

The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

June 2012

In this issue:

Politicians with Feats of Clay by Jack Sullivan.....page 2
Upcoming Area Bottle Shows.....page 5

Meeting – June 26th at 8 PM

St. Mark's Orthodox Church, 7124 River Road, Bethesda, MD 20817.

This is our last meeting before the summer break, and we are hoping for a good turnout. Because so many people missed our May meeting due to the Memorial Day holiday, Phil Townsend will lead a discussion of **Virginia soda bottles** at the June meeting. Please bring Virginia sodas for show & tell.



Virginia sodas from Phil Townsend's collection

Meetings: 8:00 PM on the last Tuesday of each month January-June, October-November; picnic in September.

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Politicians with Feats of Clay

By Jack Sullivan
[Special to the Potomac Pontil]

The country is immersed in national politics, with the primary seasons over and the head-to-head between Barak Obama and Mitt Romney in full steam. Accordingly it seemed appropriate to take a look at how Presidential contenders and their parties have been captured in ceramics down through the years.

We begin with the Presidential election of 1876 in which Samuel Tilden, the Democrat, received a larger popular vote than the Republican, Rutherford B. Hayes, but the electoral vote essentially was a tie. To decide which one would become President a group of five House of Representative members, five Senators and five Supreme Court Members were selected. By an 8 to 7 vote – widely thought to have been swayed by political promises – they determined that Hayes was the winner.

That decision outraged the Kirkpatrick brothers, the founders of the famous Anna Pottery in Anna, Illinois. They were known for expressing their passions in pottery. Shown here is a jug made for a Cincinnati wine and liquor business (Fig. 1). It bears on the base a group of slashes that indicate 8 to 7, the infamous decision. On another jug the brothers were more direct. It was emblazoned: “Eight villains to seven patriots.”



Fig. 1: Anna Pottery jug

Grover Cleveland was the first Democratic President following the Civil War. Cleveland also is the only U.S. President to serve two nonconsecutive terms (1885–1889 and 1893–1897) and therefore is the only individual to be counted twice in the numbering of the presidents. He also was a man of tremendous girth so that it is not clear whether the pottery pig shown here was a ceramic artifact from his supporters or his detractors (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2: Grover Cleveland pig

Teddy Roosevelt became Chief Executive in 1901 when, as vice president, President McKinley was assassinated. Roosevelt was 42 years old when sworn in as President of the United States in 1901, making him the youngest president ever. Known for his “cowboy” persona, Roosevelt declared once that in foreign affairs it was good to “walk softly but carry big stick.” An enterprising potter incorporated that idea in a corked whiskey flask (Fig. 3). The item probably dates from Teddy’s second term, 1905-1909.



Fig. 3: Roosevelt’s “Big Stick”

The small whiskey jug shown here (Fig. 4) was entirely appropriate vessel to carry the name of “Al Smith.” Smith, an Irishman, a Catholic, and a very popular governor of New York, was an unabashed “Wet.” That is, he opposed National Prohibition of alcohol which had been imposed in 1920. His opponent, Herbert Hoover was a Dry and in the election of 1928 he trounced Smith in a landslide.

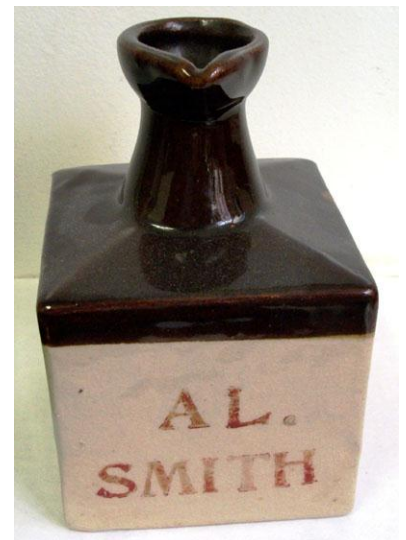


Fig. 4: Al Smith jug

Old timers may remember the time when the rooster was a popular symbol of Democrats. In the 20th Century it was the donkey that came to epitomize the party of Jefferson and Jackson. Here it is a ceramic figurale labeled “New Deal Coin Bank.” (Fig. 5). The designation likely was a sarcastic comment on President Franklin Roosevelt’s programs which were widely attacked by for allegedly putting money into Democratic coffers.



