

# The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

*July - September 2015*

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## Meeting – September 29th

Please join us at St. Mark's Orthodox Church in Bethesda at 8 PM. Our program will be "summer finds." For show & tell please bring in anything you have added to your collection since June.



**Views from the June Meeting:**

**Bob Ford displays bottles from the Baltimore-Washington area (left)**

**Rare color Crowley & Coleman DC bottle (right)**

**Unusual aqua Bromo-Seltzer (below)**

**Mike Cianciosi's bottles including several pontils acquired at the meeting (below right)**



Meetings: 8:00 PM on the last Tuesday of each month January-June and October-November

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)

# A Singing Frog Was No Help to J. P. Haddox

By Jack Sullivan

[Special to the Potomac Pontil]

J. P. Haddox, who put his picture on a “label under glass” pocket flask (Fig. 1), was a leading liquor dealer in Winchester, Virginia. With a reputation as a successful businessman and civic leader, he was elected chair of the Democratic Party in his home town and the captain – head man – of a local volunteer fire company. About 1898, however, Haddox decided to invest in a brewery and within a decade his economic house came crashing down despite a testimonial to his beer that invoked a singing frog.



Fig. 1: Haddox picture flask

A native son of Winchester, Haddox was born in 1853 into a family of longtime Virginians. Throughout his life he seems to have been known by multiple names. Written in full it was John Perry Haddox, but other versions in public records identified him variously as John P. Haddox, J. Perry Haddox and J.P. Haddox. We can assume that he received his education in the elementary and perhaps secondary schools of Winchester. About 1874, at the age of 22 he married a local girl, Annie E. Buckley. They would have two children, Edmonia, born in 1875, and Mary Agnes, born a year later.

Haddox appears to have been well established in his liquor business by the 1890s and was moving up the

social/political ranks of Winchester. His election as captain of the Friendship Fire Company not only meant recognition of his ability and enthusiasm as a firefighter but carried a great deal of social prestige. Moreover, like many whiskey men his political views were “wet” and Democratic Party oriented. Elected chair of the Winchester Democrats, Haddox was wheeling and dealing in local and state politics. A 1899 news article reported him heavily involved in organizing a convention in Winchester to select Senatorial candidates.

Symbols of his prosperity in the liquor trade were the quality of his give-away items to special customers. Haddox's label under glass flasks, including one with a fancy lady (Fig. 2), were relatively pricey items, as was a silver plated match safe (Fig. 3). The safe, dated 1898, bears the inscription, “Compliments of J. P. Haddox, leader in fine wines, liquors and bottler of the Belvidere Brewing Co.'s high grade lager beer.”



Fig. 2: Woman picture flask



Fig. 3: Haddox match safe

That was the fateful year that Haddox expanded from peddling whiskey into making and selling beer. A bottling factory for carbonated beverages had begun in the 1880s in Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, a 30 mile drive over the Blue Ridge Mountains from Winchester. At the outset the company was a very small operation, occupying only a single building and employing only a few workers, most of them said to be poorly paid. With the decision of the local owners to expand into brewing beer in the mid-1890s the facilities were expanded considerably, resulting in burdensome debt. When the brewery failed to be profitable, bankruptcy loomed.

Obviously sensing an opportunity, in 1898 Haddox and two Winchester brothers named Savage purchased the brewery property for a bargain basement \$4,000 and began to make a beer they called "Belvidere," a name they registered with the Federal Patent and Trademark office. As shown here they packaged their brew in both clear and amber bottles, some with porcelain closures (Figs. 4-6). In addition to paper labels their bottles were embossed with the name of the company.



Fig. 4- Fig. 6: Belvidere bottles

Enter the singing frog, as I imagine him (Fig. 7). One of the brewery's customers in Harrisonburg, Virginia, named W. H. Willis, the manager of the Kernstown Showroom, a local saloon, took out an ad in the Harrisonburg paper to extoll the virtues of Belvidere Beer (Fig. 8). Terming the beer "delightful" and claiming no hurt could come from it, he proclaimed: "*But if even a frog drinks it, it will make him sing — for joy!*" Mr. Willis apparently knew something about frogs to elicit this glowing testimonial.



