

The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors Serving the National Capital



June 2003

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Meeting June 24th

Program: Richard Lilienthal will speak on milk bottles.

Show & Tell: Please bring recent acquisitions as well as unusual or unlisted milk bottles.

Business: We need volunteers to help out with our show on August 10th and to help distribute show fliers at antique malls and antique shows in the mean time. Lee Shipman will be collecting table fees at the meeting. Please remember to send in your contract if you cannot attend the meeting.



Richard Lilienthal (shown above right) displayed a trio of E. Abner Washington, DC bottles (at right) during the May meeting.



Jim Sears (at left) displayed early Mason jars at the Baltimore Antique Bottle Club's May meeting.



Marco Fuster brought a strange ceramic barrel to the May meeting. While he seems to have become quite attached to it, he had planned to leave it behind when he first dug it.

Meetings: 8:00 PM on the last Tuesday of each month in the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer, 6201 Dunrobbin Dr., Bethesda, MD 20816.

President: Matt Knapp

Vice President: Henry Fuchs

Secretary: Jim Sears

Treasurer: Ken Anderson

Pontil: Jim Sears (email: searsjim@usa.net, PH: 703/243-2409) & Andy Goldfrank (email: amg_sticky@yahoo.com, PH: 202/544-0543)

Web Site <http://members.aol.com/potomacbt/bottle2.htm>

Maintained by Peter Rydquist pohraug@aol.com

A Mystery in Our Book Solved

by Richard Lilienthal

The third edition of our club's bottle book includes three milk bottles with the notation "indentation in the lip (pouring spout)?" Most peoples' initial thought upon seeing the bottles was that the lips were chipped. Only after seeing multiple bottles with the identical "chip," did we realize that the indentation was deliberate.

My curiosity was peaked about a year ago, after discovering a link between two of the bottles. The link was a bottle with "Evergreen Dairy" in a slugplate and "Belle Pre" on the base. Armed with a date for a Belle Pre patent, I headed to the US Patent Office. I found that the indentation was designed, not as a pouring spout, but as a groove to hold a special milk cap.

Illust A shows the patent for the unusual milk bottle and cap; Illust B shows a bottle with that patent. The patent describes a bottle with a section of the top cut away forming a groove and a paper cap adapted to fit into the groove. The cap would seal the

bottle opening as in a regular bottle but the cap's integral extension through the groove and beyond would serve as a handle, allowing for easy removal without a cap pick. The patent was designed to avoid the problems of a normal paper cap, e.g., damaging the paper cap when it is inserted and removed such that it cannot be used a second time. The patented snap cap would seal the bottle in the same manner as a regular cap but would not be susceptible to damage during insertion and removal.

