

# The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

*May 2015*

In this issue:

Christian and the Xanders: Selling Spirits in D.C.  
by Jack Sullivan .....page 2  
Upcoming Area Bottle Shows.....page 5

## Meeting – May 26th

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

## September Picnic?

After the June 30<sup>th</sup> meeting, our club will break for the summer. If there is sufficient interest we will have a September picnic. The default picnic date is the last Saturday in September. Please let us know if you would be interested in attending a picnic.



**Roland Longerbeam shows recently acquired fruit jars at the April meeting. Most of these were found at the Baltimore show in March. Other show & tell items at the April meeting included local Portner variations, a Mohanlon whiskey, and dug local bottles.**

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) &

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)

# The Baltimore Torps of Charlie Baldwin

By Jack Sullivan  
[Special to the Potomac Pontil]

In October 2012, I did an article for the Pontil on one of the Nation's top collectors of torpedo bottles, a man named Charlie Baldwin who resides in Middletown, Connecticut (**Fig. 1**). That article featured his Washington, D.C., torpedoes, an attractive array of round bottom bottles in a variety of interesting colors. Charlie had also revealed that he had an equally impressive collection of Baltimore torpedoes and promised to send me photos for a second article.



Fig. 1: Charlie Baldwin

Life has a way of getting in front of good intentions and thus it was only while attending the recent Baltimore Bottle Show, when Charlie was in our dinner group, that I reminded him of his promise. This time he followed through right away with photos. They included a basket of the bottles, mixed Baltimore and D.C. (**Fig. 2**), along with individual pictures.



Fig. 2: A basket of bottles

Since my knowledge of these bottles is very limited, Mike Ciancosi put me in touch with Chris Rowell, a leading Baltimore collector of torpedoes. Chris has on the Web a post entitled "Baltimore Pontiled & Early Smooth Based Sodas and Beers." In it he showcases his torpedo collection and gives some company history on the issuing organizations. With a tip of the hat to Chris, I have drawn liberally on his research to provide information on Charlie's Baltimore torps.

The green bottle shown on two sides here (**Figs. 3,4**) was produced by John Boyd & Sons who were listed in Baltimore city directories as in business from 1842 to 1851. Their address was Nine South Gay Street. Chris believes Boyd bottled many beverages because there are at least five distinct molds that bear the company name. Boyd torps came in as many as eight different colors, including the olive green shown here.



Fig. 3: Boyd torpedo #1



Fig. 4: Boyd torpedo #2

William Coughlan was the beverage bottler responsible for the next torpedo, again shown on two sides (**Figs. 5,6**). Chris believes he did business sometime between 1840 and 1870 from a business located at Eastern Avenue and Exeter Street. He is aware of two torpedo molds from Coughlan, and the bottles are found in a range of colors including the emerald green of the one shown here – an appropriate color since Coughlan was an Irishman.



Fig. 5: Coughlan torpedo #1



Fig. 6: Coughlan torpedo #2

While Ireland's landscape is said to display 40 shades of green, the torpedoes of Baltimore might provide competition in the many variations of that color. Paul Keach through his company produced a deep green bottle (**Fig. 7**) that Chris notes as distinctive because the name "Keach" is embossed high on the torpedo, near the seam rather than being centered as with other Baltimore examples. Keach torpedoes, he notes, come in a range of greens, including apple green, yellow green, deep emerald green, olive green — and for some variety, yellow topaz and apricot puce.



**Fig. 7: Keach torpedo**

Philip Gardner and Christopher Brown, Chris says, were involved in mineral water manufacturing in Baltimore, listed in directories as located at 116 North Howard Street. He believes that because they apparently were in business for only two years (1846-1848) that their bottles are quite scarce (**Fig. 8**). Once again green predominates in their colors, ranging over several shades.



**Fig. 8: Gardner torpedo**

The Chapman name on the side of the two torpedoes shown here (**Fig. 9**) likely was John Lee Chapman, the son of a druggist who also was a partial owner of the Baltimore Glass works. John Lee married a cousin whose father operated Chapman's Glass Works in the late 1820s, a business that John Lee later acquired. He also set up as an apothecary and druggist at the corner of South and Market Streets, later moving to other locations. From his ads we know he was dispensing soda water as early as 1837 from his drug store. Later with his brother John Lee Chapman would open a glass factory called the Maryland Glass Works.



**Fig. 9 Chapman torpedoes (2)**

While Chris' article does not give historical background on the H. Fitzgerald bottle shown here (**Fig. 10**), he identified him as a Baltimore source of torpedoes. An appreciation of Fitzgerald's bottle appeared on Ferd Meyer's Peachridge site recently: *"When we talk about rare, this is about as tough to find as one can get. Super early and super crude, here is a Baltimore soda that has amazing eye appeal, as it shimmers in the light, covered in whittle....For rarity and overall beautiful early glass, this is a tough one to top."*



**Fig. 10: H. Fitzgerald torpedo**

The last torpedo shown here (**Fig. 11**), was sent to me by Charlie as a Baltimore example, but has no identifying embossing. It may be that he bought it at a past Baltimore Bottle Show and assumes that it was minted in that city. In any case it is a striking cobalt blue, a relief from green, and a beautiful bottle definitely deserving to be seen.



**Fig. 11: Cobalt blue torpedo**

I have owned only one torpedo during my collecting years. It was a cheap Taiwanese knockoff with a sickly bluish cast. After seeing the real stuff in a collection like Charlie Baldwin's, the bottle was an embarrassment and I sold at a yard sale years ago for a couple of bucks. Now I just look at photos sent to me or view them on the Internet — and wish.

# Upcoming Area Bottle Shows

May 30-31 Santa Rosa, CA  
 June 5-6 Butte, MT  
 June 6 Raleigh, NC  
 June 7 Ballston Spa, NY  
 June 27 Tulsa, OK  
 July 11 Houston, TX  
 July 17-18 Reno, NV  
 July 25 Birmingham, AL  
 July 26 Ankeny, IA  
 Sept. 13 Richfield, OH  
 Sept. 19 Santa Ana, CA  
 Sept. 20 Westford, MA  
 Oct. 3 Richmond, VA

July 18-19 Adamstown, PA  
 July 25 Castle Rock, CO  
 Aug. 16 Poughkeepsie, NY  
 Sept. 13 Pekin, IL  
 Sept. 19 Indianapolis, IN  
 Sept. 27 Depew, NY  
 Oct. 4 Chelsea, MI

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



This unusual Alex Guinsburg's Buffet bottle was also part of our April show & tell



Chas Kraemer and Jas Tharp's & Sons strap sided flasks at the April meeting



This GV-8 decanter will be part of show & tell at the May meeting.