Fig. 7: Singing Frog

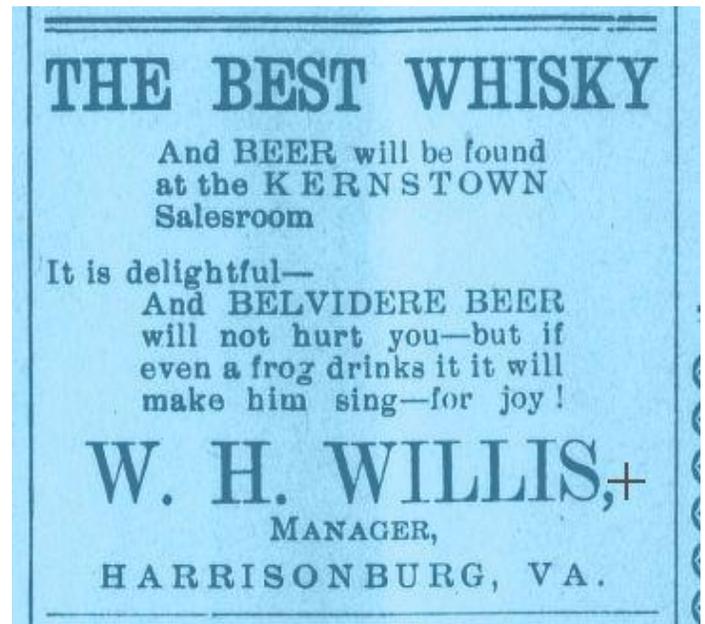


Fig. 8: Ad for Belvidere beer

Haddox and his partners, after buying the Harpers Ferry property, spent lavishly on refurbishing the brewery and building a customer base – both expensive. Before long it became clear to them that the Belvidere Brewery was continuing to be a losing proposition and that nothing could be done to remedy the situation. In 1907 the partners decided to sell the brewery buildings and property. How much was realized in the sale was not disclosed but indications are that significant losses were involved.

The economic drain of the brewery appears to have brought down Haddox's Winchester clothing business, located at 148 Main Street (now Loudoun Street). A 1908 photograph (Fig. 9) tells the story: "J. P. Haddox store to be sold without reserve...to retire from business." Haddox's entire stock, pegged at worth \$20,000, was to be disposed of and the store had been put into the hands of a New York salvage firm.



Fig. 9: Haddox store photo

Earlier Haddox had suffered another painful blow. Annie, his wife and the mother of their two grown daughters died at the young age of 44 in January 1899. She was buried in Mount Hebron Cemetery in Winchester with this inscription on her tomb: "In after time we'll meet her. Her children will rise up and call her blessed. We love her." Haddox later remarried.

Only 55 years old when he announced retirement from business, Haddox in subsequent years faded from public records. He was out of the liquor business when Virginia went "dry" in 1916 and lived long enough to witness one daughter, Mary Agnes, die in 1933. Three years later, in July 1936, Haddox himself died, age 83. John Perry Haddox lies in a crypt next to Annie, where a chain of three links decorates his plaque (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10: Haddox grave monument

## Upcoming Bottle Shows



Sept. 27 Batsto, NJ  
 Sept. 27 Depew, NY  
 Oct. 3 Richmond, VA  
 Oct. 4 Chelsea, MI  
 Oct. 10 Coventry, CT  
 Oct. 11 Keene, NH  
 Oct. 18 Findlay, OH  
 Oct. 18 Scriba, NY  
 Nov. 1 Elkton, MD  
 Nov. 7 Royal Oak, MI  
 Nov. 8 Pittsburgh, PA  
 Nov. 16 Albany, NY  
 Nov. 29 Bethlehem, PA  
 Dec. 6 Enfield, CT

Oct. 18 York, PA  
 Oct. 25 Matteson, IL  
 Nov. 7 Jacksonville, FL  
 Nov. 8 Oakland, NJ  
 Nov. 14 Belleville, IL  
 Nov. 22 Greensboro, NC  
 Dec. 5 Roseville, CA  
 Jan. 8 Palmetto, FL