

# The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

*May 2012*

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This tiny bottle seen at our April meeting may have contained opium.

## Meeting – May 29th at 8 PM

**St. Mark's Orthodox Church**, 7124 River Road, Bethesda, MD 20817.

Phil Townsend will speak on **Virginia soda bottles**. Please bring Virginia sodas for show & tell.



### Views from the April meeting:

Phil Townsend showed some of his recent finds (above).

Several club members displayed their smallest bottles (above right).

Alan Ou explained that his tiny bottles may once have contained opium. Alan obtained his bottles in Hawaii, but they likely originated in China. (right)



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 Mike Cianciosi (chosi@cox.net)

# Mini Jugs: They Don't Give Them Away Anymore

By Jack Sullivan

[Special to the Potomac Pontil]

From the numbers of them available, mini jugs were a favorite giveaway for thousands of U.S. distillers, dealers, saloon keepers, and others where liquor was bought and sold in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The items were cheap to make and easy to distribute. Since repeal of Prohibition in 1934, laws have prevented free distribution of liquor. Mini jugs, including some shown here from the District of Columbia and Virginia, have been selling for increasingly higher amounts. .

The first example is from Luke J. Kearney who ran a saloon at 1811 L Street NW in Washington and for many Christmases issued a jug given to good customers (**Fig. 1**). The series began in 1900 and appears to have ended in 1906. This jug was issued in 1904. Kearney brushed with celebrity a year earlier when he accepted a check drawn on the Riggs Bank from Harry K. Thaw. Thaw was the young socialite who murdered famous architect Stanford White over the showgirl, Evelyn Nesbit, "The Girl in the Red Velvet Swing." A sensation of its time, the incident has spawned a number of books and more than one motion picture. Thaw may well have been a customer in Luke's saloon.



Fig. 1: Luke Kearney, DC

Sanborn fire maps of the time show his 1811 L Street saloon as a two story brick building 25 feet wide and extending rearward almost one-half block to an alley. There was an empty lot on the east side, possibly for hitching horses. Today the address itself has vanished between a large office building at 1801 L St. and a restaurant and bakery at 1819.

Luke Kearney died in 1916. He is buried with wife Mary and family members in Holy Rood Cemetery in Washington. That graveyard is situated just above Georgetown. Most of the burials took place from the mid 19th Century into the early years of the 20th. Today the cemetery is in very sad repair. Numerous gravestones are destroyed or overturned.

A similar jug to Kearney's was issued by T. H. Millar who was proprietor of Millar's Hotel in Culpeper, Virginia (**Fig. 2**). This motto mini jug was issued in 1901, a year after Kearney used the same motto for Christmas 1900. My research reveals very little about Millar or his hotel. His giveaway jug sold on eBay recently for \$308.

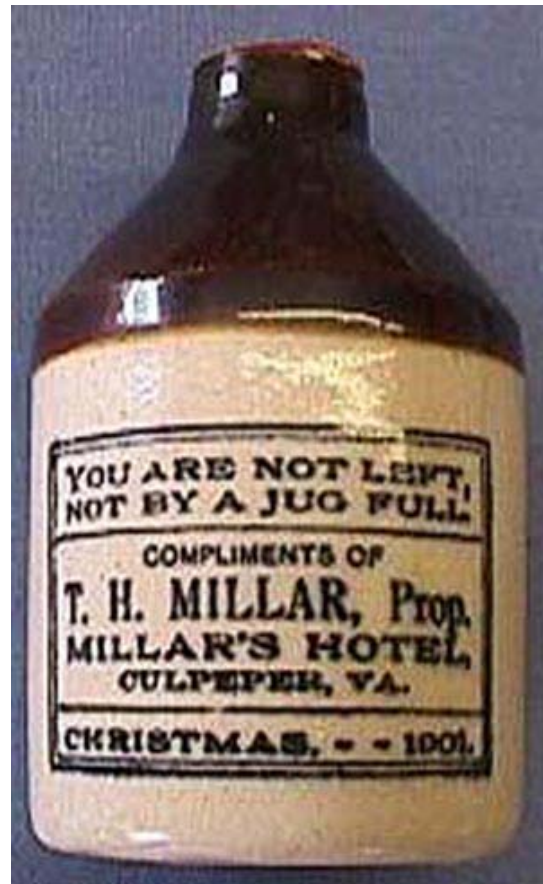


Fig. 2: Millar's Hotel, Culpeper

Little information also is available on the Earnest Bros. company at 28th and M Streets in the District. Its mini jug is unusual in that it replicates with Albany slip and Bristol Glaze a much larger "shoulder" jug in which Earnest Bros. also merchandised its whiskey (**Fig. 3**). This jug is listed in the Club's bottle book at \$130-\$150. It recently went up for auction on eBay for \$445 and found no takers. The Gulick & Vermillion jug shown here (**Fig. 4**) sold for \$157 in November 2011. This organization, located at the corner of First & C Streets S.E., probably was one of the principal purveyors of liquor to hard drinking members of the House of Representatives.



