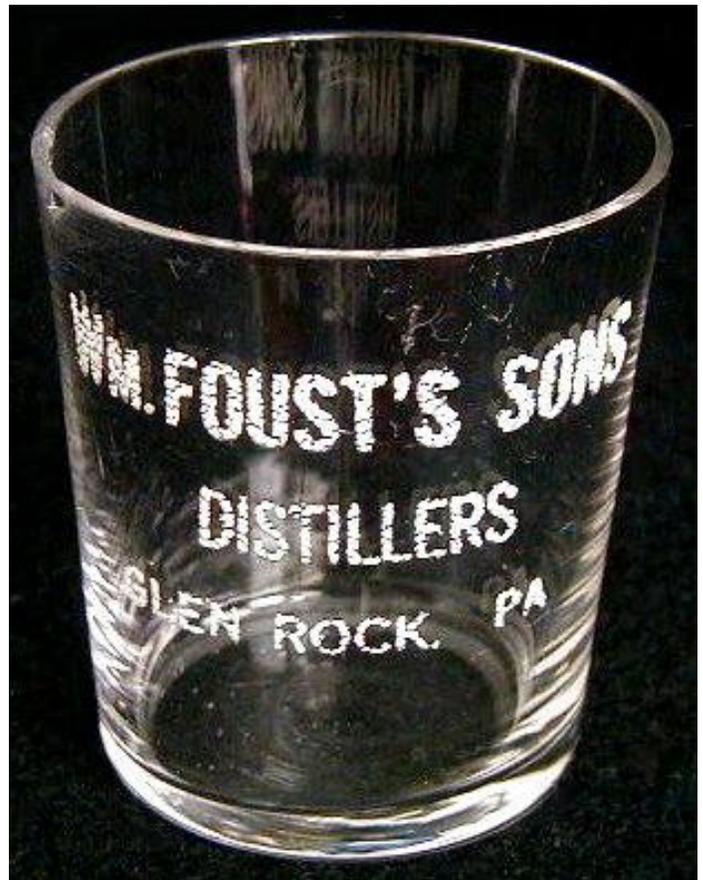


Fig. 13: Foust Sons shot glass



Fig. 14: Foust Sons mini jug

With the coming of Prohibition in 1920 the Fousts were forced to close the business. Billy died the same year. Nevertheless, the distillery bearing his name made headlines in 1921 when a gang of bootleggers, reputedly from Baltimore, raided the whiskey stored in the warehouse. A local newspaper reported that the theft netted “almost 300 barrels of the best firewater the Foust family had ever made.” Law enforcement officials were reportedly able to recover only some of the liquid loot. The Fousts subsequently sold the distillery.

After Repeal the Foust brand continued to be produced, apparently by Sherwood Distilling in nearby Westminster, Maryland. Shown here is a post-Prohibition Foust pint bottle (Fig. 16). During World War II Foust’s Glen Rock facility was refitted to produce industrial alcohol, but the war ended before production began. A 125-foot smokestack built at that time, but never used, is all that remains intact of Foustown and Billy’s distillery (Fig. 17). The rest lies in ruins (Fig. 18).



Fig. 15: Foust Sons tin cup

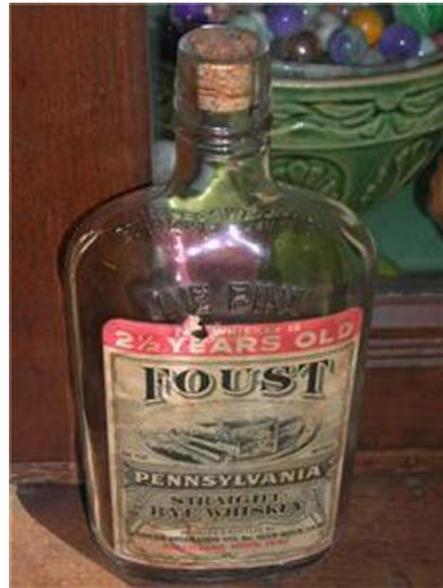


Fig. 16: Post-Prohibition Foust flask

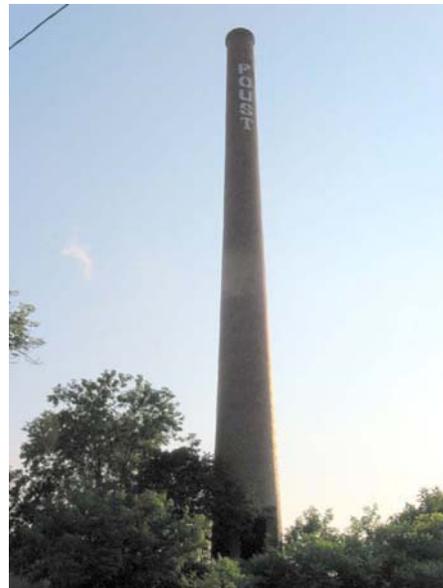


Fig. 17: Photo of smokestack



Fig 18: Photo of warehouse ruins

The Foust name and tradition is remembered and carried on by the legion of collectors who are willing to pay substantial amounts for the wide range of Foust flasks, bottles, jugs, shot glasses, and other items. The cost of that ceramic banana, for example, will buy many, many bunches of the real thing.

Notes: The material and images for this article were drawn from a variety of Internet and other sources. The shot glasses and the picture of Billy Foust are through the courtesy of Robin Preston and his *pre-pro.com* website. The photos of the Foust smokestack and ruins are courtesy of Linda and John Lipman and their "American Whiskey" website.

Upcoming Area Bottle Shows

April 8-9 – Fredricksburg, VA

Northern Virginia Relic Hunters Association's 39th Annual American Civil War Show (2pm – 7 pm Friday, 9 am to 4pm Saturday) at the Fredericksburg Expo Center, 2371 Carl D. Silver Parkway, Fredericksburg, VA 22401. Info: Lewis Leigh, jr., ph: (703) 771-3081, web: www.nvrha.com/show.htm.



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.

October 1, 2011 – Richmond, VA

Richmond Antique Bottle Show and Sale (9am – 3pm, early entry 7:30 am) at the Chesterfield County Fairground, 10300 Courthouse Road, Chesterfield, VA 23832. Info: Marvin Croker, ph: (804) 275-1101, or Ed Faulkner, ph: (804) 739-2951, email: RichBottleClub@comcast.net.

Editor's Note on Show Listings:

The goal of this section is to provide a list of events where collectors are likely to find Washington, DC area bottles for sale. This means that shows may be included even if they focus primarily on items other than bottles, but it also means that many fine bottle shows in distant areas are omitted. For those who seek a more complete listing of bottle shows, we recommend the Federation of Historic Bottle Collectors at http://www.fohbc.com/FOHBC_ShowCalendar2.html. If anyone knows of an upcoming event not listed here where Washington, DC area bottles are likely to be offered, they are invited to inform us at searsjim@usa.net.



Club member Roland Longerbeam sports a bright hat, which helped us keep track of where he was at the Baltimore show.