



The Potomac Pontil



The Potomac Bottle Collectors Serving the National Capital



May 2000

In this issue:

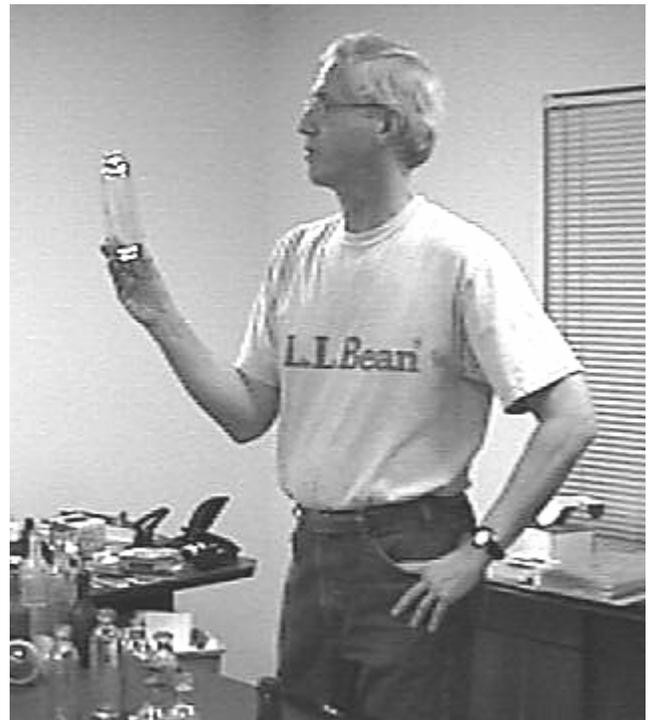
Potomac Bottle Collectors Annual Awards.....page 2
 Around the Swamp by Andy Goldfrank.....page 3
 A Look at Matt Knapp's Web Site.....page 5

May 30th Program: John Krouse will speak about patent closures for soda and beer bottles. This talk will focus on internal closures such as the Codd and Hutchinson varieties. John will save the external closures such as lightnings for a separate future program.

Refreshments: Lee and Karl Shipman.

Show & Tell: Bottles with internal closures and new finds.

April Meeting: Richard Lilienthal used local beer and soda bottles to educate us about the different styles of blob closures (see picture at right provided by Matt Knapp).
Awards Banquet: Winners of the Potomac Bottle Collectors 1999 annual awards were announced at the April meeting, and Lee Shipman organized a very nice awards banquet to accompany the ceremony. Club members contributed a wide variety of tempting treats, but the apple pies brought by Roland Longerbeam appeared to be the most popular dish.
Raffle Bottle: Mike Jordan won a pair of blue storage jars. Thanks go to Allan Einseln for donating these items.
Show & Tell: Members brought in an impressive array of local bottles and go-withs. The most coveted local item on display was Al Steidel's amber W.C. Milburn Brain & Nerve Tonic, which is shaped like a round bottom soda.



Mike Jordan (left) enjoys a hearty second helping at the April awards banquet. Despite Jordan's unsubstantiated allegations that a certain Mason jar collector eats everything that isn't nailed down, he himself managed to put away an impressive amount of food. Mike's appetite was undoubtedly whetted by the fact that this was his "last meal" with the Potomac Bottle Collectors. Mike and Betty Jordan have retired and will have moved to Florida by the time of the next meeting.

Richard Lilienthal (right) demonstrates the use of a black light to reveal that one blob top is actually made of epoxy. While epoxy glows under black light, Richard finds that pocket black lights such as the one shown here are not powerful enough to be much help at brightly lit bottle shows.



Potomac Bottle Collectors Awards for 1999

Helping Hand: Betty Jordan

The helping hand award is given by the club president to honor a member whose efforts have particularly benefited the club. When Karl Shipman became ill, Betty assisted him in his role as club treasurer. She has also been maintaining the club membership, mailing, and refreshments lists and helping Mike Jordan with the *Pontil*.



