

The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

March 2013

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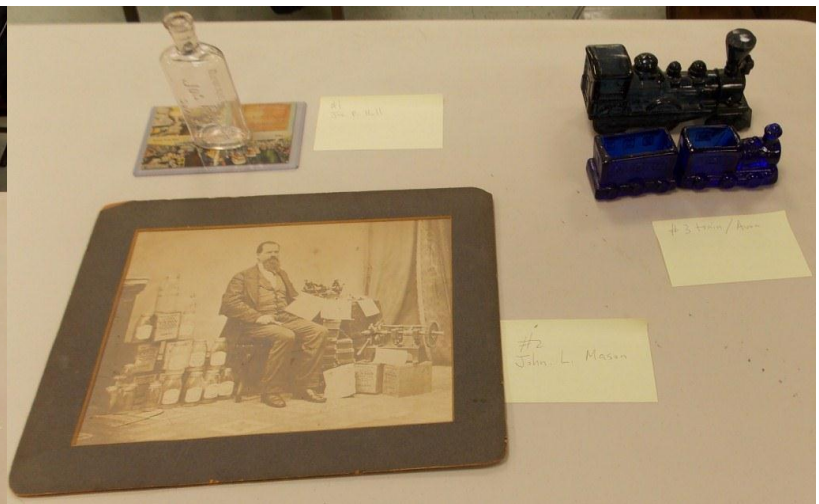
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Meeting – March 26th at 8 PM

Please join us at St. Mark's Orthodox Church in Bethesda for our monthly meeting. Visitors are always welcome, and we enjoy seeing antique bottles for show & tell.



Jim Sears sits at his table at the March 3 Baltimore show. Thank you to Steve Charing for this photo.



Our "collector of the year" entries are shown above. Jim Sears won the collector contest with the unique clear gallon Mason jar, but Mike Cianciosi's A. Shinn bottle was only one vote behind. Jim's photo of inventor John Mason with his Mason jars won the "go-with" contest.



At our February meeting Roland Longerbeam displayed the scarce stoneware jars shown at left. One jar had a lovely blue glaze and another claimed to be a "Sanitary Self Sealing Jar."

Scott Gordon presented some research on a small green jar that he dug. This jar was unusual in that it appeared to be made of pressed rather than blown glass.

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

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 Mike Cianciosi (chosi@cox.net)

The Goldsboroughts: Blue Bloods of Baltimore Booze

By Jack Sullivan

[Special to the Potomac Pontil]

As an aristocratic Maryland family, the Goldsboroughts ranked at the top. The two Charles Goldsborought, father and son, did not rise to the apex of the Baltimore business and social world merely because of blood lines, however, but because they made good whiskey and scads of money selling it.

The Goldsborought ancestors came to America from England in 1639, settling in Maryland. The paternal grandfather of Charles Senior had been a Governor of the state, as had been his mother's father. Charles father, William, was a State Senator. The ancestral manor was located on large fertile acreage south of Cambridge, Maryland. Known as "Horn's Point," the Goldsborought spread was described by contemporaries as "second to none as a plantation."

Charles Senior was born in Annapolis in 1839. Father William saw to it that his heir received a thorough education and Charles completed his education, age 18, at the prestigious Balmar School in West Chester, Pennsylvania. He entered business life in 1857 working for a Maryland shipping company and quickly rose in the ranks.

When the Civil War broke out, despite Maryland staying in the Union, Charles cast his lot with the Confederacy. It is likely that the Goldborought plantation used slave labor and that may have help shape his decision. He was immediately commissioned an officer in the Confederate Navy, an appointment influenced by his uncle by marriage, Franklin Buchanan, the only full admiral for the South. Quickly disillusioned by life aboard a gunship, Charles quit the Navy and enlisted in the First Maryland Light Artillery. He saw action in several battles, including Gettysburg, and surrendered with Lee at Appomattox.

