

# The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

## December 2012

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### 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 4 PM at Lee's home: 6403 E. Halbert Road, Bethesda, MD 20034.



This lid would be on Roland Longerbeam's NE PLUS ULTRA jar if he had been at the November meeting.

### January 29 Meeting

The January meeting will feature our annual club contest for the best bottle, go-with, dug item, and shard acquired during 2012. We look forward to some good stories about 2012 bottle hunts. Has anyone been doing any digging lately? We will collect annual dues of \$10 per person or family at our January meeting. If you are unable to attend, **please send dues to Potomac Bottle Collectors, c/o Jim Sears, PO Box 370, Garrett Park, MD 20896.**

### Save the Date: April 6, 2013

At our November meeting we discussed the possibility of having a small show on April 6<sup>th</sup>. Some members are concerned about the limited size of our St. Mark's location and the likelihood that a revised version of our DC area bottle guide will not be ready by April. Phil Townsend has suggested that we might treat our event as something similar to the tailgate events held by the Richmond, VA club. We could then start building toward a full size show in 2014.



Club members show off their summer finds at the November 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](http://www.potomacbottlecollectors.org)

Maintained by Mike Cianciosi (chosi@cox.net)

# A Holiday Look at Luke Kearney

By Jack Sullivan  
[Special to the Potomac Pontil]

A few years ago, I provided the Pontil with an item on a District of Columbia saloonkeeper who was notable for giving away to favored customers at Christmas time small jugs of whiskey bearing mottoes. Since that time, a considerable amount of new information and additional images have reached me. December seems a good time for a second look at Luke J. Kearney.

While other whiskey distributors and tavern keepers sometimes gave customers favors at Christmas and New Years, Kearney's giveaways are distinctive. Virtually all are two-toned stoneware mini-jugs about 5 and 1/2 inches high. More important, each year had a new slogan – something for the drinking public to ponder while draining the modest contents of the jug.

The earliest seems to have been issued in 1900 (**Fig. 1**). Its under glaze label read: "You are not left...Not by a Jug Full"...Compliments of...Luke J. Kearney... Christmas 1900." This was followed in 1901 by "Another Jug Full... Compliments Of..." (**Fig. 2**). In 1902, Kearney used the slogan: "While we live – let's live." Later ceramics would add his address at 1811 L Street in the District of Columbia.

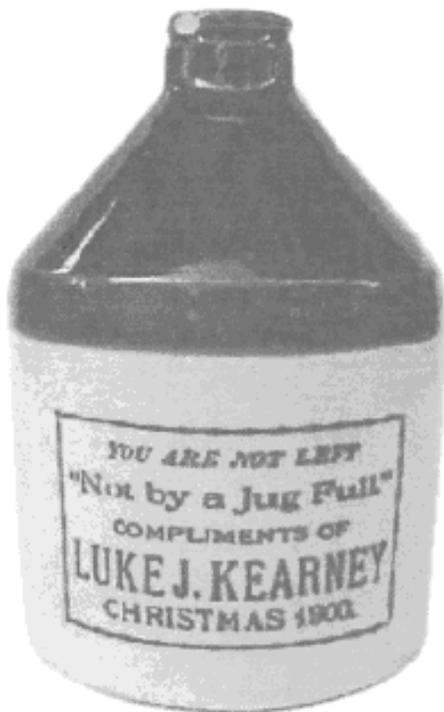


Fig. 1: 1900 Kearney jug



Fig. 2: 1901 Kearney jug

The next year the Washingtonian employed a personal motto: "Well I'll be Jugged...Here's Another Jug with Compliments of Luke J. Kearney." The 1904 version was "If You Try Me Once, You Will Try Me Again." It appears that Luke also issued a second version in 1904 (**Fig.3**). It contains a verse that says: "To Be Healthy? That's the Question; Drink Arlington Club It Aids Digestion."

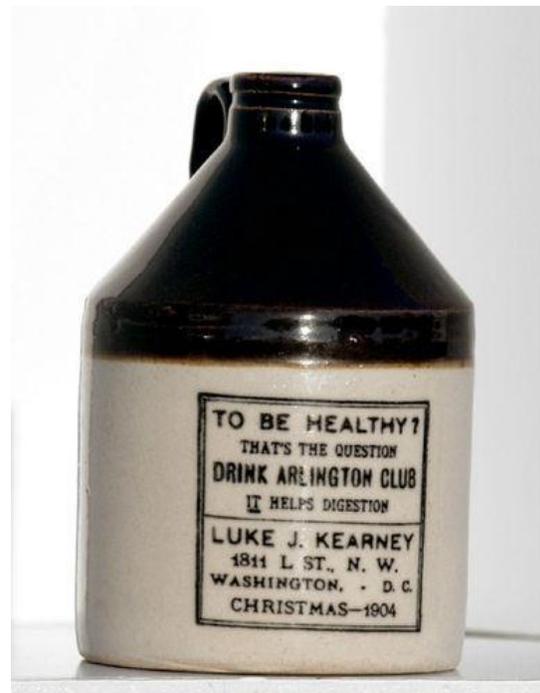


Fig 3: 1904 Kearney jug

Although I have yet to identify a giveaway for 1905, Kearney issued two items in 1906. One bore the enigmatic motto, “As I Go Up the Hill of Prosperity, May I Never Meet a Friend.” The second 1906 stoneware is a squared jug with the simple question: “Is Everybody Happy?...Christmas 1906...Luke J. Kearney” (Fig. 4). The 1907 issue reads “Another Jug Added to What You Have Makes Another Jug More” (Fig. 5).



