

The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

November 2009

In this issue:

Reflections on Pocket Mirrors by Jack Sullivan.....page 2
The Potomac Bottle Collectors Bottle Book by Mike Cianciosi.....page 7
Upcoming Area Bottle Shows.....page 9

Meeting November 24th

Please join us at 8 PM at the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Bethesda. **Figural bottles** will be our theme for the meeting. Please bring along bottles shaped like something other than bottles for show & tell.

Richard Lilienthal displayed the Annapolis, MD bottle shown at right. While J.B. Martin bottles are not particularly unusual, the Baltimore loop style closure on this one is.



Members brought their summer finds to the October meeting. Many of the new acquisitions are shown in the photo at right. See page 9 for additional photos from the October meeting.

No meeting in December

Because many members will be traveling for Christmas, the Potomac Bottle Collectors will not meet in December. Regular monthly meetings will resume in January.

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: Andy Goldfrank Vice President: Al Miller Secretary: Jim Sears Treasurer: Lee Shipman
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 Maintained by Al Miller: www.potomacbottlecollectors.org/contact.php

Reflections on Pocket Mirrors

By Jack Sullivan
[Special to the Potomac Pontil]

If it had not been for the invention of celluloid, one of America's most popular advertising giveaway items might never have existed. A New York inventor named John Wesley Hyatt (Fig. 1) stumbled on the substance during the 1860 while trying to find a substitute for elephant ivory in billiard balls. In the process he developed the world's first industrial plastic.

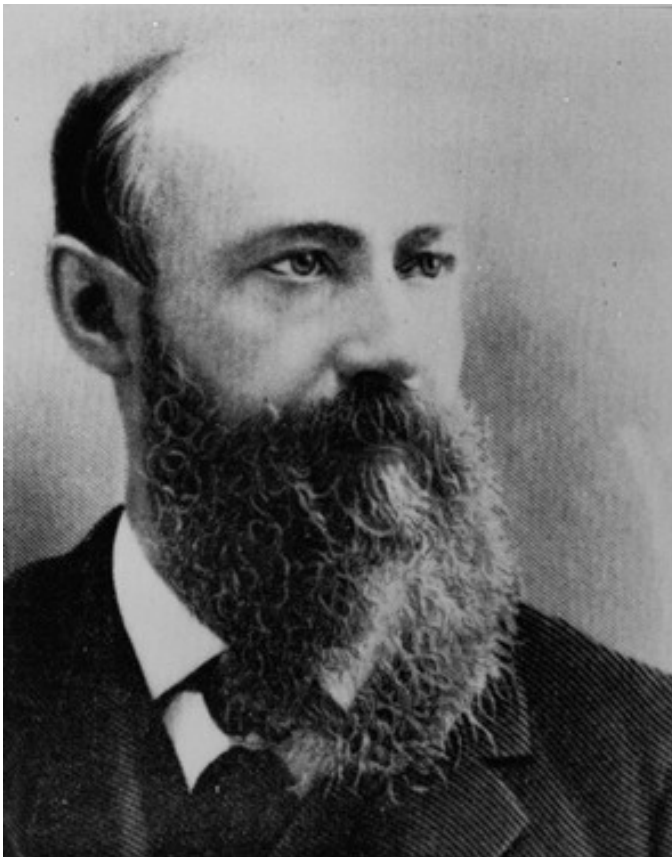


Fig. 1: John Wesley Hyatt

Put into mass production in 1872, celluloid rapidly became popular for its ability both to be shaped and to carry elaborate colored lithographic images. In particular it was suited for backing small mirrors that could be stowed away in a pocket. The mirrors came both round and oval, with typical size for the latter at 2 3/4 by 1 3/4 inches. An ad was on the back, a reflective surface on the front.

Millions of pocket mirrors have been distributed down through the years advertising everything from baby shoes to funeral parlors. I have been interested in them as vintage giveaways by whiskey makers and sellers.

