

The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

March 2005

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Meeting March 29th

Please join us at 8 PM at the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Bethesda.

Notes

We are saddened to learn of the death of **Ferd Meyer**. Ferd was known to many of us as the president of the Delmarva Antique Bottle Club. He passed away recently following a long struggle with cancer.

Otto Koch of 828 North Ohio Street, Arlington, VA 22203 is interested in selling a collection of about 725 antique bottles. Mr. Koch hopes to sell his bottles as one lot for about \$1600. The collection contains many different types of bottles, but it includes almost no local examples. Club members Jim Sears and Al Steidel have already viewed the collection and decided not to pay the asking price, but a dealer in need of stock might find the group worthwhile. Anyone who is interested should call Otto Koch at (703) 534-8944.

Conrad Badger has about 30 Jim Beam bottles, which he would like to sell as a group. Examples include Paul Bunyan, Civil War, and Reno, Nevada flasks. Mr. Badger indicates that he would be happy to get any reasonable offer at cbadger@bdumail.com or (703) 425-6915.

June Lowry reported losing several boxes of antique fruit jars following the March 6 Baltimore bottle show. If anyone hears of a newly discovered cache of jars including about 47 midget pints, please contact Jim Sears at searsjim@usa.net or (703) 243-2409.

The photo at right shows Jim Sears' table at the Baltimore antique bottle show. For more pictures of this highly successful show, please see the Baltimore club web site at <http://www.baltimorebottleclub.org/show.htm>



Above: Andy Goldfrank in a Mississippi pit. See article on page 5.



Distilling History Along the National Pike

By Jack Sullivan

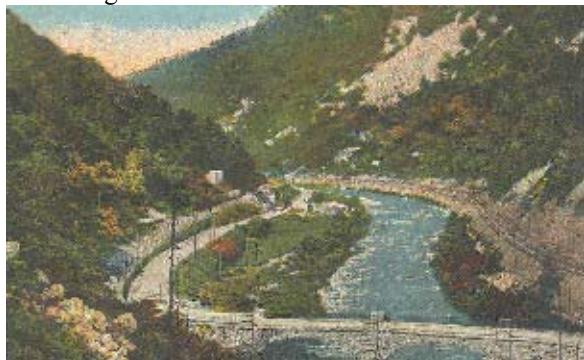
(Special to the Potomac Pontil)

When James Clark opened his distillery in Cumberland, Maryland, in 1883, he knew that the National Pike and railroads that traversed his town would take his whiskey to the Western reaches of the United States. He could not have known that they also would take him to the U.S. Supreme Court and into American legal history.

The National Pike

The National Pike, sometimes called the National Road, was of historic importance. Early Americans, including Washington and Jefferson, had seen the economic impact of connecting the Potomac and Ohio River water routes by a road through the Cumberland Gap in the Alleghenies. Urged on by Henry Clay, the U.S. Congress in 1803 approved the first Federal highway, to connect the town of Cumberland on the Potomac with Wheeling, West Virginia on the Ohio.

Work began in 1811. Snaking its way across the mountains, the road was the best that had ever been built in North America. The right-of-way was 66 feet wide and the roadway was 20 feet. The surface was covered with 18 inches of crushed stone, engineered to drain water from the surface. The road took seven years to reach Wheeling. Subsequently it was pushed eastward from Cumberland to Baltimore and westward by 1841 to Vandalia, Illinois, where it stopped – 800 miles long.



A postcard view of the National Pike west of Cumberland in the early 1900s

The road made possible a great deal of commerce both east and west of the mountains. The toll rates, shown here in an old postcard, clearly favored commercial wagons over personal transport. A passenger buggy with four wheels and two horses cost 12 cents. A cart or wagon was charged by the breadth of its wheels. The biggest wheels – over eight inches – went free, thus encouraging trade along the route.