Fig. 5: New Deal Donkey bank

Like the donkey, the elephant has become a familiar object in political parlance as a symbol for the Republican Party (Fig. 6). Less well known may be Everett Dirksen, after whom one of the Washington D.C. Senate office buildings is named. In December 1943, Congressman Dirksen announced that he would be a candidate for the Republican Presidential nomination in 1944. He stated that a coalition of midwestern Republican Congressmen had urged him to run and that his campaign was serious. Word was he really was trying to syphon votes away from another Midwest Republican, Wendell Wilkie, or was angling to become vice president. When all was said and done, Dirksen received not a single vote for either office at the 1944 Republican Convention. He subsequently would be elected to the U.S. Senate and part of the Republican leadership there.



Fig. 6: Dirksen Elephant

Adlai Stevenson was another politician who twice sought the presidency. Stevenson had been a very successful governor of Illinois and the Democratic Party was strongly behind his candidacy. But in the elections of both 1952 and 1956 he faced Dwight D. Eisenhower, a World War Two general and hero. A coffee cup depicted Stevenson apparently riding the Demo donkey toward the White House (Fig. 7). He never got there.



Fig. 7: Stevenson cup

The ceramic ashtray (Fig. 8) is clearly a satire with its message: “Nixon and Agnew in ‘76.” By the time of the 1976 Presidential campaign, Richard Nixon had left the White House in disgrace over Watergate and Spiro Agnew had preceded him from the vice presidency because of a criminal conviction in Maryland. Neither was in the slightest contention for the Republican nomination. Jerry Ford and Nelson Rockefeller were the (losing) GOP candidates that year.



Fig. 8: Nixon-Agnew ashtray

The winner, however, was a man whose toothy grin marked a field day for cartoonists and caricaturist – Jimmy Carter. His face is unmistakable on this ceramic coffee mug (Fig. 9). His brother, Billy, also got a lot of attention at his gas station in Plains, Georgia, and earned a mug of his own (Fig. 10). Known as a prodigious beer drinker, this Carter eventually put his name to a brew known as “Billy Beer.”



Fig. 9: Jimmy Carter mug

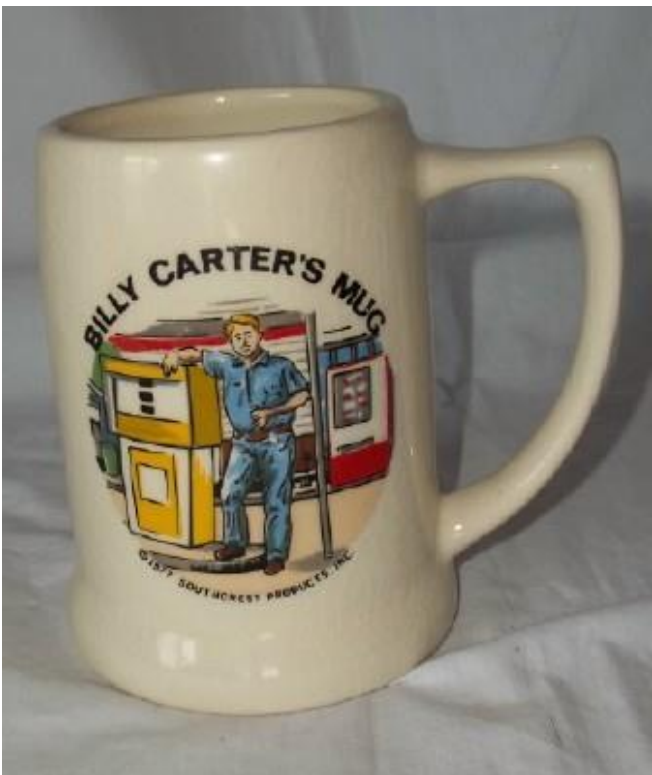


Fig. 10: Billy Carter mug

Beer mugs and coffee cups frequently have been the utilitarian ceramic of choice for political comment. The elephants shown here, dancing in line, date from 1987 during the Reagan Administration (Fig. 11). Republicans in Congress were well known for hewing to party discipline and doing the will of the President. The cup is an affectionate spoof on “keeping the party line.”