Pictures of women, sometimes clothed, sometimes not, often were featured on pocket mirrors. Lowenbach Bros., liquor dealers of Alexandria, Virginia, made full bodied use of the medium (Fig. 2). Their illustration for Wakefield Rye is a striking beauty who is fashioned after Diana, the Greek goddess of the hunt (Fig. 3). Note the similar bows and arrows after dwelling on other features.



Fig. 2: Lowenbach Bros. pocket mirror



Fig. 3: Diana, Goddess of Hunting

Lowenbach Bros. was a pre-Prohibition whiskey purveyor, located at the corner of King and Alfred Streets in downtown Alexandria. Wakefield Rye was its flagship brand, advertised in the local newspaper as "The Right Whiskey for

Everyone.” The company also featured Lowenbach’s Virginia Rye, shown here on a labeled half gallon jug (Figs. 4,5) and Pure Old Country Brandy. The Club’s bottle book describes six different Lowenbach bottles, including one embossed example shown here (Fig. 6). The Lowenbachs also appear to have had a facility, perhaps a distillery, in Culpepper. The company disappeared after Virginia went “dry” in 1916.



Fig. 4: Lowenbach half gallon bottle

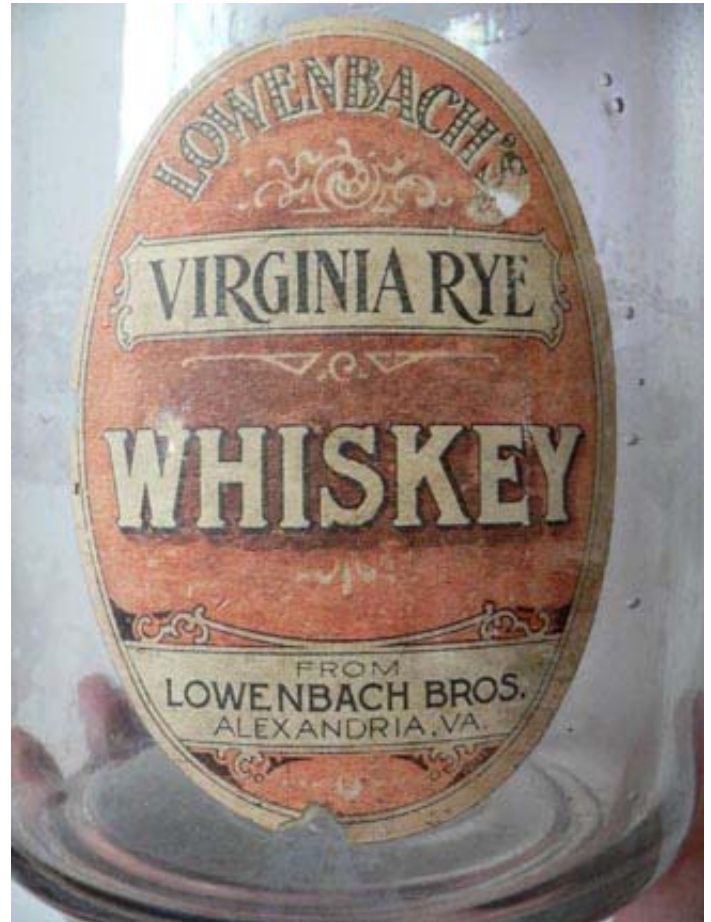


Fig. 5: Lowenbach label (above)



Fig. 6: Lowenbach quart bottle (right)

Lowenbach Bros. were not alone in featuring women on their giveaways. The Phil G. Kelly liquor dealers of Richmond, Virginia (see my article, *Pontil*, June 2007) called one of its many rye whiskey brands “Miss Tempting.” The picture on its pocket mirror shows a middle aged woman with a mop of hair and a large hat who, to my thinking, offers very little temptation (Fig. 7).