Despite the fact that the Civil War pit Marylander against Marylander, and even Goldsborought against Goldsborought, Charles returned home, apparently without any rancor, to reenter business in 1865 as the head of the Baltimore firm of Goldsborought and Tate. That company was listed in local business directories as "jobbers and dealers in wine, brandies, and whiskies." The same year he also got married. His bride was Mary Galt, the daughter of James Galt, an opulent planter and owner of 4,000 acres of good farmland in Fluvanna County, Virginia. Charles was 25 years old and Mary was 18. From this union eventually would come seven children, including Charles Junior, born in 1870.

In ensuing years the elder Goldsborought continued running a successful liquor trade on Baltimore's South Gay Street. Alfred Ulman was conducting a similar business just down the street. By 1878, the two had decided that cooperation was better than competition and so combined their two firms as

the Ulman-Goldsborought Company. Soon after the merger the partners contracted to take all or most of the whiskey being made at a distillery in High Spire, Pennsylvania, just down the Susquehanna River from Harrisburg. It had been founded by a Welsh immigrant named Robert Wilson in 1823. He and his family had run the distillery until 1870 when they sold it and a succession of owners ensued.

Goldsborought and Ulman apparently found the contractual relationship with Wilson's less than satisfactory and in 1887 the partners bought the plant and ran it themselves, calling it the "High Spire Distillery." They promptly appropriated the 1823 founding date for their own advertising purposes and moved their flagship brand from "Atlas" to "Wilson." (Fig. 1) Their offices were at 41 South Gay Street with a sales outlet at 100 North Broadway in Baltimore. Eventually they built a large bottling plant on Belair Road. Under their ownership, Wilson Whiskey achieved a national reputation for quality and sales soared

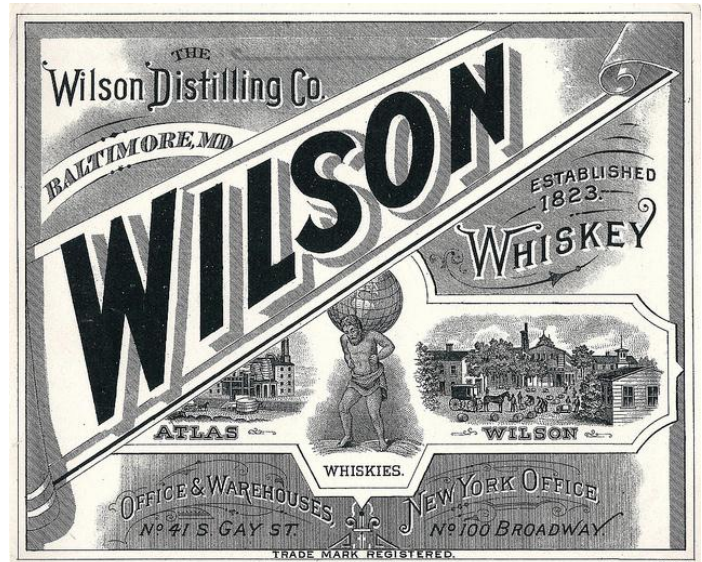


Fig. 1: Wilson Whiskey label

Soaring too was Charles Goldborought's reputation in Baltimore business and social circles. During this period he was president of both the Merchants' and Atheneum Clubs, and governor of the Maryland Club, the oldest in the city. The Merchants' Club was described as "the most influential, opulent and potent citizens of Baltimore." Charles Senior was a member of the Elkridge Fox and Hunting Club and held memberships in both the Manhattan and Commercial Clubs of New York City.

Meanwhile, he was seeing that Charles Junior was being groomed to manage the family enterprise. The son entered the firm at the bottom rung and was said to have been employed in every department in order to achieve mastery of it. Both Goldsboroughts were on hand for the disastrous news that came to them on June 17, 1893. As reported by the Williamsport PA Daily Gazette and Bulletin, a fire had left the High Spire Distillery in ashes.