Fig. 3: Earnest Bros., DC



Fig. 5: Yates & Co, DC



Fig. 4: Gulick & Vermillion, DC

Across the Potomac River in Alexandria, the Yates family was involved in the whiskey trade for several generations. In 1818, William Yates purchased an oyster house and tavern that reputedly had been frequented by George Washington. He also purchased other neighborhood lots and expanded the facility. His saloon was renamed Yates Tavern, and the area is still called Yates Gardens. Later family members opened a retail liquor store in Old Town at 300 S. Fairfax. Their mini jug, shown here, sold for \$105 at auction in Sept. 2010 (Fig. 5).

The Fair Oaks Distilling jug, advertising Mountain Rye Whiskey (Fig. 6), was reputed to be a Richmond, Virginia, product but I have been unable to confirm that. Nor have I found references to the Willis Liquor House in Harrisonburg. The Willis mini jug shown here sold at auction for \$265 in May 2010 (Fig. 7).



Fig. 6: Fair Oaks, Richmond?



Fig. 7: Willis Liquor House, Harrisonburg

More information is available about the Martin Distilling Co. of Roanoke who produced a mini jug (Fig. 8). Although it appeared in local directories on Tinker Creek Rd. for only 1909 and 1910, Martin Distilling obviously had a longer business life. In 1912 it ran an extensive ad in the Roanoke Herald Journal. In 1914 the Federal Government recorded a transaction from its bonded warehouse. In 1918, after Virginia had voted prohibition, the Martin organization re-incorporated as a distillery. What the company was making was not recorded and remains a mystery since whiskey was banned.



Fig. 8: Martin Distilling, Roanoke

Gordon L. Aronhime, whose mini jug is shown here (Fig. 9), was a longtime Roanoke whiskey merchant, and may have begun as a small distiller. In a 1908 Roanoke business directory his operation was listed as the Aronhime Distillery Company, also located on Tinker Creek Road. Whether he sold out to Martin is unclear but he continued to list the distillery in his advertising. After receiving a charter from the State of Virginia in 1909, Aronhime changed the company name to the Aronhime Liquor Company and moved to 127 Salem Street



Fig. 9: Aronhime Distilling, Roanoke

The last three mini jugs are from Bristol, Virginia. I have long wondered about Bristol's proliferation of whiskey companies. The answer became clear by understanding that from November 1909 to 1916 it was illegal to sell whiskey in Bristol, Tennessee, and elsewhere in the Volunteer State, but perfectly legal to do so in Bristol, Virginia. Because shipments of booze by road, rail and mail across state lines was still allowed, the number of liquor merchants on the Commonwealth side of the border proliferated.

Among them were the T. H. Haynes Company. It opened for business the same year Tennessee went dry, occupying a building on State Street Bristol, Va. Haynes issued an attractive mini jug (Fig. 10). Matt Miller relocated from Johnson City on the Tennessee side of the "dry" border to open a whiskey dealership in Bristol and also issued a mini jug (Fig. 11). Miller featured such brands as "Bristol Club," "Clinchfield," "Cream of Bristol," "Dixie Club," "Miller's Oldest," and "Potters Club Corn." Martin Lynch was a Bristol

saloonkeeper who also maintained several retail liquor stores through the city. His mini jug sold for \$142 at auction in July 2011 (Fig. 12).

