

The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

March 2015

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Meeting – March 31st

Please join us at St. Mark’s Orthodox Church in Bethesda at 8 PM.



The National Capital Brewery mug shown above was one of the “go-withs” displayed at our January meeting. See page 5 for additional items we collect along with our bottles.

The small labeled bottles (above left) are from Baltimore. They were at our February meeting in honor of the Baltimore bottle show. We enjoyed seeing many members and old friends at that show.

The little pontiled bottles at left were also part of our February show & tell.

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

Pontil: Jim Sears (email: searsjim@usa.net, PH: 609/472-5473) &

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Harrison W. Huguley: The “Honest” Alexandria Boy

By Jack Sullivan

[Special to the Potomac Pontil]

“We are sticklers for old fashioned honesty. We believe people like to see sixteen ounces to the yard and thirty-six inches to the yard. We may be a little behind the times but we can’t be convinced that the public ‘don’t care a d— for quality.’ On the contrary, we believe that the average man would rather have a straight article than a crooked article any day....”

This self-described pillar of “old fashion honesty,” was born Harrison Whitfield Huguley in 1845 in Alexandria, Virginia, the son of George and Sarah Huguley. Although the Huguley name is said to be of German Swiss origin, the family on both sides had Virginia ties. The senior Huguley had been born in Virginia and ran a grocery store at the corner of King and Henry Streets. The 1850 U.S. census-taker found the family with nine children living in Alexandria. Harrison, whose name erroneously was given as “Henry” in the census, was the seventh child.

Alexandria would become a Union focus during the Civil War. Invaded and occupied by Federal troops immediately after Virginia formally joined the Confederacy, the city was a military post and supply point for Federal forces. Although many locals profited from their presence, Southern sympathies were strong in the town. The Huguleys, however, almost certainly were pro-Union and profited by that stance. Harrison came of age during the conflict but unlike many other Alexandria youth did not flee South to join the Confederate Army. Rather, he is recorded as having spent his formative years going to school in the District of Columbia —Union territory.

The idea that this native Virginian was a Yankee at heart is reinforced by Huguley’s post-war career. While still in his early 20s he was hired as a clerk by the post-war military government established in Virginia. No such position would have been available to him if his loyalties had been in question, nor would his subsequent employment as a federal deputy collector of customs and later as staff member of the Army Surgeon General.

In 1866 Huguley married Helen C. Todd, called “Nellie.” She was a New Englander, born in New Hampshire of parents who were originally from Maine. Whether it was the desire of his new wife, or hostility from unreconstructed Southerners in Alexandria, or other causes, Huguley early on decamped for Massachusetts, settling in Boston with Nellie and their three children.

Like many merchants of his time the senior Huguley had sold whiskey in his Alexandria grocery. Harrison, apparently having learned the trade from his father, opened his own liquor business in Boston sometime between 1876 and 1880, claiming

it had been founded in 1834. The 1880 census recorded his occupation as “wholesale and retail liquors.”

Along the way Huguely had become close to Benjamin Butler, a former Union general and ardent abolitionist, who was particularly hated in the South and faced hanging if he had been captured during the war. In the post-war era Butler served as a Massachusetts congressman and in 1883, one term as governor. As governor Butler appointed Huguely as his aide-de-camp and gave him the rank of “colonel,” a title Harrison would keep for the rest of his life, providing yet another indication of Huguely’s “Yankee” orientation.

After serving Gov. Butler for his term Huguely returned to running his Boston liquor business full time. The local whiskey trade was booming. H.W. Huguley Co., located at 135 Canal St., Boston, offered customers more than 30 national brands of whiskey and his own house labels. They were “Amor” and “Myopia Club,” both trademarked in 1906. He packaged his whiskey in glass bottles and ceramic jugs, a number of them shown here (**Figs. 1 - 5**). He also issued shot glasses and decks of playing cards for his major brands (**Fig. 6, 7**).