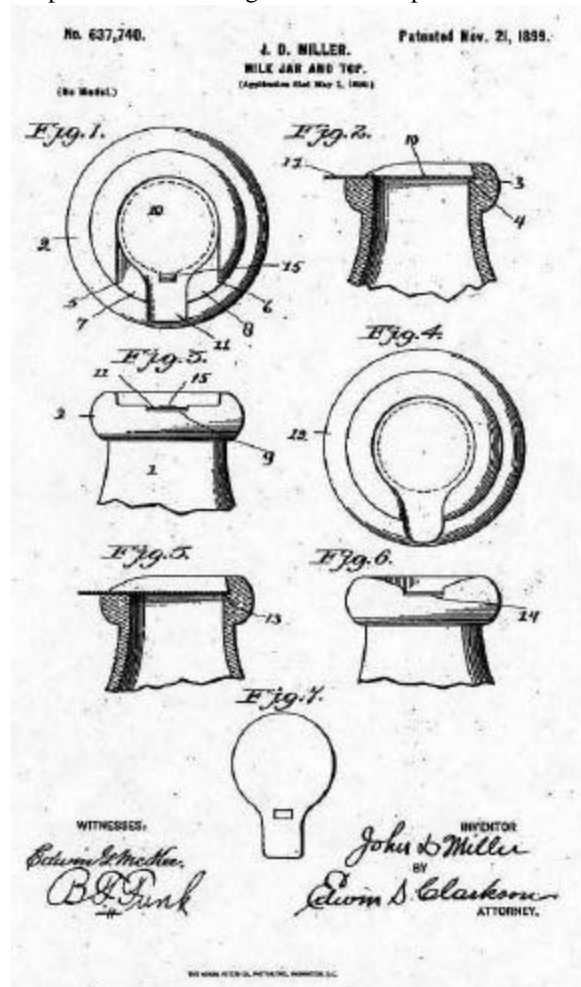


Illustration B

Although I have never seen the cap described in the patent, I have several of the bottles. The bottles are all from the Washington DC – Alexandria VA area, which is understandable since the recipient of the patent was from Washington DC. (Also because I collect bottles from this area). Only one actual dairy is known to have used these bottles. The other bottles having the patented groove are believed to be manufacturer or jobber bottles made for demonstration purposes. The dairy bottle (Illust C) is embossed as follows:

"Evergreen Dairy, F.R. Horner, 1300 9th St NW, Washington DC" in slugplate.



Illustration A is above (patent text follows article).
Illustration C is at right.

The bottles show the typical signs of being early milks, i.e., squat shape, sun colored amethyst (SCA) color, “This Bottle to Be Washed and Returned” embossed on the back. This bottle is known to exist in quart, pint, and half pint sizes.

There is a variation of this bottle with the following additional embossing on the base: “.... (unreadable but assumed to say “Bell”) Pre Bot Co Nov 21 99.”

The demonstration bottles (Illust D & E) are embossed as follows:

“Belle Pre Bottle Co, Alex VA” in slugplate; “Patd Nov 21 ’99” on base. The bottle is SCA and is known to exist only in the gill size.



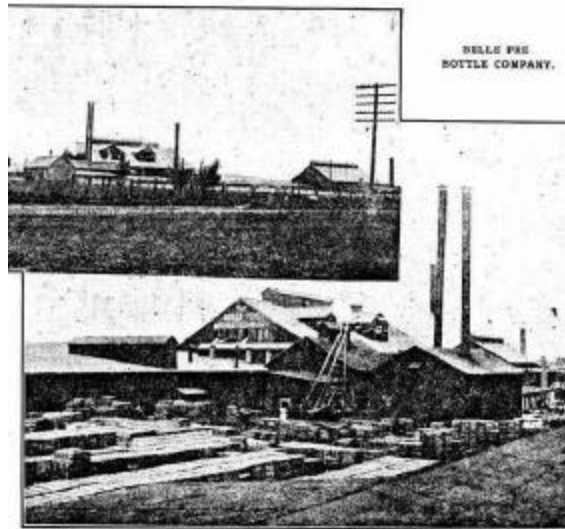
Illustration D

“Belle-Pre Bottle Co, Washington DC, Patented” on base. The bottle is SCA, squat, and is known to exist in the pint and half pint sizes.



Illustration E

What do we know of the Belle Pre Bottle Company? Illust F describes it as and **the largest milk bottle factory in the world.** Note that F.R. Horner, owner of Evergreen Dairy is listed as vice president of the bottle company.



Industrial Alexandria—LARGEST MILK BOTTLE FACTORY IN THE WORLD.

Illustration F above is accompanied by text below.

Industrial Alexandria.
 The Belle Pre Bottle Company, established 1902, is officered as follows: Edwin L. C. Cockrell, President; F. R. Horner, Vice-President; E. A. Thompson, Secretary-Treasurer, and C. S. Bassett, Manager. The Belle Pre is the largest milk bottle factory in the world, and is devoted exclusively to the manufacture of milk bottles. The plant covers over six acres and produces 1,000,000 bottles monthly, employing 250 men. They also sell all kinds of dairy and creamery supplies, and require over 3,000,000 feet of lumber yearly to box their output, to produce which they operate two saw mills.