Suspected to be of incendiary origin, the flames had raced through the entire complex. Within an hour the plant, including the buildings, a large bonded warehouse containing 5,000 barrels of whiskey, a barrel factory and the office were in ruins. Fire departments from Harrisburg and Middletown were dispatched and prevented the fire from reaching nearby homes. Two large warehouses containing an estimated 12,000 barrels of aging whiskey also were saved. The loss, though partially insured, was put at \$200,000 (10 times that in current dollars) and fell mainly on the Ulman Goldsborough Company. Undeterred, however, the partners almost immediately began restoring the property. The rebuilt distillery was said to yield 1,000 barrels of whiskey per day and was capitalized at \$500,000.

Meanwhile, their whiskey was building a reputation as high quality liquor. It was called “That luxury whiskey of *bon vivants* known the world over as Wilson Whiskey.” In its advertising the company did nothing to dispel the image. A trade card shown here pictures just such a *bon vivant* (Fig. 2). The whiskey also became known for the brevity of some ads that read, “Wilson, That’s All.” (Fig. 3). It ran as full page ads, prompting considerable comment. One writer opined tongue-in-cheek about its unusual brevity: “What a nice time the Wilson copy man must have had....He had leisure....” A Brooklyn minister gave a sermon he entitled “Whiskey - That Isn’t All.”

