

# The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

*November 2012*

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## Meeting – November 27th at 8 PM

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

Please We had hoped to compare our summer finds in October, but Hurricane Sandy prevented us from meeting. Please bring bottles you have obtained since our last meeting for show & tell.

## No December Meeting – But Lee Shipman will have an open house

Our regular meeting date would be Christmas Day, and we are not going to compete with the holiday. However, club members are welcome at an open house for Lee Shipman's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on Saturday, December 22<sup>nd</sup>. Please join us between noon at 3 PM at Lee's home: 6403 E. Halbert Road, Bethesda, MD 20034.

## Possible Show Date

Lee Shipman has spoken with St. Mark's Orthodox Church about the possibility of holding a small bottle show on April 6, 2013. We will need to make a final decision at our November meeting about whether to proceed with this idea. We would need volunteers to agree to help before we could commit to putting on a show. If you have any views on our potential for organizing a successful show that you will be unable to share at our November meeting, please send your thoughts to Lee Shipman ([plannerlee52@gmail.com](mailto:plannerlee52@gmail.com)) or Jim Sears ([searsjim@usa.net](mailto:searsjim@usa.net)).



The Potomac Bottle Collectors have not put on a show since 2005. We need to decide whether the time is right to schedule another show.

This photo shows Ken Anderson with his display at one of our last shows.

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](mailto:searsjim@usa.net), PH: 609/472-5473) & Andy Goldfrank (email: [amg\\_sticky@yahoo.com](mailto:amg_sticky@yahoo.com), PH: 202/588-0543)

Web Site: [www.potomacbottlecollectors.org](http://www.potomacbottlecollectors.org)

Maintained by Mike Cianciosi ([chosicox.net](mailto:chosicox.net))

# Paul Garrett: American Winemaking Pioneer

By Jack Sullivan  
[Special to the Potomac Pontil]

Paul Garrett during his lifetime was considered a pioneer American winemaker, repeatedly interviewed about his views on the wine industry. His fame, however, did not prevent him from being chased by the forces of Prohibitions through four states, including Virginia. In the process he left behind a variety of highly embossed bottles, familiar to area diggers.

Garrett was born in 1863 and grew up in Halifax County, North Carolina, part of a family that owned a winery they called Ringwood. He was a poor student and in his early teens convinced his family to let him quit school and work in the winery. He spent the next 10 years learning the business. A self-admitted failure as a grape farmer, he early on proved to have an excellent sense of business and worked an 18-hour day managing winemaking and the shipping. At times he supervised as many as three hundred employees.

After the Ringwood Winery was lost to Garrett by reason of another's inheritance, he became a wine salesman for a second firm, traveling extensively throughout the South and West. Eventually he set up his own winery in Little Rock, Arkansas. As county after county in that state went dry, Garrett pulled up stakes and returned to North Carolina. There he was able to operate under the name of Garrett and Company, initially supplied with wine by the Ringwood Winery. He subsequently established himself in Littleton, North Carolina, buying wine from a number of suppliers.

From this improvised beginning, Garrett's wine operation grew steadily. Shown here at the age of 33 (**Fig. 1**), he had been in business for six years and owned a substantial winery in Weldon, North Carolina, from which he supplied a national market, producing between 40,000 to 50,000 gallons of wine a year. A bottle from that period is shown here (**Fig. 2**). But North Carolina gradually was going dry, passing laws that squeezed hard on all alcoholic beverage makers. In 1903, Garrett moved to Virginia, building a huge new winery in Norfolk (**Fig. 3**). The new facility was rated at a capacity of 4 million gallons annually. Garrett, always the showman, also bragged that the winery clock was the largest in the world.



Fig. 1: Photo of Paul Garrett



Fig. 2: North Carolina wine bottle



Fig. 3: Garrett's Norfolk winery

Early in his Norfolk enterprise, Garrett decided label to his flagship vintage “Virginia Dare.” It was named for the first white child born in North America. He advertised it widely and by so doing created the first nationally-known proprietary brand of wine. Previously wines had been labeled by the grape from which they were made.

Garrett used a comely young woman on his signs (Fig. 4) and claimed that this product was “always appreciated by gentlewomen.” As shown in a 1904 ad (Fig. 5), Garrett also averred that Virginia Dare contained nothing but the ripened juice of the scuppernong grape. Actually he was receiving supplies of wine from New York to California, representing a range of grape varieties. As one observer put it, “East met West in Virginia Dare.”