Neither the Belle Pre nor the Evergreen Dairy bottles contain a bottle maker’s mark. Belle Pre is not listed in Jeffrey L. Giarde’s 1980 book *Glass Milk Bottles: Their Makers and Marks*. Any ideas as to what happened to all the bottles produced at the largest milk bottle factory in the world?

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

JOHN D. MILLER, OF WASHINGTON, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

MILK-JAR AND TOP.

SPECIFICATION forming part of Letters Patent No. 637,740, dated November 21, 1899.

Application filed May 1, 1899. Serial No. 715,209. (No model.)

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, JOHN D. MILLER, a citizen of the United States, residing at Washington, in the District of Columbia, have invented certain new and useful Improvements in Milk-Jars and Tops; and I do declare the following to be a full, clear, and exact description of the invention, such as will enable others skilled in the art to which it appertains to make and use the same, reference being had to the accompanying drawings, and to the figures of reference marked thereon, which form a part of this specification.

This invention relates to bottles and jars generally, but more especially to milk-jars and tops for the same.

My invention consists of a jar having the usual round neck and opening with the heavy rounded bead on the top cut away at one point across the top, the bead being cut down about one-half. The walls formed inside of this bead are preferably dovetailed or given a slight inclination.

My invention further consists of a pliable or resilient top adapted to fit into the groove formed in the top, said top being provided with a lateral extension, which is adapted to serve as a handle.

Heretofore it has been the custom for sanitary reasons to use a paper top for all milk-jars; but it has been found in practice that said tops are liable to be damaged unless great care is taken when they are snapped into the mouth of the bottle. Again, it is somewhat difficult to remove said tops, and in removing them they are invariably damaged to such an extent that they cannot be used a second time, and this is particularly objectionable to consumers, as they have to provide an improvised cover for the jar to prevent the milk being contaminated with odors arising from vegetables, &c., in a refrigerator. Again, it is not always convenient to provide an air-tight cover.

It is the object of my invention to produce a snap-cover for milk-jars that is cheap, simple, durable, and at the same time one that is not apt to become damaged in inserting in the mouth of the bottle and one that may readily be removed from and replaced in the bottle as often as found desirable without

damage, the top being at all times an air-tight closure for the jar; and with these objects in view my invention consists of the parts and combination of parts, as will be more fully hereinafter set out.

In the drawings, Figure 1 is a top plan view of a bottle embodying my invention. Fig. 2 is a vertical central section of the same. Fig. 3 is a front elevation of my improved bottle. Fig. 4 is a top plan view of a slightly-modified construction. Fig. 5 is a vertical central section of the same. Fig. 6 is a front elevation of the same. Fig. 7 is a top plan view of the lid or cover.

1 represents a bottle or jar of approved construction.

2 is the usual bead or rounded flange formed around the mouth of the bottle, the inner wall of which is slightly inclined to form a dovetailed groove 3. It will be seen from the sectional views that the inner walls of the mouth of the bottle are set back a slight distance from the walls of the neck of the bottle, thus forming a ledge 4 at the bottom of the walls of the mouth, which serves as an additional support to the dovetail groove for the cap or cover, the cap or cover resting upon this ledge. The bead 2 is cut away between the points 5 and 6 a distance greater than one-half the height of the inner wall between the ledge and the top of the wall, the top of the cut-away portion being flat, forming bearing-surfaces 7 and 8 for the lid or top when the top or lid is being inserted, while the points of the bead at 5 and 6 form guides for the same. The cut-away portion has a depression 9, having a flat surface. The walls of said depression are perpendicular, the same being flared outwardly toward the ledge 4. The bottom of the depression 9 is on a level with the top of the ledge 4.