Although the coming of the railroads eventually brought a decline in the need for the National Pike, for decades the road engendered a lively atmosphere along its route, including in Cumberland. According to one witness, “Never had there been such landlords, such taverns, such dinners, such whiskey, such bustle or such endless cavalcades of coaches and wagons....” Supplying those travelers with

TOLL RATES	
Forevery score of Sheep or Hogs.	6 Cents
Forevery score of Cattle.	12 Cents
Forevery Horse and Rider.	4 Cents
Forevery led or driven Horse, Mule, or Ass.	3 Cents
Forevery Sleigh or Sled drawn by one horse or pair of Oxen.	5 Cents
Forevery Horse or pair of Oxen in addition.	3 Cents
Forevery Bearborn, Sulky, Chair, or Chaise with one horse.	6 Cents
Forevery Horse in addition.	5 Cents
Forevery Chariot, Coach, Cochee, Stage, Phaeton or Chaise with two Horses and four wheels.	12 Cents
Forevery Carriage of pleasure by whatever be it called, the same according to the number of wheels and horses drawing the same.	
Forevery Cart or wagon whose wheels do not exceed three inches in breadth, drawn by one horse or pair of oxen.	4 Cents
Forevery Cart or wagon whose wheels exceed three inches and does not exceed four inches in breadth for every horse or pair of oxen drawing the same.	4 Cents
Wheels exceeding four and not exceeding six inches.	5 Cents
Wheels exceeding six and not exceeding eight inches.	2 Cents
All Carts or Wagons whose wheels exceed eight inches in breadth.	Free.

DAVID T. SHRIVER, Supt.

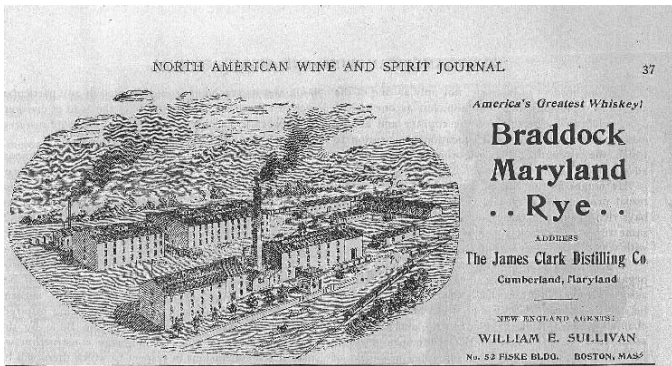
Postcard of an early schedule of tolls from the National Pike

whiskey spawned a distilling industry in the town. An immigrant named James Clark was among the principal beneficiaries.

Clark and His Distillery

Clark was born in 1846, reputedly aboard a ship en route to America from Ireland. When he arrived in Cumberland is unclear. However we know he early showed a strong business acumen and probably was engaged for a number of years in whiskey sales and distribution as the James Clark Company. In 1879 he was joined in the firm by his half-brother, John Keating, some 17 years his junior. Four years later James Clark bought a distillery that had been erected in 1856 by partners Clabaugh and James. Their business had failed and the plant subsequently had been turned into a chemical factory.

Clark rebuilt the facility as a distillery and in 1895 reorganized the business, changing its name to the James Clark Distilling Company. John Keating became its vice president and treasurer. A line drawing of the distillery shows it as an impressively large installation. The drawing also emphasized the ready availability of the plant to both overland and rail transport. The depiction was part of an advertisement that the company ran in the April 1909 issue of the North American Wine and Spirits Journal.



A 1909 Clark "institutional" ad

Braddock Rye

The ad also trumpeted Braddock Maryland Rye as "America's Finest Whiskey." Clark had registered this brand name with the U.S. government at least three times, in 1886, 1905, and 1916. Braddock Maryland Rye sold in three formats: 4 year old – 4 quarts for \$4.50, 8 year old – 4 quarts for \$5.50, and "black label" – \$1.50 per quart. Clark also sold Braddock Old Export Whiskey, Braddock Barley Malt, and Braddock "Blend of Whiskeys." Clark often called his facility "Braddock Distillery," and the plant prominently displayed that name.

There were distinct ironies in Clark's choice of this name. General Braddock, shown below, was the ill-fated British general who marched out of Alexandria, Virginia, 250 years ago to confront the French and Indians in the Ohio Valley. His passions, said contemporaries, were for women and liquor. Braddock camped for a time in Cumberland, then known as Fort Cumberland, before marching out to be killed on the battlefield in Pennsylvania.



E Braddock

Shown here in a early 1900s magazine ad are the Braddock whiskey labels and bottles. James Clark also featured other brands, including Old National Pike Maryland Rye, Old Cumberland XXXX, and Queen City Club. Cumberland called itself the "Queen City," as did a number of American towns. Some believe the designation indicated a community that considered itself second only to the metropolis – in Cumberland's case, Baltimore. Clark's espousal of the name caused the brand use to be contested by Edgewood Distilling of Cincinnati, which also marketed a Queen City Club whiskey.



