

# The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

*April 2011*

In this issue:

The Supremes Dive into Hungarian Waters by Jack Sullivan.....	page 2
Upcoming Area Bottle Shows.....	page 5
The Jack Daniel Distillery, submitted by Lee Shipman.....	page 6

## Meeting – April 26th

We look forward to seeing everyone at 8 PM on Tuesday, March 29<sup>th</sup> at St. Mark's Orthodox Church, 7124 River Road, Bethesda, MD 20817. Please bring bottles for show and tell. We debated the color puce at our March meeting. If anyone has a bottle they believe is puce, we would enjoy seeing it in April.



**Show and Tell Items at the March 2011 Meeting of the Potomac Bottle Collectors**

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](http://www.potomacbottlecollectors.org)

Maintained by Al Miller: [www.potomacbottlecollectors.org/contact.php](http://www.potomacbottlecollectors.org/contact.php)

# The Supremes Dive into Hungarian Waters

By Jack Sullivan

[Special to the Potomac Pontil]

Over two days in March of 1900 in Washington, D.C., the U.S. Supreme Court heard extensive testimony about water with laxative qualities produced from Hungarian wells. The justices, presided over by Chief Justice Henry Billings Brown (**Fig. 1**), in effect, were diving headfirst into a liquid controversy that had swirled for almost two decades on two continents.



Fig. 1: Chief Justice Brown

The suit had been brought by the widow and children of Andreas Saxlehner, a man who in 1862 found a spring of bitter-tasting water in Budapest and discovered that it possessed mild laxative qualities. Granted permission by the local authorities to bottle and sell it, Saxlehner merchandised the water vigorously as a cure for constipation and other ailments. According to a 1907 medical dictionary, his product contained sodium & magnesium sulfates, sodium carbonate, and sodium chloride.

Saxlehner sold his laxative in distinctive bottles that were 8.8 inches tall, deep green in color, and sometimes boasted silver tops (**Fig. 2**). They contained raised embossed letters on the base to identify them (**Fig. 3**). He also designed a distinctive label that appropriated the portrait and name of one of his most famous countrymen, a Hungarian hero variously called John, Johan, and Janos Hunyadi (**Fig. 4**).



Fig. 2: Hunyadi Janos bottle with silver top



Fig. 3: Hunyadi Janos base embossing

A great warrior, in 1441 Hunyadi delivered Serbia from the Ottoman Turks and recovered for his native Hungary the region of Wallachia. In 1450 he vanquished another Turkish army and became renowned throughout Christendom. Returning to Hungary he was made governor of the kingdom. In 1456 a flotilla assembled by Hunyadi destroyed the Ottoman fleet. Hunyadi died in the same year, a revered national hero.



Fig. 4: Hunyadi Janos bottle with label

In his merchandising, Saxlehner trumpeted his product as “Hunyadi Janos.” He called it “aperient water” which is another, perhaps more polite word, for a laxative. His advertising featured illustrations of the Hungarian conqueror riding into battle (Fig. 5). Hunyadi water was touted as victorious not only against constipation but “dyspepsia, torpidity of the liver, hemorrhoids, as well as all kindred ailments resulting from indiscretion in the diet.”



Fig. 5: Hunyadi Janos trade card

Saxlehner reveled in testimonies. From the back panel of each bottle Prof. Dr. Varchow of Berlin opined that the water was “the most valuable item in our treasury of remedies.” Equally enthusiastic was Prof. Dr. Hertz of Amsterdam who declared that he was convinced of the “superior efficacy of Hunyadi Janos Water.”

Business was brisk for this bitter-tasting laxative and Saxlehner began buying up wells all over town. He eventually owned 112. He soon was exporting his water worldwide, including to the United States. One American ad featured an African-American servant assuring “Mars George” about

Hunyadi Janos: “It knocks out constipation en makes yer feel like a jay bird in June.” (Fig. 6). To drug stores stocking his product, Saxlehner gave away glass paperweights (Fig. 7).