Fig. 4: 1906 Kearney jug

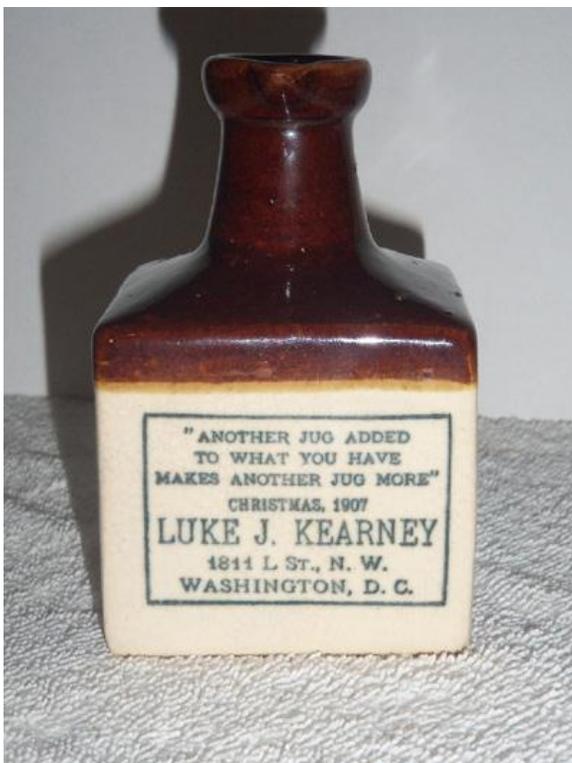


Fig. 5: 1907 Kearney jug

After 1907 the jugs apparently ceased, although Kearney continued to sell whiskey in embossed glass bottles (Fig. 6). He also gave out shot glasses advertising Arlington Club Whiskey (Fig. 7), a brand registered to the Hellman Distilling Co. of St. Louis. Kearney’s saloon continued to be listed in local business directories until by Act of Congress the District went dry in 1917.



Fig. 6: Kearney embossed bottle

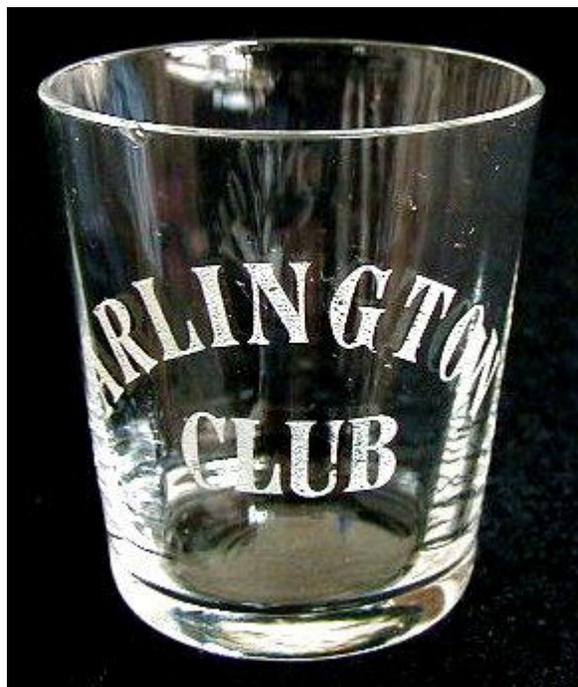


Fig. 7: Arlington Club shot glass

Luke Kearney was the product of an Irish Catholic family whose parents had emigrated to the U.S., before his birth. His father, also named Luke, found a job as a watchman in federal service, working for 50 years. He and his wife, Mary, had a family of six children. Among them was Luke, born in 1868. The family lived at 3331 O Street in Georgetown.

The source and length of Kearney’s education and early business career is shrouded in time, but the 1900 Census found him, age 32, living at 1811 L Street, above his saloon. He was married to a woman named Catherine with whom he had three children. In 1906, Catherine died, leaving Luke to raise Mary, 8; Luke Jr., 6, and Frank, 3. Kearney does not appear to have

remarried. His parents may have helped him with the parenting for a time but his Father died in 1916 and Mother in 1917.

Kearney brushed with celebrity in 1903 when he accepted a check from a customer drawn on the Riggs Bank by Harry K. Thaw (Fig. 8). Thaw was the young socialite who later 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 have been a customer in Luke's L Street saloon. In 1915, Kearney also is reported to have owned a baseball club in DC.



Fig. 8: Thaw check

Kearney died in 1933, at the age of 65. He is buried with his wife Catherine, his parents and other family members in Holy Rood Cemetery situated just above Georgetown. It is a predominantly Irish Catholic graveyard associated with the Jesuit parish of Holy Trinity Church. 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. (Fig. 9). Numerous gravestones have been destroyed or overturned.



Fig 9: Holy Rood Cemetery

Sanborn fire maps of the time show the 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. The street is shown as it looks today (Fig 10).



Fig. 10: 18th & L Sts. today

As the Holiday Season comes upon us, we should remember Luke Kearney, as Charles Dickens would say, as "a man who knew how to keep Christmas." and, as appropriate, salute Luke's memory by taking a nip from a jug of our own.

## Upcoming Area Bottle Shows



Jan 4-5 St. Petersburg, FL  
 Jan 13 Muncie, IN  
 Jan 26 Anderson, CA  
 Feb 03 South River, NJ  
 Feb 15-16 Las Vegas, NV  
 Feb 16 Aurora OR  
 Feb 24 Enfield, CT

Jan 13 South Attleboro, MA  
 Jan 19 Jackson, MS  
 Feb 02 Rome, GA  
 Feb 15-16 Columbia, SC  
 Feb 16 Columbus, OH  
 Feb 22-23 Phoenix, AZ  
 March 3 Baltimore, MD

Feb 23 Grand Rapids, MI show cancelled