Ad for Clark Distilling products, undated

From the number of Clark Distilling bottles and jugs that have been dug and otherwise found, the firm did a strong business in the Shenandoah Valley and the Washington, D.C. area. Shown here is a 9 and 1/2 inches high clear BIMAL bottle with a torn label that held Clark's Monongahela Whiskey. It was distributed by one D. P. McCarthy, Manager, whose address was Pennsylvania Av. and 611 B Street N.W. in D.C. The bottle is marked "JTF, Wash D.C."



Monongahela Whiskey from a D.C. distributor (photo by author)

Mail Order Whiskey

As town after town, state after state in America voted to go "Dry," thirsty Wets in those areas had to obtain their supplies by ordering through the postal service. By the early 1900s James Clark had developed a thriving mail order business for his whiskey, making use of the good transport by railroad, road and water out of Cumberland. His ads emphasized distance sales, urging customers to cut out pictures of the items they wanted and send them in with their money. The 1903 U.S. Internal Revenue of distillery warehouses records considerable activity at the James Clark Distillery, including withdraw of whiskey for export.

Clark's mail order business took a body blow in 1913 when Congress, under pressure from "Dry" interests, passed the Webb-Kenyon Act over the veto of President Taft. The law prohibited the interstate transport – by mail or other means – of "any spirituous, vinous, malted, fermented, or any other intoxicating liquor of any kind" into a state where laws forbid the sales of such products. Initially the law was unenforced and the mail order sale of liquor continued relatively unabated. As a result the State of West Virginia, which had enacted a statewide prohibition law, took the step of enjoining the Western Maryland Railroad and the American Express Company from carrying alcoholic products into their state.

To the U.S. Supreme Court

James Clark, whose business now was in serious jeopardy, fought back. Questioning both the constitutionality of the Webb-Kenyon Act and its application to West Virginia, he filed suit against the two carriers and the state government. The case was argued before a U.S. District Court judge in 1915 who ruled in favor of Clark. The victory was short-lived, however, as the U.S. District Court of Appeals quickly overturned the lower court and then in 1916 explicitly upheld West Virginia. Undeterred, Clark took his case all the way to the United States Supreme Court.

On January 8, 1917, by a vote of 7 to 2 the Supreme Court ruled against Clark and upheld the constitutionality of the Webb-Kenyon Act. The majority opinion was written by Supreme Court Chief Justice Edward Douglass White (Fig. 7). Ironically, he had been appointed by President Taft, who opposed Webb-Kenyon. Renowned for earlier having abolished the Louisiana Lottery, Chief Justice White handed down an opinion that established that in specific instances Congress may abridge the Interstate Commerce Clause of the Constitution. Thereupon the case of *The James Clark Distilling Co. vs. Western Maryland Railroad Corporation, etc.* became part of legal history and even today frequently is cited in interstate commerce controversies.

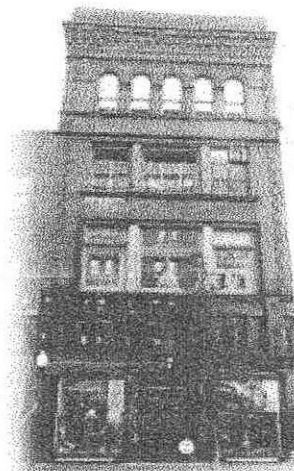
Judge White, an obese jurist, dropped dead in office in 1921 at the age of 76 and is buried at the Oak Hill Cemetery in Washington, D.C. He was preceded in death by the James Clark Distilling Co., which closed its doors in 1920 with the onset of National Prohibition, never to open them again. The Irish distiller's legacy, however, may still be seen in downtown Cumberland. The Clark-Keating Building, which

once held his retail liquor store, remains at 55 Baltimore Street. Constructed in 1899, it currently is on the town's historic walking tour.



Chief Justice Edward Douglass White took the office in 1910.
Chief Justice Edward D. White

55 Baltimore Street



The Clark-Keating Building

The Webb-Kenyon Act has proved to be the most durable of all. When President Franklin Roosevelt sought to eliminate the legal provision in 1935 following Repeal, Congress overturned his veto and kept it on the books. It still is the law today.