Celluloid allowed a wide range of colorful designs, although most pocket mirrors echo the merchandising themes of the brand of liquor they advertise. For example, Duffy’s Malt Whiskey (see *Pontil*, April 2008) regularly featured the aged alchemist who presumably first cooked up the potion. (Fig. 8). Petts’ Bald Eagle Whiskey patriotically featured the white headed national bird on its mirror back, calling it “The Representative American.” (Fig. 9). The owner was Sanford Petts who

ran a liquor business in Boston, Mass., with his son until Prohibition. Petts also issued a highly elaborate shot glass featuring the eagle (Fig. 10).



Fig. 7: Phil. G. Kelly pocket mirror



Fig. 9: Pett's Bald Eagle pocket mirror

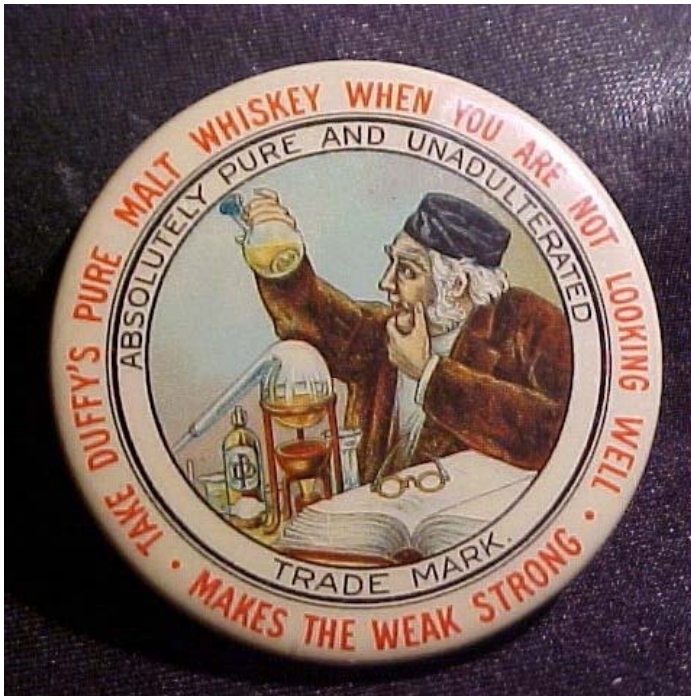


Fig. 8: Duffy Malt Whiskey pocket mirror



Fig. 10: Pett's Bald Eagle shot glass (right)

Woodford Club Rye, self-described as “the unequalled whiskey,” showed less imagination by featuring its labeled quart bottle (Fig. 11). This liquor originated with the Hanley-Hoye Co. Cofounder James Hanley was an Irish immigrant who became a towering figure in the in beer and liquor industry of Providence, Rhode Island, during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Another mini-mirror featuring a bottle was Montezuma Rye (Fig. 12). This was the flagship brand of another Irishman. He was James Maguire of Philadelphia who founded his firm about 1872. Fond of customer giveaways as advertising, McGuire also produced an elaborately decorated shot glass (Fig. 13). After his death in 1900, his heirs continued to operate the company until 1915.



Fig. 11: Woodford Club pocket mirror



Fig. 12: Montezuma Rye pocket mirror



Fig. 13: Montezuma Rye shot glass

As their appearance might suggest the next two pocket mirrors were issued by the same organization, but under different names. A Pennsylvania whiskey dealer named Philip Hamburger owned both organizations, as noted on a paperweight he issued (Fig. 14). Although the weight cites a Pittsburgh locale, the Old Bridgeport mirror (Fig. 15) lists nearby Brownsville PA as the distillery. After buying into the George W. Jones whiskey business in the 1880, Hamburger became total owner in 1883 and purveyor of its premier brand, Monongahela Rye (Fig. 16).