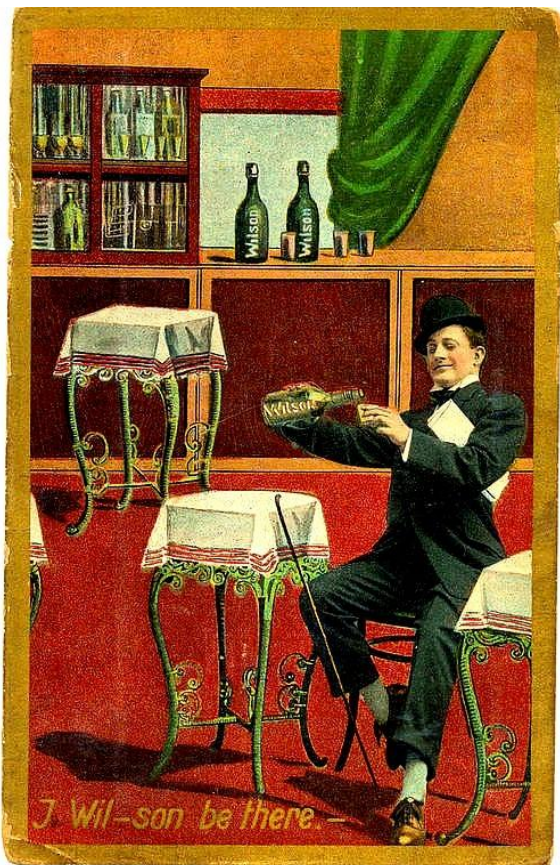


Fig. 2: Wilson post card

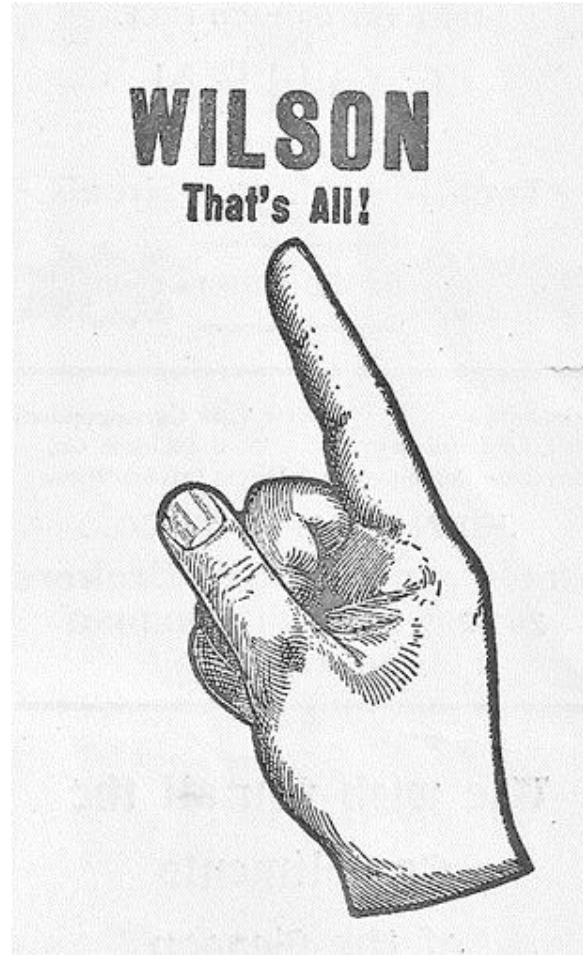


Fig. 3: Wilson “finger” ad

The brand was also noted for being sold in bottles, quart and smaller containers, to the public (Fig. 4). Nor did the firm neglect giving advertising items to their saloon patrons. Over the years Wilson Whiskey was featured on an array of signs suitable for hanging in drinking establishments, some fashionable, some racy, some colorful (Figs. 5-7). The Goldsborough’s El-Bart Gin also merited a gaudy sign (Fig. 8). Shown here, the Wilson sign of signs appeared on the wall of a tall building in Chicago. The sign touted itself as “the largest picture in the world (Fig. 9). It depicts a distinguished gentleman shooting seltzer into a glass containing whiskey. It helpfully provided the dimensions of the image, including the factoid that the man’s head was 38 feet high. “Wilson High Ball, That’s All,” topped the display.

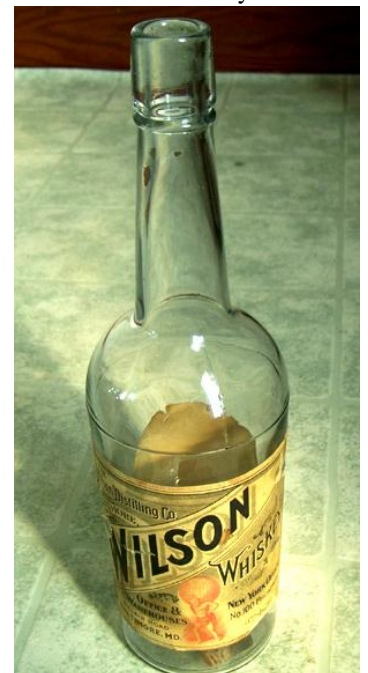


Fig. 4: Wilson quart bottle



Fig 5: Wilson sign "coach"

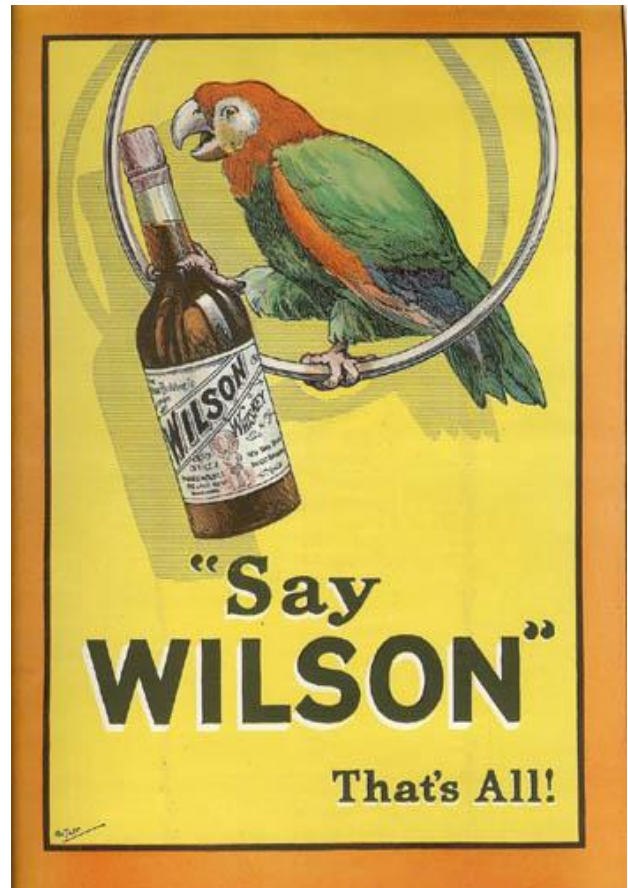


Fig 8: Wilson Parrot Sign



Fig 6: Wilson sign "two women"