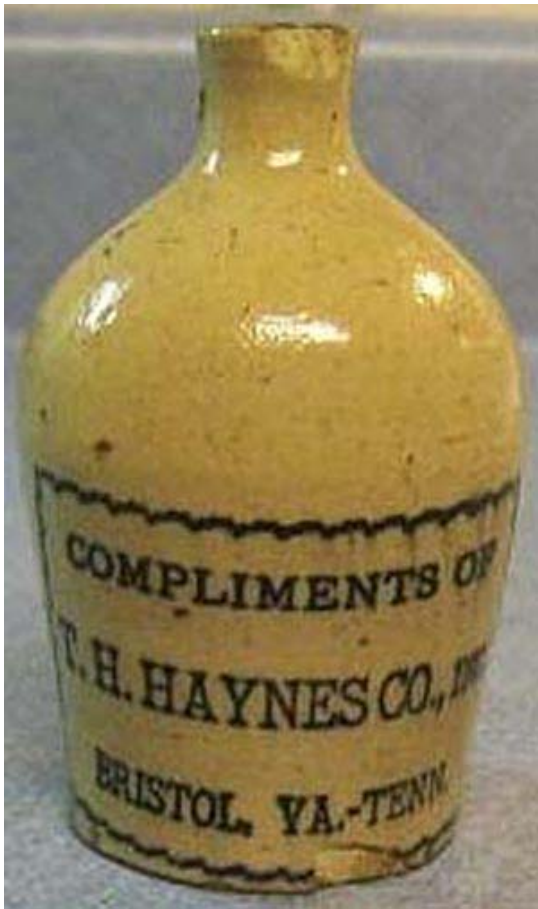


Fig. 10: T. H. Haynes Co., Bristol



Fig. 12: M.R. Miller Co., Bristol

No, liquor mini jugs are not given away any more. In fact, finding one to purchase for \$100 or under may be difficult. Why? They are old, most of them antiques; avidly collected locally as well more generally; small and not space taking, and easily displayed. All these attributes add up to the reality that what once liberally was handed out for free now require big bucks to acquire.

Notes: The material for this article were drawn from a number of sources on the Internet, including auction sites, principally eBay, for prices.



Fig. 11: Parkwood, Lynch, Bristol



Mike Cianciosi sent in this photo of an S & S Model A soda cooler with Herrmann's logo. This item may be for sale privately.

# Upcoming Area Bottle Shows



**31 May – 02 June 2012**

(Thursday – Sunday)

**Grantville (Hershey), Pennsylvania The National Association of Milk Bottle Collectors (NAMBC), 32nd Annual Convention** at the

Holiday Inn, Grantville (Hershey), Pennsylvania, at the junction of I-80 and I-81. Info: Penny Gottlieb, 18 Pond Place, Cos Cob Connecticut 06807, Tele: 203.869.8411. email:

[PennyGottlieb18@gmail.com](mailto:PennyGottlieb18@gmail.com), website: [milkbottlecollectors.com](http://milkbottlecollectors.com)

**21 and 22 July 2012** (Saturday & Sunday) **Adamstown, Pennsylvania The 11th Annual Shupp's Grove Bottle Festival**, (Saturday & Sunday, 6:00 am to dusk, early buyers Friday 3:00 pm, at the famous "Shupp's Grove", 1686 Dry

Tavern Road, Denver, Pennsylvania 17517, Info: Steve Guion, Tele: 717.626.5557, email: [affinityinsurance@dejazzd.com](mailto:affinityinsurance@dejazzd.com)

**06 October 2012** (Saturday) **Richmond, Virginia Richmond 41st Antique Bottle Show and Sale**, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm, Admission: \$3.00, Early Admission: 7:30 am, \$10.00, Chesterfield County Fairgrounds, 10300 Courthouse Road, Chesterfield, Virginia 23832, Info:

[RichBottleClub@comcast.net](mailto:RichBottleClub@comcast.net) or Marvin Croker 804.275.1101 or Ed Faulkner 804.739.2951

Jun 1 Butte, MT  
 Jun 2 Raleigh, NC  
 Jun 9 Aurora, OR  
 Jul 7 Tulsa, OK  
 Jul 13-14 Houston, TX  
 Jul 27-28 Birmingham, AL  
 Jul 28 Altoona, IA  
 Aug 2-4 Mebane, NC  
 Aug 11 Vicksburg, MS  
 Aug 18 Urbana, OH  
 Sep 8 Downieville, CA  
 Sep 23 Greensboro, NC  
 Sep 29 Santa Ana, CA  
 Sep 30 Lowell, MA  
 Oct 6 Point Pleasant, WV  
 Oct 6-7 Savannah, GA  
 Oct 7 Chelsea, MI

Jun 2 San Diego, CA  
 Jun 9 Smyrna, GA  
 Jun 30 Weston, WV  
 Jul 11-15 Muncie, IN  
 Jul 21 Leadville, CO  
 Jul 27-29 Reno, NV  
 Jul 29 Coventry, CT  
 Aug 4 Tallahassee, FL  
 Aug 12-19 Bouckville, NY  
 Aug 19 Poughkeepsie, NY  
 Sep 15 Salt Lake City, UT  
 Sep 23 Depew, NY  
 Sep 29 Albuquerque, NM  
 Oct 5-6 Canyonville, OR  
 Oct 6 Chesterfield, VA  
 Oct 7 Dryden, NY  
 Oct 7 Keene, NH



Scott Gordon holds a small cobalt blue bottle at our April meeting. We believe this item went home with Lee Shipman.



Lee Shipman is particularly fond of cobalt blue. At our March meeting her clothing matched her bottles.