Information for the preceding article was drawn from a number of sources. Jim Bready, the recognized guru on Maryland distillers, provided information as did a plethora of websites. The Clark ad with bottles is from Robert Snyder's "Whiskey Papers." The photograph of General Braddock is courtesy of the Andrew Carnegie Library.

Mississippi Digathon III

by Andy Goldfrank

Last February, a few of my digging buddies got together down in Mississippi. This trip included some boys from the North (Scott Jordan from NY, Mike Saindon and Marty Homola from Colorado, and me from DC) along with some Mississippi guys we have dug with over the years (Justin McClure, Bob Bankston and Charles Greenlee). We Yankees flew into Jackson, Mississippi at the invitation of Justin to do a little digging out of the cold and snow. Justin is a former member of the Potomac Bottle Collectors and we have maintained our friendship ever since he left the Washington, D.C. area about 6 years ago. Justin is also the primary author of the Mississippi Bottle Club's authoritative book on Mississippi bottles. He not only cleared out time for all of us but also put us up in fine fashion – he is a true gentleman overflowing with classic Southern hospitality. Here is a shot Justin in his Blue Betty that carted us to many sites.



On Thursday, after picking up some digging tools and probes, we all ventured into downtown Jackson to hit a lot where both Confederate and Union troops had camped during the War and then continued to be occupied by Union troops afterwards. Justin not only arranged for some fine sunshine – which we failed to realize had been a rare commodity of late – but also got the lot freshly bladed by the bulldozer on the day before our arrival. After probing and digging test holes for a short while, Mike confirmed that one spot was in fact some sort of large trash pit. In the ashy layer near the top, Justin picked up a breastplate that had been tossed out with the throw dirt! (A breastplate was worn across the chest on a leather strap by Union troops and sports an elegant eagle; it is made of brass and is usually backed with lead.) The hunt was on and the pit ended up being at least 8 feet by 8 feet plus about 4 feet deep. It was quite a monster to dig with the clay

being sticky and wet but, perhaps as you can tell from our smiles, we managed to pick some nice finds.



Justin in on the left holding the breastplate, Scott is next hefting a 12-pounder solid shot cannon ball and an aqua peppersauce, Marty is grasping a Confederate pike (which would have been on the end of long pole for use in combat against calvary) and a Georgia frame buckle worn by Confederate troops, on the right is Charles holding a Confederate bayonet and a stoneware beer. Marty dug the pike and bayonet side by side in the bottom of the pit. Below is closeup of some of our finds from the trashpit and the surrounding construction site.



The next few days (Friday through Sunday), we focused on digging privies in Vicksburg on the Mississippi River. Although the town has been hit hard by bottle diggers over the last 30 years, we figured that there were a couple



spots left. In addition, our experience is that even if someone has dug an outhouse pit or two in a yard, it is still likely that some more privies are left. The yellow house is one house we dug behind, hitting an eight-foot-deep privy that went from 1900 back to pontils (but the best stuff was dipped out). There were a nice bunch of local and early hutchinson sodas plus a massive pickle. Also, it rained a bit so we set up tarps over our holes.



Right before I took this picture, Mike had located a Confederate bullet with his metal detector. In the following shots you can see that we found a decent privy (and it was between a number of other previously dug holes). This 9-foot deep, wood-lined privy went from the late 1890s back to the 1870s as indicated by the bottles in the second picture.



Many of these were local pharmacy bottles that were neat to find but not exactly what we were after. (As you can tell from our last picture of this article, almost all of these bottles although decent, did not end up making the cut as being of good enough quality or age for best bottles of the dig.) In this pit, I did manage to uncover a nice crude 1860s-70s flask with an applied lip and wonderful seed bubbles plus the revolver with early vulcanized rubber grips that is shown below.



This next picture shows Justin (seated) and Scott (in the hole) with a landowner at another house. This pit was straight out the back door and had a thick lime layer at the bottom that is evident in front of Scott on the ground. We dug a bunch of bottles but like many of the holes, took only about 3 and left the other 40 or so with the landowner.



These next pictures show Mike with a number of early hutches that came out of a pit behind one house and a chamber pot with the image of deer in a field. Notice the cobalt Royal Hair Restorer and the giant wide-mouthed pickle that are covered with awesome rainbow-like oxidation.