10 is a top or lid of my improved bottle or jar, and it consists of a disk of paper provided with an integral extension 11 from one side of any approved shape, which serves as a handle by which the cover may be readily removed and replaced. To cap this jar, it is only necessary to place the body of the lid or cover upon the flattened portions 7 and 8 and shove it in on a slight angle until the body of the lid is entirely within a neck of a bottle,

687,740

whereupon the lid is pressed or snapped down back of the flaring walls of the depression 9 and held firmly and air-tight, the handle slipping down and resting in the depression 9. The cover may be removed by grasping the handle 11, raising the same sufficiently to clear the edge of the cover over the tops of the flared walls of the depression 9, and then by pulling outward.

In the modified form the walls formed inside of the bead 12 are perpendicular from the ledge 13 upward. The bead is entirely cut away or depressed from the top to a point on a level with the ledge 13 and the walls of the cut-away portion or depression 14 being tapered downward from the top of the bead to a point near the bottom of the depression, from which point they are perpendicular. The lid described hereinbefore may be used with this construction of bottle. In this construction the lid is pressed or snapped into position, the depression 14 providing for the extension of the handle. The flaring or the tapering of the walls of the depression serves as a guide for the handle toward said depression.

15 is a lug or projection formed in the depression 9 and projecting upwardly from the bottom of said depression a distance equal to the depth of the depression. The inner face of this lug is curved to agree with the curvature of the mouth of the bottle, as clearly shown in Fig. 1. The lug may be rectangular in vertical section; but I prefer to make it with a sloping top, as clearly seen in Fig. 2, inasmuch as the sloping face will not offer any perceptible obstruction to the handle when the same is lifted in the act of removing the lid from the mouth of the bottle, as will be readily understood by those skilled in this art. This lug 15, by reason of its position, serves as a bearing-point for the top or lid to more firmly hold it against the walls of the mouth of the bottle. The lid 10 is provided with an aperture or opening having three straight sides, while the fourth side is curved, as is the curved face of the lug or projection 15, whereby this opening may,

when the cover is placed in position, fit snugly around the said lug.

What I claim, and desire to secure by Letters Patent, is—

1. A bottle having a thickened bead surrounding its mouth, a dovetailed groove formed in the inner wall of said bead, a cut-away portion in said bead and a depression formed in said cut-away portion in combination with a lid or cover.

2. The combination with a bottle of a thickened bead surrounding its mouth, a dovetailed groove formed in the inner wall of said bead, a cut-away portion formed in said bead and a depression formed in said cut-away portion.

3. The combination with a bottle of a thickened bead surrounding its mouth, a dovetailed groove formed in the inner wall of said bead, a cut-away portion with perpendicular walls formed in said bead and a depression with perpendicular walls flaring outward at the rear in said cut-away portion; and a cover having a body portion and an integral laterally-extending handle.

4. A bottle having a thickened bead surrounding its mouth, a depression or cut-away formed in said bead and a lug projecting from the bottom of said depression.

5. A bottle having a thickened bead surrounding its mouth, a depression or cut-away formed in said bead and a lug having a curved inner bearing-face, said lug projecting from the bottom of said depression.

6. The combination with a bottle having a thickened bead surrounding its mouth, a depression or cut-away formed in said bead, a lug projecting from the bottom of said depression of a lid comprising a body portion, having an opening adapted to engage said lug, and an integral laterally-extending handle.

In testimony whereof I affix my signature in presence of two witnesses.

JOHN D. MILLER.

Witnesses:

EDWIN S. CLARKSON,
B. F. FUNK.

Illustration A continued

Upcoming Area Bottle Shows

July 18 & 19 (6 AM to dusk, both days) **Adamstown, Pennsylvania:** Shupp's Grove 2nd Annual Bottle Festival at Shupp's Grove in Adamstown, PA. Info: **Steve Guion**, PH: (717) 560-9480, email: affinityinsurance@dejazzd.com or **Jere Hambleton**, PH: (717) 393-5175, email: jshdetector@webtv.net

August 3 (10 AM to 4 PM, early buyers Sat. 5 PM) **Millville, NJ:** The Wheaton Village in Assoc. with the F.O.H.B.C. Annual Show & Sale at the Wheaton Village. Info: **Wheaton Village**, 1501 Glasstown Road, Millville, NJ 08332. PH: (856) 825-6800, ext. 2735

August 10 (9 AM to 3PM) **Bethesda, Maryland:** Potomac Bottle Collector's Annual Show & Sale at the Washington Waldorf School, 4800 Langamore Rd. (off Massachusetts Ave. inside the Washington Beltway), Bethesda, Maryland. Info: **Jim Sears**, PH: (703) 243-2409, E-mail: searsjim@usa.net

Remember the FOHBC National Show is on June 29th in Louisville, Kentucky.