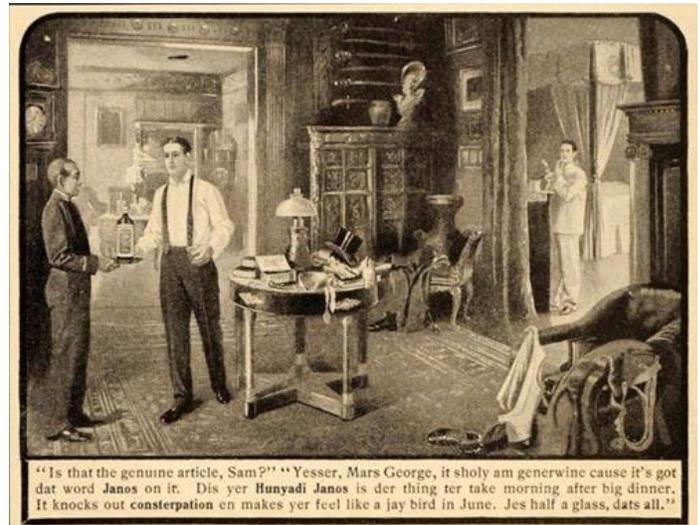


Fig. 6: Hunyadi Janos 1903 ad

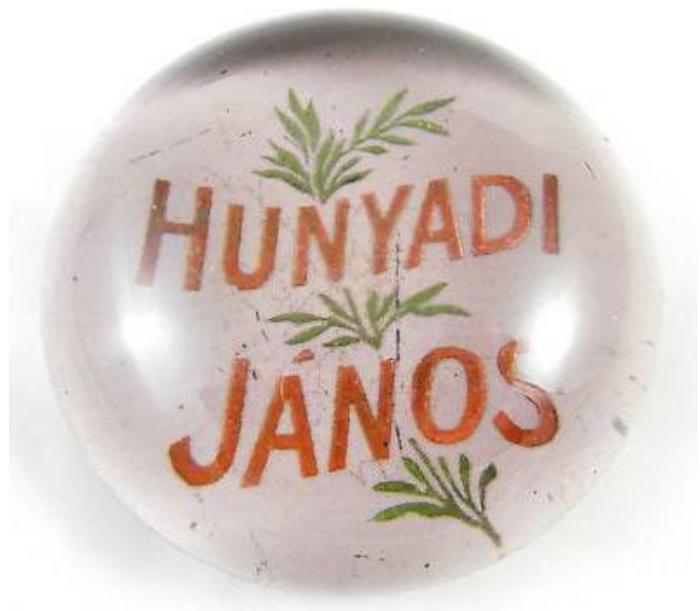


Fig. 7: Hunyadi Janos paperweight

The success, however, drew competition. A number of Hungarian springs were tapped and bottled. Many of them used Hunyadi in their brand name, much to the consternation of Saxlehner. Chief among competitors was Hunyadi Arpad. This laxative water was bottled beginning in 1880 from a Budapest area spring owned by Ignatz Ungar. In his ads Ungar claimed that his product had been legally conceded by the Prime Minister of Hungary to be the best and strongest natural aperient (Fig. 8). Not to be outdone by Saxlehner, Ungar also issued a glass paperweight (Fig. 9).

NOTES OF NEW REMEDIES.



**UNGAR'S HUNGARIAN HUNYADI ARPAD APERIENT WATER**

**BEST AND STRONGEST NATURAL APERIENT.**



Legally Guaranteed by the Prime Minister of Hungary, Article XVII. 1852: Patent No. 4011.

UNGAR'S HUNGARIAN Hunyadi Arpad Spring of Laxative Water is not only the most powerful but the most valuable of its class of waters ever prepared, by its purity, its strength, its purity.

That the HUNYADI ARPAD APERIENT WATER is the most concentrated when it is shown by the following table of cubic contents:

NAME OF THE WATER	HUNYADI ARPAD	FRANCOIS JARVIS	AROLD	FRANCOIS JARVIS
Gallic Magnesian	12.000	12.000	12.000	12.000
Bottle	12.000	12.000	12.000	12.000
Total	12.000	12.000	12.000	12.000

To be had of all Druggists and Mineral Water Dealers.

Fig. 8: Hunyadi Arpad ad



Fig. 9: Hunyadi Arpad paperweight

Saxlehner, asserting the Hunyadi name was proprietary to himself, sued his rival in European courts – with mixed results. Through the 1880s European courts rendered differing opinions. Almost inevitably the watery conflict spilled over into the New World. Saxlehner had a partner firm that merchandised his aperient in the U.S. Ignatz Ungar had a brother living in New York who served as his agent. Between 1886 and 1893, according to U.S. import figures, 1,395,050 bottles of Hunyadi Arpad were shipped into the U.S. It was closely followed by another Hungarian competitor, Hunyadi Matyos, with 1,112,000 bottles. Other imported waters – all bearing the name Hunyadi -- were Corvin, Laszlo, Bela, Jozsef, Lajos, Mikios, and Vilmos.