Fig. 14: Phil. Hamburger paperweight



Fig. 15: Old Bridgeport pocket mirror

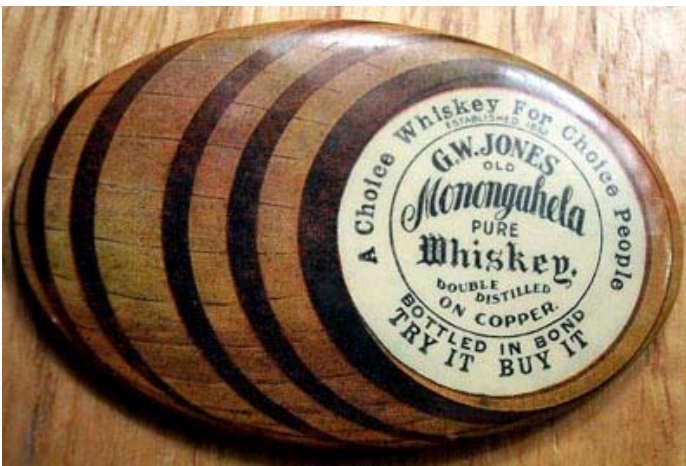


Fig. 16: Monongahela Rye pocket mirror

Hamburger apparently loved snappy slogans. Note that Old Bridgeport is hailed in verse: “You’ve tried the rest...Now buy the best.” Monongahela Rye is “A choice whiskey for choice people.” The firm disappeared from Pittsburgh directories in 1920.

Having entered with a scantily clad damsel, we end with another on a pocket mirror (**Fig. 17**). This lass lounging provocatively along the bar might seem to be as advertising whiskey as “The Bartender’s Best Friend.” In reality, she is pitching for a product to clean off the bar. Invented by George Wm. Hoffman of Indianapolis in 1882, the “Bartender’s Best Friend” proved to be a superb cleanser for many surfaces, including chrome, stainless steel, porcelain, tile, plastic, copper and brass. It is still being sold under that same unusual name many years after those pre-Prohibition bartenders – and the whiskey men who supplied them – were forced out of business.



Fig. 17: “Bartender’s Best Friend” pocket mirror

Each of these pocket mirrors is a highly collectible item – all made possible by John Wesley Hyatt and his serendipitous discovery of celluloid. By the way, Hyatt’s invention, whatever else its uses, did not prove practical for billiard balls.

Notes: The material for this article came from a variety of sources, both print and Internet. A principal one was Robin Preston’s pre-pro.com website. The Lowenbach bottles and label were provided through the courtesy of Dr. Richard Lilienthal. Some of this material earlier appeared on my blog, bottlesboozeandbackstories@blogspot.com.

The Potomac Bottle Collectors Bottle Book

By Mike Cianciosi

I've bought copies of the older editions of our club book on eBay®. I now have copies of every edition except one (which I borrowed from Richard Lilienthal), so I've been doing some comparisons, and I thought I'd share what I found. To date there have been 4 editions of our club book, which lists bottles from Washington DC and their prices.

The first edition was published in 1976, is 22 pages long, and lists 306 bottles. The first edition listed only bottles from Washington DC – none from Alexandria. Bottle categories included “Beverages” (later renamed “Beer and Sodas”), “Bitters”, “Cures & Medicines”, “Milks”, “Spirits”, and “Miscellaneous”. The book was simply printed on 8.5 by 11 inch paper and stapled together.

I've also got a second printing of the first edition. The second printing is from 1978, is 38 pages long, and lists 444 bottles. It was bound with a plastic binding comb, and looks a little bit more professional. Figure 1 shows both printings of the first edition.

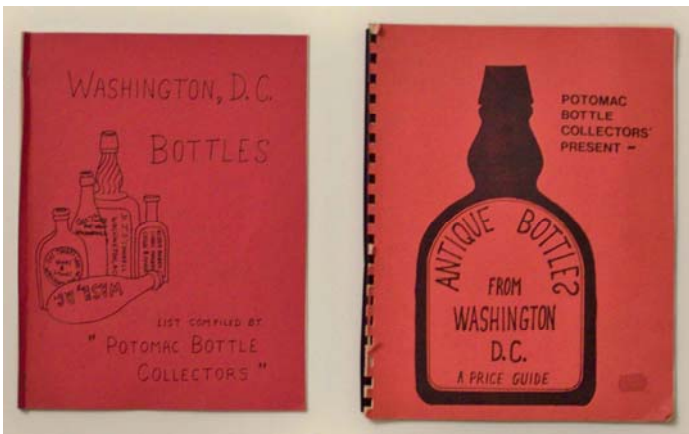


Figure 1 - First Edition (1st & 2nd printings)

The second edition was published in 1985, and is 38 pages long. It lists 838 bottles, with four new categories added: “Fruit Jars”, “Dose Glasses”, “Seltzers”, and “Stoneware & Pottery”. It was more professionally bound, although the copy I borrowed from Richard is falling apart somewhat (see figure 2).