Of Oyster Shells and Marbles... Privy Digging in Baltimore

By Al Miller

Still fairly new to the east coast and a complete rookie in the world of bottle digging, I was filled with enthusiasm by Peter Rydquist's suggestion that we travel up to Baltimore to check out a construction site. I'd read many of Andy Goldfrank's digging tales posted on the club's website, and even been digging a couple times with Peter and Marco Fuster at a couple old dump sites. It was becoming obvious that the "bug" that compels some of us to spend weekend hours away from family and other pursuits was turning into a bit of a fever for me.

I'd been to Baltimore a few times since we'd moved to Northern Virginia, but only to attend Orioles games. During the last few trips, I'd been struck by how old the neighborhoods adjacent to Camden Yards looked, and my imagination raced about the hundreds of bottles that must lie buried somewhere in their backyards. Embossed beers and sodas, medicine and drug bottles, and perhaps the granddaddy of them all, torpedoes! I'd begun to understand that at some point I'd have to get up to Baltimore and do some digging to satisfy my curiosity. Peter's offer to go dig that Saturday morning in late April was just too good to pass up. We agreed to meet at 9 a.m. at the Laurel rest area just off I-95, and then I'd follow him to the location. My wife and I had plans later in the afternoon, so I'd be leaving Baltimore around 12 or so to get home in time.

I was hopeful that three hours would be adequate to at least find a few items to take home – we'd been pretty successful in that amount of time at the dump he'd taken me to for my first dig. Saturday morning came and I packed some sodas, munchies, and digging clothes in the car and headed to Laurel. I met up with Peter and followed him to the construction site near the harbor. We grabbed some shovels, buckets, a probe, and assorted other tools and walked the short block to the large vacant lot where we would dig. When we arrived, Peter introduced me to Phil and Chris, who were already about 5 feet into a brick-lined privy. Beside the top, a small assortment of bottles and shards they'd found that day were strewn about. Wow – I mean, I'd seen pictures before, but there were *brick-lined privies* here! Right here under our noses! After talking with Phil and Chris about what they'd found and consulting the Sanborn map they'd brought along, we dug a few test holes and ran the probe into the ground. We eventually chose a spot we estimated

was along the same rear property line as the privy Chris and Phil were in.

We began digging, taking turns and clearing out hard-packed clay and oyster shells. LOTS of oyster shells. Whoever had lived here *really* liked their oysters. Eventually, we found what looked like the back wall of the privy. We continued working outward to find the sides, and after quite a bit of head-scratching, realized that what we'd really found was the outside of the back wall of a privy. As it turned out, we'd have to move our operations to the other side of a chain-link fence running along the lot. Fortunately, that side had been dug a bit as well, and the fence was wide open, so we moved over and enlisted the aid of Phil and Chris to clear out this new privy we'd found.

As we opened it up, it showed itself to be a trench about 18 inches wide by 4-5 feet in length, seemingly filled entirely with oyster shells. We slowly removed some of the top layer, and almost instantly ran across the 3-inch neck of a 1915 Coke. This was encouraging – since we'd actually been outside of any actual privy when we originally started digging, it was the first shard we'd found all day. Due to the confined space (which was made much worse by a large tree adjacent to the trench), we worked out a system. One of us would stand in the trench and fill a bucket with oyster shells, pass it on to another who'd empty it behind us, and the third would break loose new dirt and oyster shells.