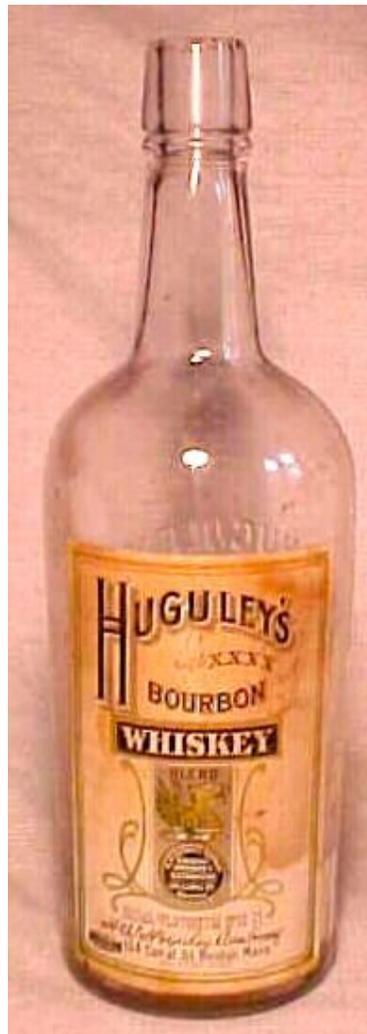


Fig. 1: Bourbon quart



Fig. 2: Huguley flask



Fig. 4: Huguley glass flask



Fig. 3: Amor ceramic jug

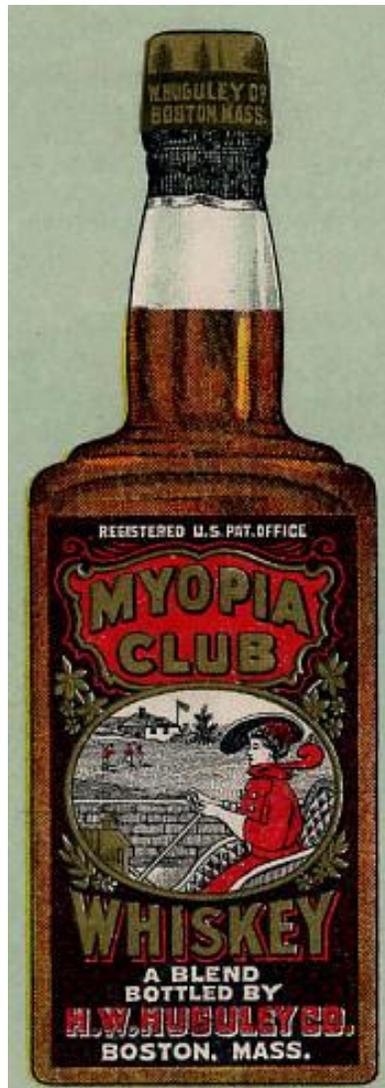


Fig. 5: Myopia Club quart



Fig. 6: Huguley embossed quart

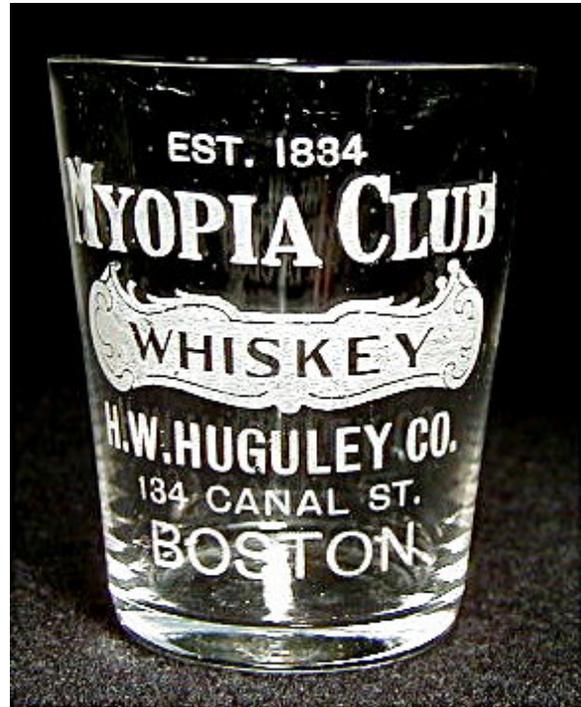


Fig. 9: Myopia Club shot glass

Huguley's proprietary brands, his literature trumpeted, came from his own distillery: "*We are distillers and operate one of the largest distilleries in the world. Registered by the U.S. Government. Distillery No. 13, First District Ohio, capacity over 12,000 gallons per day. Storage capacity over 15,000 barrels.*" (Fig. 9). There was just one thing wrong: Huguley did not own or operate this distillery, Frieberg & Workum of Cincinnati did, although from time to time he probably received quantities of whiskey from that facility. Despite his claims, Huguley was a "rectifier," not a distiller. He was compounding and blending raw whiskeys, slapping on his own labels, and selling it, mostly by mail order. So much for "old fashioned honesty."

In whiskey merchandising "truth" frequently was a missing element. Only occasionally did a liquor dealer suffer economically from misrepresentations and even outright lies. Certainly Harrison Huguley did not. Despite disparaging the lavish living styles of other whiskey dealers in his ads, he himself owned a Beacon Street mansion in the Back Bay area of Boston and was an active investor in local real estate.