Another practice in which Garrett pioneered was his insistence on selling Virginia Dare in bottles rather than in bulk. The dominant practice for U.S. winemakers was to ship in barrels to regional wholesalers who bottled the wine, slapped a label on it, and sold it. Garrett created a revolution by bottling his product himself and gave the public something identifiable to ask for: Not just “white wine,” but “Virginia Dare.”



Fig. 4: Virginia Dare sign

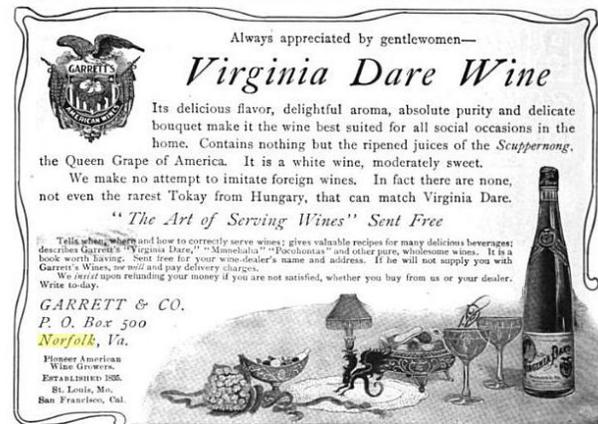


Fig. 5: Virginia Dare ad

Always a master of marketing, Garrett fancied highly embossed glass containers for his products. Shown here is a quart wine bottle and a close up of his characteristic embossing (Figs. 6,7). He also featured smaller bottles, some with metal caps (Figs. 8,9). Both are embossed “Norfolk.” Garrett also featured giveaways such as wine glasses with the Virginia Dare label (Fig. 10).



Fig. 6: Garrett wine bottle (right)



Fig. 7: Detail of embossing



Fig. 8: Norfolk Wine #1  
Fig. 9: Norfolk Wine #2

By 1910 Garrett could boast a wine empire that stretched all across America. It included facilities in five states with a total of 7 million gallons in storage capacity. There were several bigger winemaking enterprises in California but nothing to approach Garrett's "empire" in the East. Even his critics recognized him a giant in the industry. The dispersion of Garrett's holdings appears to have been motivated by being driven by Temperance forces from both Arkansas and North Carolina. He anticipated the Drys also winning in Virginia. By scattering his enterprises, he hoped to stay one step ahead of the laws. The Garrett Company sign showing a running couple might have been symbolic of Garrett's psychology (**Fig. 11**).

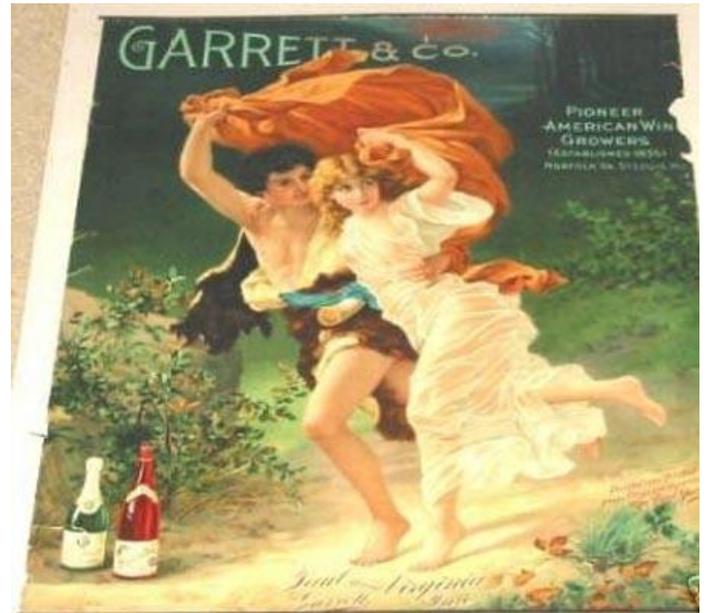


Fig. 11: Sign- running couple



Fig. 10: Wine glass

In 1912, Garrett moved to the town of Penn Yann in New York State. On the shores of Keuka Lake he bought twelve hundred acres and built himself a summer residence. Virginia went dry by statewide vote in 1914, with the enabling legislation that finally slammed the door on everything alcoholic in 1916. Garrett moved his operation out of the Commonwealth and opened a new winery on the Brooklyn waterfront. More and more of his operations were concentrated in New York, as indicated on a bottle from this period (**Fig. 12**).

Garrett's respite in New York was short-lived as National Prohibition was enacted in 1920. Home winemaking was exempted from the law, however, and the practice exploded as tens of thousands began fermenting their own muscatel in the basement. Garrett & Company stayed alive, offering grape concentrates and other items for the trade. Garrett also saw an eventual end to Prohibition, given its unpopularity, and began buying up California vineyards.