We started to make good progress, and Phil commented that if they ate this many oysters, they'd likely need a lot of beer to wash them down, and we should be finding some embossed beers soon. I kept checking my watch, realizing it was getting close to time for me to leave, but knowing that we'd not reached the bottom; there just *had* to be some bottles beneath all these blasted oyster shells. I kept bucketing oysters, ever hopeful, but finally, 15 minutes past my self-imposed departure deadline, knew I had to leave.

I left a bit disappointed but learned a lot about privy digging that day. Peter and I spoke later in the week and he told me they'd hit bottom at 4 feet or so and found nothing but oyster shells. He said they stuck around until almost dark and explored several other privies that a construction trench had uncovered. They found some fairly old shards and a few buttons and other items, and he was looking forward to going back. The next week, I saw Andy at the club meeting and he shook his head when I told him we hadn't found much. He mentioned that Baltimore's municipal code and sanitation standards had resulted in many of the old privies being "too clean" (i.e.,

dipped too often and thus devoid of most of the bottles we were looking for).

Shortly after that, Peter and Andy went back to the site again and found several more privies, including at least one that was a wooden barrel. At the May club meeting, Peter showed off some of the items they'd found, including a couple open pontil bottles, an unbroken pipe, buttons, and marbles. They estimated they were into the 1840s or so, and both were anxious to get back to the site and explore at least one other privy they'd tunneled to with some very promising shards.

Soon after that, I received an email from Peter about going digging the first Sunday in June at the same spot. Andy and Marco would be joining in as well, and I was looking forward to finally getting back out after the very rainy May we'd had. This time I met Peter at the site at 9, with plans to leave at 1. We started by exploring a huge oval brick-liner that had been opened up and then partially filled in by some other diggers the last time Peter and Andy were on site. Peter carefully checked along the edges in some soil that had been amazingly undisturbed by the prior occupants of the hole. He quickly found a whole (but cracked) Frederick milk, an unembossed flask, a Keystone Mineral Water hutch with the top broken off, and an amber Improved Mason with the back side shattered. Further careful exploration yielded several a few small bottles and some blue and brown marbles (of which I got a few).

We eventually began work on a new hole from which the initial probing had returned promising results. We got several feet deep and realized we were once again not inside a privy. Eventually, Andy and Marco arrived, and we set out to open up the privy that Andy and Peter had tunneled to the week before. Marco and I pounded away at the hard-packed clay

through the first few feet, and Andy and Peter pitched in to help pry out a huge chunk of concrete that stood between us and the bottom. As we worked to square up the hole, Marco's shovel suddenly broke through to the tunnel Peter and Andy had dug the week before. Andy suggested we rig up a tripod and begin bucketing out the hole.

As luck would have it, my 1 p.m. deadline was quickly approaching, but we were too close to some sort of breakthrough for me to leave now! I called home and left a voicemail that I'd be leaving at 2. We worked in a near frenzy of activity, but there was still quite a bit of dirt to be removed, and before I knew it, 2 p.m. was upon us. I headed home, a little wiser, a little disappointed, but again hopeful that at least something would be found after I left. I didn't hear back from any of the group for a day or so, and sent them an email ("...come on guys, the suspense is killing me... whatcha find? whatcha find??")

Marco's response came a short while later. "...The hole went down about 6'. We got about 40 marbles of which you get ¼. They are made of actual stone and are from about the 1820s. There was nothing else in there..."

Peter sent a follow-up email. "...Andy dug a barrel from about the 1850s after Marco left. It was only about 3 ft deep. All we got to show for it was a nice china marble and a broken o.p. medicine from Baltimore. By the time we got the hole filled in and the stuff packed up it was close to 10pm...It's frustrating not to find much, but it will pay off one of these days... Just got to keep trying..."

I know he's right. For now, I think I'm in the market for some sort of clear jar to display all my newfound marbles.



Peter & Marco hoist a bucket Andy has filled.



Andy gives another bucketful of dirt the old heave-ho



Marco & Al pull another bucket from Andy.