In presenting this award, Phil Godwin noted that Betty has stepped in quietly whenever help was needed. Although Phil alone chose Betty to receive this award, the other club members join him in thanking Betty for her many years of service to the club and wishing her a happy retirement. She and her husband Mike will both be greatly missed at future meetings.

Collector of the Year: Jim Sears

The winning entry in the collector of the year contest is a gallon jar marked MASON'S PATENT NOV 30TH 1858. Gallon size fruit jars are quite rare and were probably used as advertising pieces rather for home canning. (Not even the owner of this jar has the appetite to eat an entire gallon of fruit). The winning jar is one of three known early gallon Masons that have unlined zinc lids bearing 1857 patent dates. John Mason was a tin smith who first made lids for tin cans before turning his talents to jar lids. By 1870 his unlined zinc lids were obsolete, and later "Mason" jars used glass lined lids patented by Lewis Boyd. It would be difficult to put a price on this oversized jar from the 1860s, but a later and more common style of gallon Mason recently sold for \$2450 on Ebay.



Digger of the Year: Andy Goldfrank

This award is given for a bottle that has been dug by a club member during 1999. Andy found his winning bottle during a dig on Manhattan's Bowery Street. It is a cobalt iron pontiled mineral water bottle from J. Boardman & Co. Andy reports that this company was in business between 1840 and 1852. Because his bottle has a tapered lip rather than a blob top, he judges it to be pre-1850.



Go-With of the Year: Ken Anderson

Ken has an exceptional collection of advertising for native American medicines, and he shows newly acquired go-withs at nearly every club meeting. His winning go-with for 1999 is a fan in the shape of an Indian Princess that was produced about 1903 as an advertisement for Morse's Indian Root Pills of Morristown, New York. Ken has another Morse's advertising fan in his collection, but this is the only example of the Indian Princess fan he has ever seen.

Shard of the Year: Andy Goldfrank

Traditionally the shard-of-the-year contest has been restricted to "tear jerkers" dug by club members, but in recent years club members have also been allowed to enter bottles they have broken. We are pleased to report that Andy got his shard the old-fashioned way without destroying anything in his collection. It is the lower portion of an iron pontiled half gallon emerald green Alum Water from Rockbridge, Virginia. No whole iron pontiled half gallon has been reported in any sale, but a gallon example did sell for \$12,000 in 1997. The Rockbridge Alum Springs were a nineteenth century resort featuring four different springs. Andy dug his shard from a privy at the site of a circa 1800 house in Georgetown.



ALUM SPRING

Around the Swamp . . .**Bottles from our
Nation's Capital**by **Andy Goldfrank**

Spring arrived in Washington, D.C., right on schedule -- the cherry blossoms around the Tidal Basin were so thick that sound was muffled like a mid-winter storm, the slap of softballs landing in gloves resonated across the Mall, and streams engulfed by the seasonal rains roared through Rock Creek Park. With a few hours to spare one wet afternoon, I traveled to a dump that folks have long written off as dug-out to see if the spring rains had brought in some good luck. Maybe, I thought, I would find some early local crown-top beers I had promised a colleague for his home-brew.

Diggers have tilled this dump for at least the past twenty years, uncovering an assortment of bottles disposed of by a neighboring middle-class residential area. Over the last five years, however, diggers have given up on this location because the meager finds hardly make the work worthwhile. Literally, 6 to 10 feet of ash and other debris has to be removed before bottles begin to surface. The bulk of the artifacts uncovered here date from between 1905 and 1915, but occasionally an older treasure surfaces, such as an 1850s redware ink, a pre-1900 blob-top beer, foreign medicine, or blown milk. Machine-made milks, bromo-seltzers, and crown tops have been mixed in with hand blown bromo-caffeines, crown-tops, pharmaceuticals, flasks, medicines, and food/household bottles. This site also has produced some particularly interesting bottles for me, including a blown ribbed amber local Coca-Cola, a teal Buffalo Lithia Water, and a crock emblazoned in cobalt from Parkersburg, West Virginia.