Marty is pretty handy with a backhoe and cut open a nice slot in an old ravine dump. As you can see in this shot, we are all looking at the hole just hoping some bottles will roll out of the dirt.



Here are Justin, Mike and Scott looking up out of the hole. Shortly before this picture was taken, Mike had pulled out a number of embossed and colored pontiled bottles that appeared to have been in an old wooden crate or barrel.



Monday was the last full day that all of us were going to be in Mississippi, so Justin and Bob arranged for a little backhoe digging on a spot where they had dug a green U.S.A. Hospital amongst some other nice finds not that long ago. The lot is to be developed soon and they wanted to get to the bottles and relics before they are gone for all time. The next photo is a shot of Bob – he is one of the nicest guys you can meet and has an awesome Civil War relic collection that is the product of digging for over three decades.



In this picture, we are reading the dirt to try and locate the oldest and best layers to excavate and find bottles. Frankly, there were so many heartbreakers in the form of broken bottles that the list is endless but for starters, there were loads of broken black-glass Hostetters' Bitters, iron-pontiled Udolpho Wolfe's, colored and pontiled Bull's medicines plus sided-cobalt root beers from Kentucky, Vicksburg squat sodas, and so on. We clearly did not have enough time with the backhoe – but do you ever really? Nonetheless, we managed to extract some excellent bottles and certainly enough for everyone to go home with some real prizes.



As follows is a final shot of most of our better bottles from our entire 5 days of digging. Bob had to leave early so he carted off one nice pontiled medicine, but as you can see there are cool cobalt citrates, black glass cylinders, saratogas (Clark & White), pontiled embossed medicines (Ayer's, Osgood's India Cholagogue), iron-pontiled (Lampin's from Indiana) and early Vicksburg hutchinson sodas, a green open-pontiled master ink from Philadelphia (J.S. Mason), bitters, pickles, and so on. We did have a blast – and that is a tribute to our friends from Mississippi and, in particular, Justin.

Thanks again and we are already looking forward to Mississippi Digathon IV!



Upcoming Area Bottle Shows

APRIL 24 - WASHINGTON, PENNSYLVANIA

The Washington County Antique Bottle Club's 31st Antique Bottle Show (Sun. 9 AM - 3 PM, donation \$3) at the Alpine Star Lodge, 735 Jefferson Ave., Washington, Pennsylvania. (From I-70, exit 17) INFO: **Nigel Dunmore**, 121 Highland Ave., Avella, PA 15312; PH: (724) 587-5217; Email: legin1247@msn.com.



APRIL 24 HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA

The Historical Bottle-Diggers of Virginia 24th Annual Antique Bottle and Collectible Show & Sale, (9 AM to 3 PM), at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds, (US Rt. 11 South, Exit 243 off I-81) Info: **Sonny Smiley**, PH: (540) 434-1129 or Email: lithiaman1@yahoo.com

MAY 22 BRICK, NEW JERSEY

Jersey Shore Bottle Club's 33rd Annual Show & Sale, (9 AM to 2 PM), at the Brick Elks, 2491 Hooper Ave., Brick, NJ. Info: **Richard Peal**, 720 Eastern Lane, Brick, NJ 08723, PH: (732) 267-2528, Email: boxcar1@worldnet.att.net

JUNE 12 - MILLVILLE, NEW JERSEY

Wheaton Village Antique Bottle Show (Sun. 10 AM - 4 PM) at Wheaton Village, 1501 Glasstown Rd. (Rt. 55 South exit 26), Millville, NJ. Info: **Doris Abeling**, PH: (856) 825-6800 Ext. 104, E-mail: dabeling@wheatonvillage.org, Website: www.wheatonvillage.org.

JUNE 26 - CHEVERLY, MARYLAND

The Potomac Bottle Collectors Annual Show & Sale (Sunday 9 AM to 3 PM) at the American Legion Post 108, 3608 Legion Drive, Cheverly, MD 20785. Info: **Jim Sears**, 4211 N. 2nd Rd., Apt. 1, Arlington, VA 22203 PH:(703) 243-2409, Email: searsjim@usa.net or **Andy Goldfrank**, PH:(202) 258-2389, Email: amg_sticky@yahoo.com