The third edition was published in 1995, is 98 pages long, and lists 1315 bottles. This was the first edition to include Alexandria Virginia bottles, which added a lot more bottles. But this is also the first edition that ignored embossing variations of words like “TRADE MARK”, “REGISTERED”, and “THIS BOTTLE NOT TO BE SOLD” (which reduced the number of bottles). The third edition was also professionally bound, like the second edition (see figure 3).

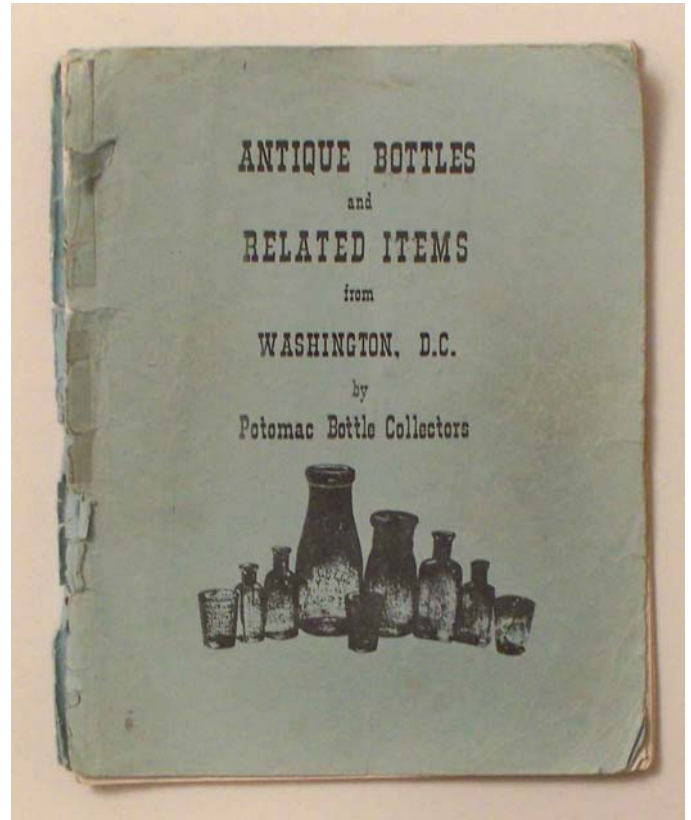


Figure 2 – Second Edition

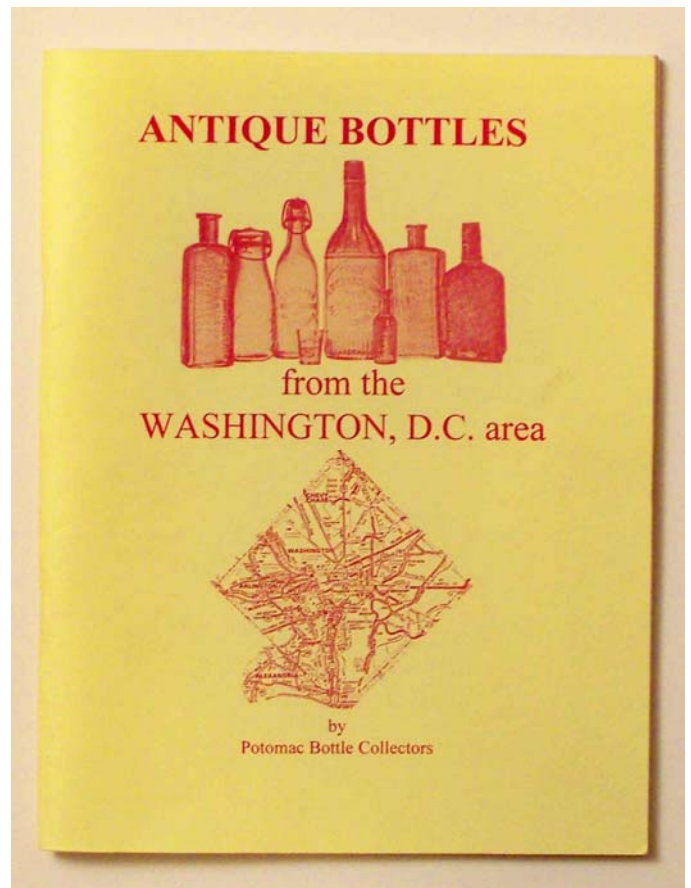


Figure 3 – Third Edition

The fourth & latest edition was published in 2005, is 147 pages long, and lists 2004 bottles. It added one more category of bottles: “Household & Hardware Store”. It has a wire spiral binding, and a glossy color cover (see figure 4).

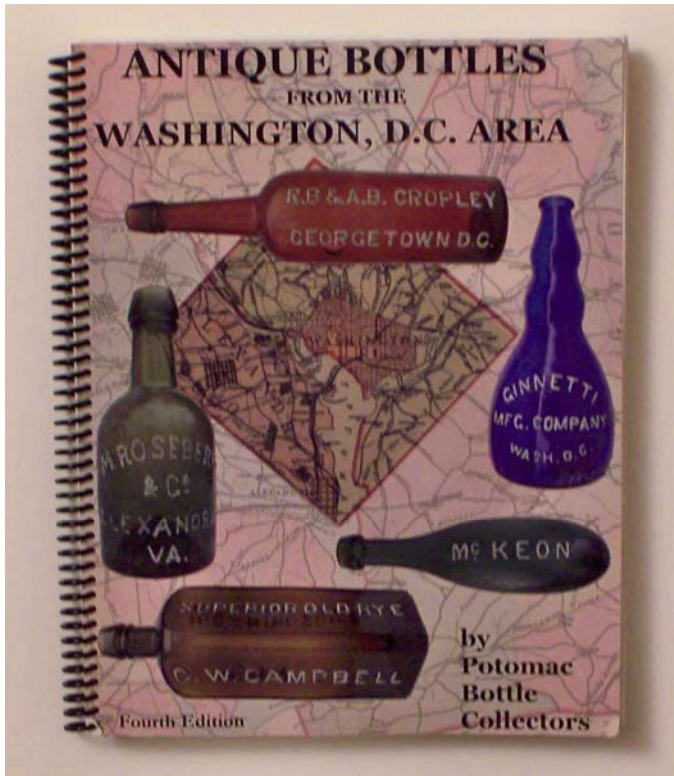


Figure 4 – Fourth edition

The total number of bottles listed in each category for each of the 4 editions is shown in the following table:

Bottle Type	1 st edition (1976)	2 nd edition (1985)	3 rd edition (1995)	4 th edition (2005)
Beer & Soda	149	333	471	608
Bitters	2	3	5	7
Food, Spices, Canning Jars		4	10	31
Household & Hardware Store				25
Medicines, Drugstores, Perfumes & Poisons	48	136	244	465
Milks	28	135	213	271
Shot & Dose glasses		5	18	61
Spirits & Wines	75	178	234	370
Stoneware & Pottery		20	89	124
Syphon Seltzers		14	16	18
Miscellaneous	4	10	15	24
Total # bottles	306	838	1315	2004

How fast have we been finding new bottles to list in the book? The number of bottles went from 306 to 838 between the first and second editions, an increase of 523 bottles in 9 years (average of 59 new bottles per year). The third edition had 1315 bottles, an increase in 477 bottles in 10 years (average of 48 new bottles per year). The 4th edition had 2004 bottles, an increase of 689 bottles in 10 years (average of 69 new bottles per year). So we don’t seem to be slowing down at finding new bottles to list in our book.