Despite my best efforts that rainy spring afternoon, two hours passed and I still had nothing. Just as I started to get discouraged, I hit a small, undisturbed pocket of bottles -- a tall green capers for my window, an ink for my wife's desk, a porcelain telephone sign for my office wall, and some common local crown-tops destined to be filled with beer again. As I expanded the hole, I came across an unlisted local milk bottle (which is a story in itself to be revealed in a later newsletter) along with some common medicine flasks from Richmond, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. Daylight began to fade and I began to sort through my discoveries and decide which bottles to take home. I picked-up a clear, unembossed (or so I thought) unusually shaped bottle standing almost ten inches

CHRIS. XANDER,

Importer of and Wholesale Dealer in

Wines, Brandies, Gins, &c.

PROPRIETOR OF

MELLISTON,

THE GREAT CURATIVE IN PULMONARY AFFECTIONS.

GERMAN AROMATIC BITTERS,

An Unfailing Remedy for Indigestion and Dyspepsia, recommended by celebrated Physicians.

GENERAL DEPOT FOR

California Zinfandel, Hock, Riesling, Port and Sherry, Wines and Brandies,

BOLMANUS' IMPERIAL WINE VINEGAR

DELICACIES AND TABLE LUXURIES.

509 Seventh Street N. W., WASHINGTON, D. C.

tall. It is shaped similar to a common turn-of-the-century ammonia bottle -- oval, with a 7 and 1/4 inch body and a 2 and 1/2 inch neck, except it is strap-sided. Holding the bottle up in the fading light, the rain washed the front enough to reveal faint embossing "WASH D.C." near the bottom. "Hmmm," I thought, "I had better take this one home."

Upon cleaning the bottle at home, I could make out block-lettered embossing on one side: "MELLISTON/PREPARED &/SOLD BY/CH. XANDER/911 7TH ST./WASH D.C." Referring to my resource on local bottles, *Antique Bottles from the Washington, D.C. Area* (1995 3rd ed.), I discovered that my particular bottle was not listed but some related bottles and a Christian Xander advertisement from a turn of the century Washington, D.C. directory were. The advertisement emphasizes that Xander was the "proprietor of Melliston, the great curative in pulmonary affections." The address in the advertisement, however, is 909 7th Street in Washington, D.C., right next door to the street address on the bottle I uncovered. A second similar Melliston variant is confirmed: a 9 and 1/2 inch, clear, oval blown bottled embossed "CHRISTIAN XANDER'S "MELLISTON" WILD CHERRY CORDIAL, WASHINGTON, D.C." with no street address.

Another interesting medicine by Xander is rumored: an amber-red turn mold lady's leg bottle with a paper label that reads "Christian Xander's Stomach Bitters Compound" (Bitters/No. 6). The Xander advertisement discussed above states that his "German Aromatic Bitters" were "An Unfailing Remedy for Indigestion and Dyspepsia, recommended by celebrated Physicians." Numerous examples of Xander's other bottled products exist, with some seen recently on the internet, including "Family Brand Rye Wiskey," "OLD PRIVATE STOCK RYE WHISKEY," "Pride of Virginia Port." Other than the Melliston I found, every known Xander bottle displays the 909 7th Street address.

Hope you enjoyed this column. Any comments, suggestions, or questions, please let me know either by calling me at 202/588-0543 or by emailing me at amg_sticky@yahoo.com. Good luck searching. Andy.

Upcoming Area Shows



May 27 (9AM to 3PM) Kutztown, Pennsylvania: The Coal Cracker Bottle Club's 2nd Annual Sale at Renninger's Antique Market.

June 2-3 (Fri. 1 PM to 9PM, Sat 9AM to 3PM) Lumberton, North Carolina: The Robeson Antique Bottle Club's annual show & sale at the Expo & Farmer's Market, I-95 Exit 14.

June 18 (10AM to 4PM, early admission at 8AM) Millville, New Jersey: Wheaton Village in conjunction with the Federation of Historic Bottle Collectors 3rd Annual Show & Sale at Wheaton Village, 1501 Glasstown Rd.

June 24 (9AM to 3PM) Point Pleasant, West Virginia: West Virginia Bottle Club's 5th Annual Show & Sale at the National Guard Armory, Route 62, 3 miles north of Point Pleasant.