Fig. 11: Dancing Elephant cup

Our final piece brings the story pretty much up to date. The last ceramic is a small statue of George W. Bush (Fig. 12). Nevertheless, I am somewhat mystified by the crown. In fairness, whatever Bush's shortcomings may have been, taking on imperial airs was not one of them. That said, the statue is fully in the tradition of satirizing our leaders.



Fig. 12: Bush statuette

Politicians and political parties satirized with “feats of clay” is a national tradition. Here we have seen ceramics ranging over more than 132 years of American history. Let’s hope political jugs, mugs, cups, and figurals are produced for another 132 years as continuing evidence of free speech in America. Moreover, they represent a rich source of delectable collectibles.

Upcoming Area Bottle Shows



21 and 22 July 2012 (Saturday & Sunday) **Adamstown, Pennsylvania** **The 11th Annual Shupp’s Grove Bottle Festival**, (Saturday & Sunday, 6:00 am to dusk, early buyers Friday 3:00 pm, at the famous “Shupp’s Grove”, 1686 Dry Tavern Road, Denver, Pennsylvania 17517, Info: Steve Guion, Tele: 717.626.5557, email: affinityinsurance@dejazzd.com

06 October 2012 (Saturday) **Richmond, Virginia** **Richmond 41st Antique Bottle Show and Sale**, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm, Admission: \$3.00, Early Admission: 7:30 am, \$10.00, Chesterfield County Fairgrounds, 10300 Courthouse Road, Chesterfield, Virginia 23832, Info: RichBottleClub@comcast.net or Marvin Croker 804.275.1101 or Ed Faulkner 804.739.2951

Jun 30 Weston, WV
 Jul 11-15 Muncie, IN
 Jul 21 Leadville, CO
 Jul 27-29 Reno, NV
 Jul 28 Grand Rapids, MI
 Aug 2-4 Mebane, NC
 Aug 11 Vicksburg, MS
 Aug 18 Urbana, OH
 Sep 8 Downieville, CA
 Sep 23 Greensboro, NC
 Sep 29 Santa Ana, CA
 Sep 30 Lowell, MA
 Oct 6 Point Pleasant, WV
 Oct 6-7 Savannah, GA
 Oct 7 Chelsea, MI
 Oct 21 Findlay, OH
 Nov 11 Pittsburgh, PA

Jul 7 Tulsa, OK
 Jul 13-14 Houston, TX
 Jul 27-28 Birmingham, AL
 Jul 28 Altoona, IA
 Jul 29 Coventry, CT
 Aug 4 Tallahassee, FL
 Aug 12-19 Bouckville, NY
 Aug 19 Poughkeepsie, NY
 Sep 15 Salt Lake City, UT
 Sep 23 Depew, NY
 Sep 29 Albuquerque, NM
 Oct 5-6 Canyonville, OR
 Oct 6 Chesterfield, VA
 Oct 7 Dryden, NY
 Oct 7 Keene, NH
 Nov 9-10 Jacksonville, FL
 Nov 17 Milford, OH



Lee Shipman brought some of her recent acquisitions to the May meeting. The bottle adorned with giraffes is entered Lee’s collection courtesy of Scott Gordon.



The bottles shown above were Mike Cianciosi’s show & tell items at the May meeting. The bottle in the center is an R. A SHINN / WASHINGTON / DC variation that took a very unusual closure. The rubber ball closure patented in 1864 is sometimes called an ABC closure because the bottles that used it are marked A.B.C Co.