

The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

October 2015

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Meeting – October 27th

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

Upcoming Bottle Shows

Nov. 1 Elkton, MD
Nov. 7 Jacksonville, FL
Nov. 7 Royal Oak, MI
Nov. 8 Oakland, NJ
Nov. 8 Pittsburgh, PA
Nov. 14 Belleville, IL
Nov. 15 Albany, NY
Nov. 22 Greensboro, NC
Nov. 29 Bethlehem, PA
Dec. 6 Enfield, CT
Jan. 10 Taunton, MA
Jan. 23 Jackson, MS
Jan. 30 Rome, GA
Feb. 7 Manville, NJ
Feb. 19-20 Columbia, SC
March 13 Baltimore, MD



Dec. 5 Roseville, CA
Jan. 8 Palmetto, FL
Jan. 16 Muncie, IN
Jan. 24 Bayport, NY
Feb. 6 DeFuniak Springs, FL
Feb. 7 Columbus, OH
Feb. 28 Enfield, CT

The turnout was low at our September meeting, but the "summer finds" on display were impressive. The show & tell included jars, flasks, bitters, and an array of local bottles such as a J. Rother torpedo and a C. Peters squat



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)

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The “Silver Wedding” Three and the D.C. Mystery

By Jack Sullivan

[Special to the Potomac Pontil]

Three proprietors dealing in liquor sales in the Nation’s Capital – John Keyworth, Harry H. Meyerstein, and Alonzo Bunch – had one unusual attribute in common. They each claimed to be the source for a D.C.-based whiskey called “Silver Wedding.” The truth behind these assertions is not easily uncovered, the facts are scanty, and much remains a mystery.

John Keyworth is the first on the “Silver Wedding” scene. According to records, he was born in District of Columbia in 1838, the son of Robert Keyworth, an immigrant from England who became a “citizen of prominence” in Washington. Robert was a watchmaker and jeweler, doing business on Pennsylvania Avenue, west of Ninth Street. He also was a major in the First Regiment, D.C. Volunteer Militia.

Robert’s son, John, eschewing his father’s profession, but not a commercial life, ran a grocery store and liquor shop at the corner of Ninth and D Streets, N.W. From a fuzzy photo of Keyworth’s establishment (**Fig. 1**) can be noted multiple barrels, several of which likely held whiskey, including Silver Wedding. In an unusual step for the time — trademark laws were generally not respected — he registered the brand name in 1876 with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. The label is shown here as it appeared and on a shot glass (**Figs. 2,3**). Calling his establishment “Wholesale and Retail Dealer in Fine Groceries, Liquors and General Merchandise,” Keyworth advertised in 1881 as “sole proprietor” of Silver Wedding Rye.



Fig. 1: Keyworth’s grocery and liquor store



Fig. 2: “Silver Wedding” logo

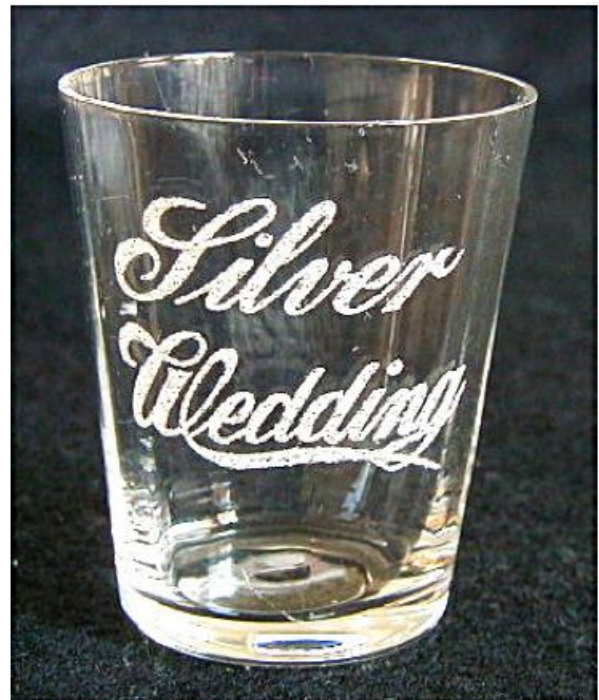


Fig. 3: Silver Wedding shot glass #1 (script)

Keyworth was a family man. Listed as a “grocer - wholesale and retail,” in the 1870 and 1880 census forms, he was living in the District with his wife, Mary, and their five children, four boys and one girl, ranging in age from 18 to 11. I have been unable to find a definitive date of his death but a John Keyworth, occupation listed as a grocer, died in April 1897 and is buried in Washington’s Congressional Cemetery. His store eventually was torn down to make way for the FBI Building.

Enter Harry H. Meyerstein. Baltimore business directories for 1900 show him working there for L. Strauss, a grocery outfit. The following year he is listed in D.C. directories as working for a Strauss outlet here. By 1905 Meyerstein was operating a saloon at 417 Eleventh St. N.W. In 1901 he had either purchased or obtained by default the trademark on Silver Wedding Whiskey (**Fig. 4**). At the time he said that the words had been used since September 1, 1874. He may have been the source of a second Silver Wedding shot glass (**Fig. 5**).