Show Reports

Keyser, West Virginia: The May 7th Potomac Highlands show featured a bake sale and a nice display of local bottles as well as about 25 tables of antique glass for sale. Most of the dealers appeared to be doing more visiting than buying and selling.

Mansfield, Ohio: Plenty of good glass changed hands in Ohio on May 12 and 13, but some attendees noted that the event seemed quieter than in previous years. Paid admissions were estimated to be about 350.

New Members

Rod McDonald 5303 Portsmouth Rd., Fairfax, VA 22032, PH: 703/273-0268, email: Digger880@aol.com.

Russ McGaffie 3904 Egan Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030-4819, PH: 703/273-6522.

Surfing the Web to Matt's Collectibles

Club member Matt Knapp has created a bottle-oriented web site that is worth visiting now and that has the potential to become extremely informative in the future. The address is members.xoom.com/guntherhess/bottles/bottles.htm. Matt warns that the free server xoom.com is a bit temperamental. If a page or picture doesn't load on the first attempt, simply hit "refresh" and try again. Besides providing links to various other bottle sites including the Potomac Bottle Collectors' own members.aol.com/potomacbt/bottle2.htm, Matt's site includes pages dedicated to bottles for sale, Fredrick, Maryland bottles, pontiled medicine auction prices, and a bottle identification and dating guide.

Matt's **Bottles for Sale** page offers moderately priced items and plenty of pictures. The pontiled olive-amber snuff bottle shown here is priced at \$80. This bottle looks like a great find for any snuff collector because the base has two unusual circular indentations in addition to the pontil.



The **Fredrick Maryland Bottles** page provides historical information as well as pictures of antique bottles from ten different Fredrick, Maryland establishments. Anyone with additional information about Fredrick bottles should contact Matt Knapp 8360 Jordan Valley Way, Fredrick, MD 21702 PH: 301/698-5925 email: mknapp@erols.com.

The **Pontiled Medicine Auction Prices** page is an ambitious new undertaking that may become extremely useful to medicine collectors. Many collectors currently rely on Jim Holst's *Pontiled Medicine Price Guide*, but this resource is limited almost exclusively to rare bottles sold at specialty auctions. Matt's list includes Ebay prices for many of the more commonly encountered pontiled medicines. He provides bottle descriptions, selling prices, and selling dates in a Microsoft Access table for collectors to use as they wish.

Matt's **Bottle Identification and Dating Guide** is intended primarily for new collectors, but the high quality pictures are useful to anyone attempting to describe various styles of bottles. The photos below are Matt's pictures of a Baltimore loop (left), a Codd stopper (center), and a Hutchinson stopper (right).



Odds & Ends

The **DAR Constitution Hall** currently features an exhibit of early American glass including pieces by Amelung and Stiegel. The museum is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 to 4 and Sunday from 1 to 5 at 1776 D St., NW.

The **June/July Pontil** will be mailed about June 18th. Since there will not be a separate July *Pontil*, all summer submissions should be made in time for this issue. If members are planning a club dig or a club picnic (hint, hint), the best time to announce it is now.

Lee and Karl Shipman will be selling some bottles and go-withs at the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer's 27th annual strawberry festival on June 10th from 11 AM until 3 PM. Please see the enclosed flier from Lee for further information about this event.

Ken Anderson warns that the club may need to find a new site for its meetings by this fall. Ken has been graciously hosting club meetings for nearly ten years, but the meeting area could disappear later this year when his office undergoes renovation. All suggestions for alternative meeting sites are welcome.

Club officers are traditionally elected in June, which means nominations should be made at the May meeting. Members should not be shy about nominating themselves. At a minimum the club needs to fill the offices of president, vice president, and treasurer. Other possible elected positions include secretary, membership coordinator, entertainment coordinator, show chair, *Pontil* editor, librarian, and archivist.

Incumbent officers President Phil Godwin (left) and **Vice President Allan Einseln** (right) take charge of the April meeting. Could this be the start of a re-election campaign?