Each edition has included prices for the bottles. The most expensive bottle in the first edition was the emerald green McKeon torpedo soda. It was listed as \$400-\$500 in both the 1st and 2nd editions, \$500-\$1500 in the 3rd edition, and \$2000-\$2500 in the 4th edition. I wish I had bought one for \$400 back in 1976 (although I’m not sure I had \$400 to spend back then).

I tried 2 different methods to determine what the average price has done through the 4 editions. First I calculated the average price for the whole “Beers and Sodas” section of each edition. This showed a huge increase (273%) in prices between the 1st and 4th editions. But I felt that was misleading, because as we add new bottles to each edition, we’re more likely adding rare bottles, since the first edition had most of the common bottles. So the second method I used was to take 10 random bottles from the 1st edition, and track the prices of those same 10 bottles through the other 3 editions. That showed a much more modest increase in prices (80%) between the 1st and 4th editions. I guess there are better ways to invest your money than bottle collecting, but are they as fun?

The results of both methods of determining the average price are shown in this table.

	1 st edition (1976)	2 nd edition (1978)	3 rd edition (1995)	4 th edition (2005)
Average price for a bottle in the “Beers and Sodas” section	\$13.39	\$14.05	\$25.79	\$49.93
Average price for a random sample of the same 10 bottles	\$17.40	\$22.95	\$26.10	\$31.25

Richard recently gave me a soft-copy of the “beer and sodas” section of our book (4th and latest edition), so I can start updating it for the next edition. I’m starting to realize that doing that will take a lot of work. Determining the updated prices for instance, will probably take a lot of effort if I really want to do it justice. Determining what’s a new bottle vs. what’s a variation of an existing bottle can also be tricky. But overall, our book gets better with every edition, and I think the results are worth the effort.

Upcoming Area Bottle Shows

NOVEMBER 22 - GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

The Southeast Bottle Club's Greensboro Antique Bottle, Pottery & Collectibles 8th Annual Show & Sale (Sun. 9 AM - 3 PM, Adm. \$1, Set-up 7 - 9 AM; No Early Adm.) at the Farmer's Curb Market, 501

Yanceyville St., Greensboro, North Carolina. Free appraisals, free bottles for kids, food available, 160 tables. INFO: **REGGIE LYNCH**, 4734 Pimlico Lane, Waxhaw, NC 28173, PH: (704) 221-6489, E-mail: rlynch@antiquebottles.com. Website: www.antiquebottles.com/greensboro.



NOVEMBER 29 BETHLEHEM, PENNSYLVANIA

Forks of the Delaware Bottle Collectors Assoc. 36th Annual Show & Sale (9 AM to 3 PM, early buyers 7:30 AM), at the Bethlehem Catholic High School, Madison & Dewberry Avenues, Bethlehem, PA. Info: **BILL HEGEDUS**, 20 Cambridge Place, Catasauqua, PA 18032, PH: (610) 264-5945.

FEBRUARY 7 - SOUTH RIVER, NEW JERSEY

New Jersey Antique Bottle Club (NJABC) 15th annual show and sale, from 9 a.m. till 2 p.m. at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 88 Jackson St., South River, NJ 08882
For Info: NJABC, 24 Charles Street, South River, NJ 08882-1603 or call **JOE BUTEWICZ** (732)-236-9945 email: botlman@msn.com

MARCH 7, 2010 BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

The Baltimore Antique Bottle Club's 30th Annual Show & Sale, (8 a.m. to 3 p.m.), Physical Education Center, CCBC-Essex, 7201 Rossville Blvd. (I-695, Exit 34) Info: **ERIC EWEN** PH: (410) 265-5745, e-mail: teresaanderic@comcast.net
www.Baltimorebottleclub.org



Show & tell at our club picnic in September



Scott Gordon displays an early black glass bottle that he dug over the summer.



Summer finds were displayed at the October meeting. Among the new acquisitions on display is the excellent *INKS* book by the Faulkners, which was purchased for the club library at the Richmond bottle show in October.