Fig. 4. Keyworth 1881 ad



Fig. 5: Silver Wedding shot glass #2 (Gothic lettering)

How Meyerstein fared in business is not recorded but at some points he may have sold or given up his right to the Silver Wedding brand. Now it belonged to Colonial Wine Co., located (like Keyworth) at Ninth and D Streets N.W. and more particularly to its flamboyant owner, Alonzo Bunch. The 1910 census found Bunch, living on 9th Street, likely above his liquor store and saloon. Age 33, he was Virginia born and married to a woman whose name – no kidding – was given as Cuta Bunch. No children were recorded in the household.

At least three shot glasses (Figs. 6-8) were issued by Colonial Wine, one involving Silver Wedding Whiskey. These would have been given to saloons, restaurants and bars featuring Bunch's liquor. Alonzo also was running a bar on the second floor of a building at 1213 Pennsylvania Avenue. He had acquired the license after the previous owner was cited by First Precinct Lieutenant J. A. Sprinkle as follows: *"Under present conditions this place should not go on...I think it is the worst conducted place in the precinct, and unless the musical attractions and the woman trade is eliminated I recommend that this license not be granted."* The license was denied and the saloon put in the hands of receivers, from which Bunch obtained it and, I trust, cleaned up the situation.



Fig. 6: Silver Wedding shot glass #3 (Colonial wine)

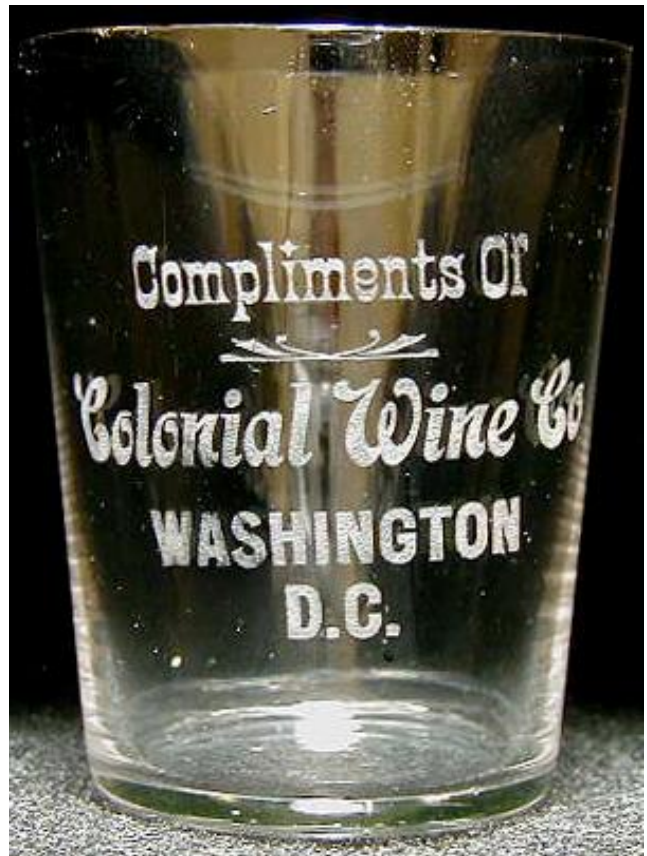


Fig. 7: Colonial Wine shot glass #1



Fig. 8: Colonial Wine shot glass #2

Alonzo's hands, however, were not altogether "clean," acting as the D.C. agent for Cincinnati Extract Works, selling vanilla, lemon and other extracts, all with a high alcoholic content. In 1913, his extracts were found by Food and Drug officials to be "imitation products, artificially colored." The Feds confiscated Bunch's stock and he was fined \$15.

After the Congress in 1917 voted to make the District of Columbia "dry," Bunch, who had continued with his liquor interests up until the end, made headlines in Washington D.C. papers during a Congressional hearing by accusing Justice Department officials of confiscating his liquor and then giving it away to friends. It is not clear that his charges were ever confirmed.

Along the line, Bunch sold Colonial Wine Company to a pair of Washington businessmen named Landmesser and Fox. The circumstances of the change are clouded by an announcement from the new owners that the business would "hereafter be conducted in a first-class manner," perhaps implying something about Bunch's proprietorship. Subsequent Colonial ads continued to advertise Silver Wedding Whiskey. It cost \$1.00 per quart; "better whiskies" cost \$2.00 (Fig. 9).



Fig. 9. Colonial ad 1914

The assumption must be that the sale of Silver Wedding ceased in the Washington with the coming of Prohibition. There is no evidence of the brand being revived after Repeal. The transfer of the brand name from Keyworth to Meyerstein to Bunch and beyond still is not entirely clear. But 1917 was not the end of the saga. Shown here is a 1932 "medicinal" prescription for Silver Wedding whiskey issued by a "Greens' Eye Hospital" in San Francisco (Fig. 10). Was this whiskey from a usurper of the brand name or federally confiscated liquor from Washington, D.C. that had found its way to the West Coast? Just another Silver Wedding mystery.



Fig. 10. Silver Wedding prescription.