With the demand for aperient water apparently exploding in the U.S. the Hungarians also found themselves competing with other homegrown and imported waters. Among them, was Apenta, represented here by a paperweight, and Eagle, by a celluloid hand mirror (Figs. 10, 11).



Fig. 10: Apenta Aperient paperweight

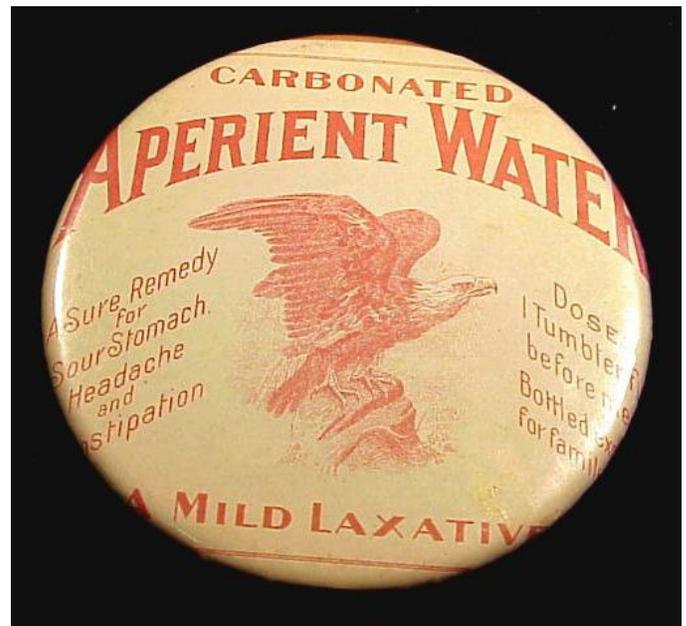


Fig. 11: Eagle Aperient pocket mirror

The Saxlehners had had enough. In 1893 they bought out the Ungars and shut their water off. Then they went after their other competition. With their America partners the family – Adolph had died -- in 1898 sued for the exclusive right to use the name Hunyadi in the United States. The Federal District court ruled for the Saxlehners. “Hunyadi” was all theirs. The losers took the case up the ladder to the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals of Southern New York. That court sustained the lower court ruling. The case was appealed again, this time to the U.S. Supreme Court.

After hearing buckets of testimony, the justices wrote an opinion that is highly detailed about the marketing of laxative waters in Europe and the United States. They reversed the findings of the lower Federal courts and decreed that “Hunyadi” was not a proprietary name but in general use for aperient water. The hero’s name could not be held exclusively by anyone. The Saxlehners were charged court costs.

Any victory by the other Hunyadi bottlers, however, was short-lived. Sales of all laxative waters were hurt by the passage of the 1906 Pure Food and Drug legislation. No longer could aperients make outrageous cure claims. By 1909 Hunyadi Janos ads had dropped all mention of diseases and now was strictly a laxative water (**Fig. 12**).

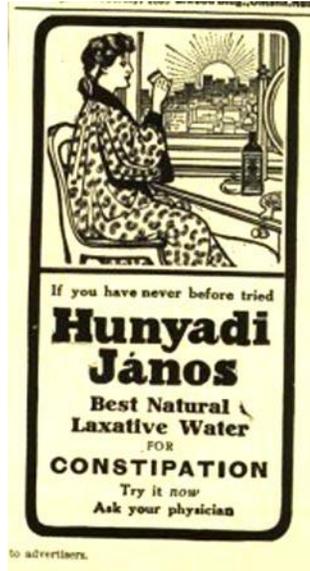


Fig. 12: Hunyadi Janos 1909 ad

Although the shape of the bottle has changed and a crown cap seals the contents, Hunyadi Janos is still being sold (**Fig. 13**). The fate of other competitors remains murky. The Saxlehners seem to have won after all.



Fig. 13: Hunyadi Janos modern bottle (at right)

\*\*\*\*\*

**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



**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 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Convention. Info: Penny Gottlieb, 18 Pond Pl, Cos Cob, CT 06807, ph: (203) 869-8411.