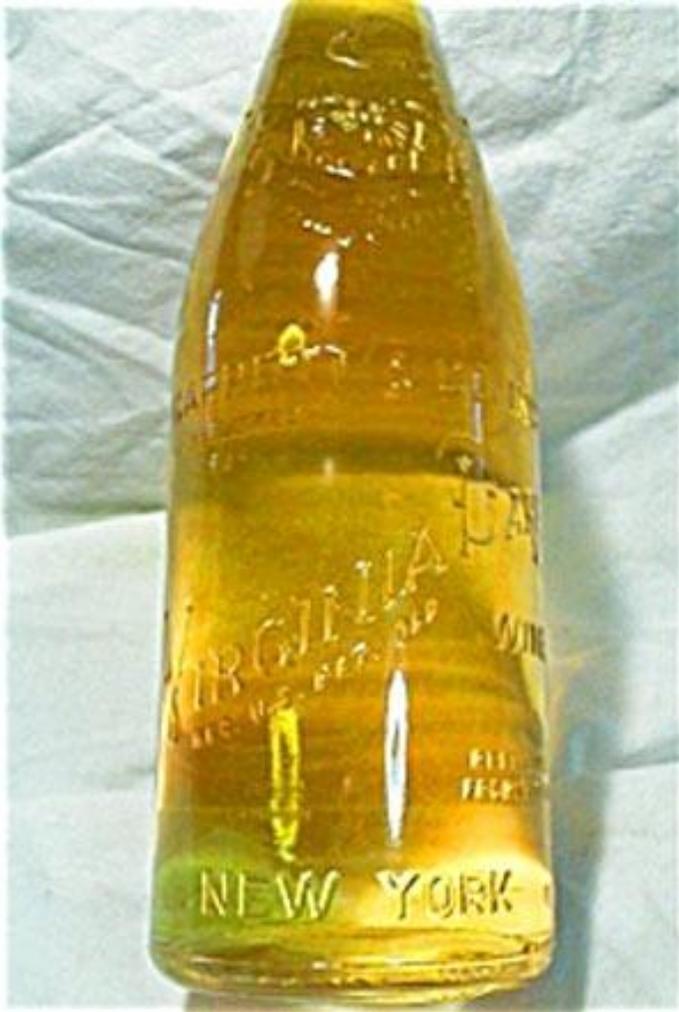


Fig. 12: New York wine bottle

When Repeal came, he was ready to exploit his West coast holdings and even returned to Virginia and North Carolina to reopen and expand facilities there. By 1939 he was selling two million gallons of wine a year, about half of it Virginia Dare. When he died of pneumonia, age 77, in 1940, Garrett had recreated an empire at least equal to the one he had built before Prohibition. Moreover, he had been a leader in the revolution that has made the wine industry the billion dollar enterprise it is today.

**Note:** The material for this article principally was drawn from a chapter devoted to Paul Garrett in the book "Makers of American Wine: A Record of Two Hundred Years" by Thomas Pinney.

## Upcoming Area Bottle Shows



Nov 25 Bethlehem, PA  
 Jan 4-5 St. Petersburg, FL  
 Jan 13 Muncie, IN  
 Jan 26 Anderson, CA  
 Feb 03 South River, NJ  
 Feb 22-23 Phoenix, AZ  
 Feb 24 Enfield, CT

Dec 01 Auburn, CA  
 Jan 13 South Attleboro, MA  
 Jan 19 Jackson, MS  
 Feb 20 Rome, GA  
 Feb 15-16 Columbia, SC  
 Feb 23 Grand Rapids, MI  
 March 3 Baltimore, MD

**On April 6, 2013 - From 9 a.m. To 4 p.m.  
 The POTOMAC BOTTLE COLLECTORS Plan To  
 Have A SHOW At St. Mark's Just Inside I-495**

PBC now has a very nice meeting place with lots of parking spaces & a good size Fellowship Hall that would be very suitable for a BOTTLE SHOW. St. Mark's is on the south side of River Road that is 3 traffic lights on the inside of Washington D.C.'s I-495 Beltway. Set-Up could be from 5 to 8 p.m. on April 5th. Their tables are 8' wide x 30" deep. They do have 4 - 6' wide x 30" deep tables suitable for Displays.

If you are interested please Email  
 In VA Phil Townsend - phtownsend@yahoo.com  
 In MD Lee Shipman - plannerlee52@gmail.com



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

Lee Shipman proposed this flier for a PBC show. Please note that we will discuss this proposal at our November meeting. Our club has not yet committed to having a show.