In his late 60s as his health began to fail, "Colonel" Huguley with his wife embarked on a long, supposedly recuperative, trip in 1913 to Southern Europe. While in Madrid, Spain, in May, he suffered a stroke and died at the age of 68. The company he had founded carried on until 1916 when the forces of Prohibition prevailed.

In summary, the story of this "old fashioned" Alexandria boy, Harrison Huguley, strongly suggests that when someone protests his honesty so insistently, it is prudent to count the silverware before he leaves the house.

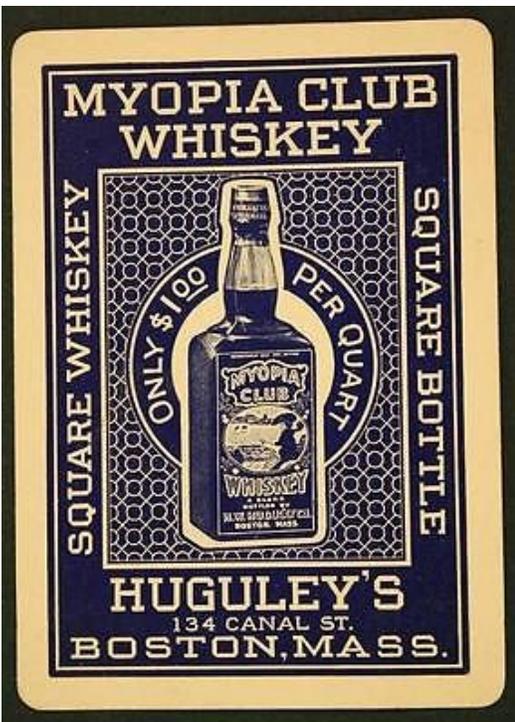


Fig. 7: Playing card

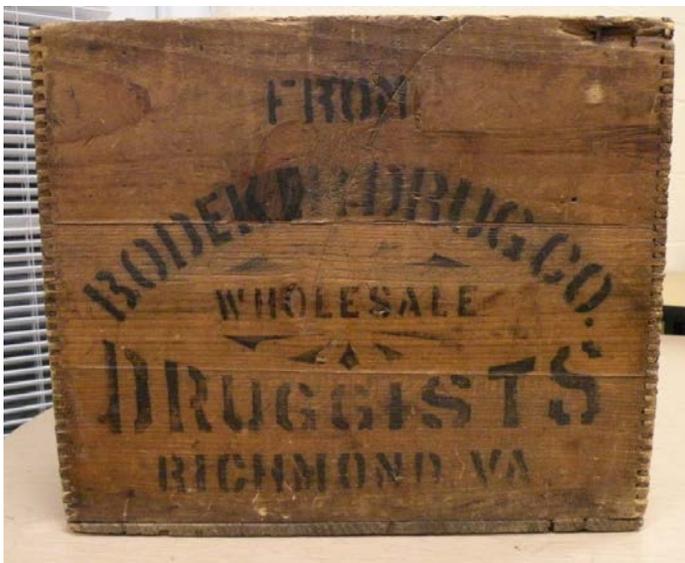
Upcoming Area Bottle Shows

March 28 Daphne, AL
 March 29 Enfield, CT
 March 29 Tylersport, PA
 April 4 Belleville, IL
 April 11 Antioch, CA
 April 11 Savannah, GA
 April 11 Kalamazoo, MI
 April 12 Dover, NH
 April 19 Rochester, NY
 May 2 Gray TN
 May 3 Antioch, IL
 May 9 Coventry, CT
 May 16 Aiken, SC
 May 17 Washington, PA
 June 7 Ballston Spa, NY
 July 17-18 Reno, NV
 July 25 Birmingham, AL



April 11 St. Clairsville, OH
 April 12 Hutchinson, KS
 April 29, Harrisonburg, VA
 May 3 Marcy, NY
 May 9 Mansfield, OH
 May 9 Adamstown, PA
 May 16 Lake City, FL
 May 30-31 Santa Rosa, CA
 July 11 Houston, TX
 July 18-19 Adamstown, PA
 July 25 Castle Rock, CO

July 31-August 2 Chattanooga, TN – The Federation of Historical Bottle Collectors 2015 National Bottle Show



At our January meeting, we saw this crate from Bodeker Drug Company in Richmond, VA.



This early hat box once held a stovepipe hat belonging to Henry Stabler. The Stabler name is well known to us from the Stable-Leadbeater Apothecary Shop, which is today a museum in Old Town Alexandria.



This close-up of the top of the hat box shows Henry Stabler's name.

Thank you to Phil Townsend for displaying both the crate and the hat box seen here.