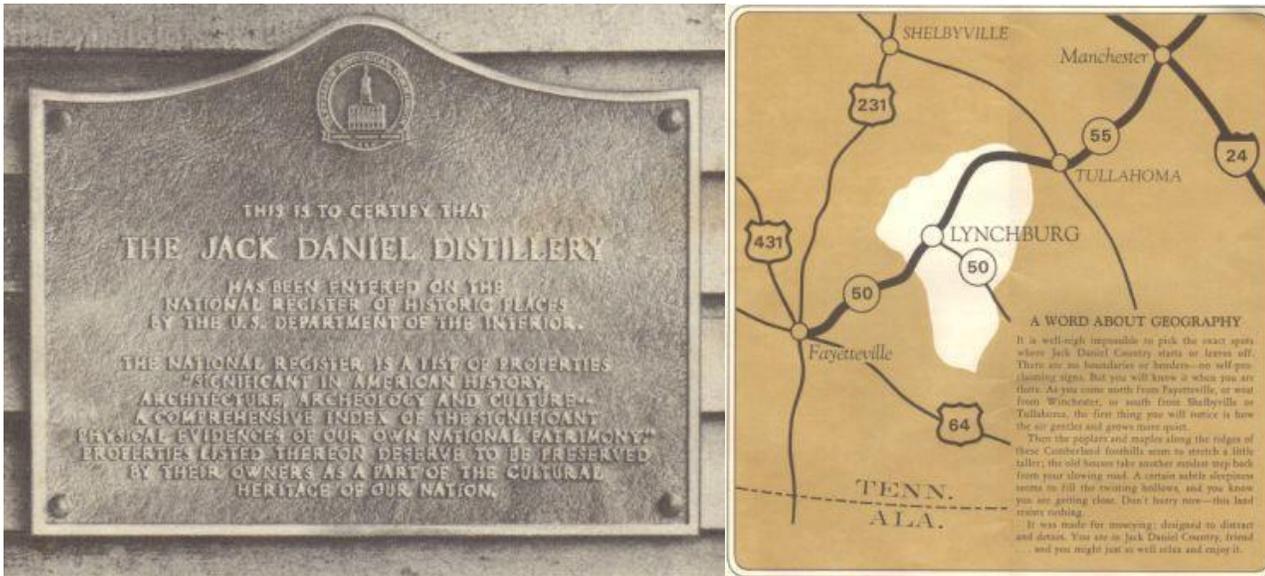
**June 25 - 26, 2011 – Memphis, TN**  
Federation of Historical Bottle Collectors’ Annual National Show & Sale at the Cook Convention Center, Memphis, TN. Info: R. Wayne Lowry, FOHBC Conventions Director, ph: (816) 318-0161, email: JarDoctor@aol.com.

**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.

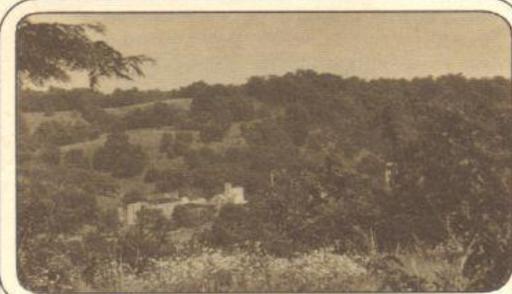


At our March meeting Scott Gordon shows off one of the earliest bottles our club members have dug in the United States

**The Jack Daniel Distillery – Submitted by Lee Shipman.**



At our March meeting, Lee Shipman recalled a trip that she and her late husband Karl took to the Jack Daniel Distillery in Lynchburg, Tennessee. Lee was staying in Tullahoma (see map) and found it very convenient to visit the oldest registered distillery in the United States. Lynchburg itself is located in Moore County, which has remained dry since Prohibition. Lee noted that she still received a whiskey sample from the distillery, but she had to take it with her for future consumption. Today one can take a virtual tour of the Lynchburg distillery at [www.jackdaniels.com](http://www.jackdaniels.com), but the web site does not offer any whiskey samples. Lee's flier shows us how the attraction looked a generation ago.




The old office—roll-top desks still cluttered with orders, bills, and penciled notes on yellowed envelopes, as though the occupants would return at any moment.

### JACK DANIEL HOLLOW





Just north of town, and around the first bend, you come to Jack Daniel Hollow. And nestled in it, the oldest registered distillery in the United States — "No. 1 — 1866."

Like Lynchburg, the distillery is remarkably well-preserved, considering the length of time it has been in continuous operation.

The fabled limestone cave — still producing its steady flow of cool, iron-free, spring water . . .

The open-air rickyard — stacked with cords of hard sugar maple waiting to be converted to vital charcoal...

The bunch of pampered mallards — parading up and down the hollow like they owned the place, haggling over spilt corn like spoiled kids . . .



The tradition of rare Tennessee Sippin' Whiskey was born in the Jack Daniel Hollow in 1866 where it continues to thrive in its own quiet, unique way. Be sure you allow time for a guided tour of its birthplace when you visit Jack Daniel Country.

Just step into the Bethel House at the foot of the hollow. You will always find someone there who is glad to see you and happy to show you around.