Fig. 8: El Bart Gin sign



Fig. 9: Wilson Chicago wall sign

About 1900, changes occurred in the company structure. The Ulman-Goldsborough Company disappeared from directories. In its place by 1901 was the Highspire Distilling Company, in which the Goldsboroughts were said to have a controlling interest. Its first address was at the corner of Calvert and Baltimore Streets. Not long after the Goldsboroughts moved into this new enterprise, Charles Senior died in May 1903, age 64. He left his son, photo shown here, to run the business.

Charles Jr. appears to have been cut from the same enterprising cloth as his father (**Fig. 10**). Under his management High Spire Whiskey became increasingly popular. A 1906 ad emphasizes its quality (**Fig. 11**). This Goldborough continued the tradition of giveaways to saloons, notably back of the bar bottles (**Figs. 12,13**). In 1907, probably spurred by the 1893 fire at his distillery, Charles Junior also founded the Distillers Mutual Fire Insurance Company in Baltimore. Although failing to match his father elections to positions in the top clubs of Philadelphia, Charles Jr. was a member of the Baltimore Country Club and the Baltimore Athletic Club. Apparently a bachelor all his life, this Goldsborought's interests seem more scholarly than social. He was a member of the Maryland Historical Society and the Original Research Society.



Fig. 10: Charles Goldsborough Jr.

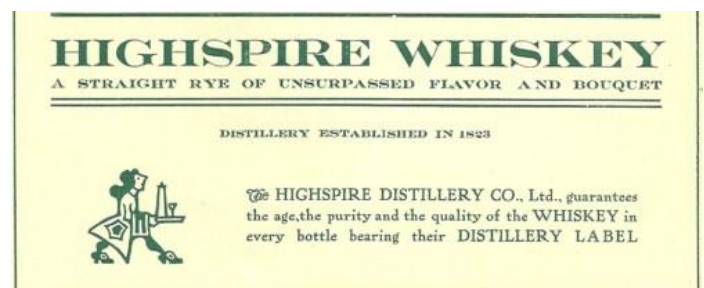


Fig. 11: Highspire ad 1906



Fig. 12: Highspire back bar bottle #1



Fig.13: Highspire back bar bottle #2

Charles Junior continued to run the Highspire Distillery until it was forced to close down in 1919 because of National Prohibition. One Temperance publication gloated that the facility in 1923 had been turned into a hosiery manufacturer, commenting on the supposed irony that many children had gone without socks because of money wasted on whiskey. After Repeal other members of the Goldsborough clan reopened the distillery in 1935 and it operated into the 1950s.

Upcoming Area Bottle Shows



Mar 22-23 Morro Bay, CA
 Mar 23 Daphne, AL
 Mar 24 Bloomington, MN
 Mar 24 Brewerton, NY
 Mar 24 Enfield, CT
 Apr 6 St Clairsville, OH
 Hutchinson, KS
 Apr 12-13 Antioch, CA
 Apr 20 Salisbury, NC
 Apr 21 Harrisonburg, VA
 Apr 27 Aiken, South Carolina
 May 5 Antioch, IL
 May 11 Mansfield, OH
 May 19 Washington, PA
 June 1 Ballston Spa, NY
 June 2 Brick, NJ

Mar 30 Athens, GA
 Apr 7 Dover, NH
 Apr 7 Tylersport, PA
 Apr 13 Kalamazoo, MI
 Apr 20 Salisbury, NC
 Apr 21 Rochester, NY
 May 4 Gray TN
 May 5 Utica, NY
 May 18 Coventry, CT
 May 30-June 1 Hershey, PA
 June 1 Butte, MT
 June 8 Raleigh, NC

21 April 2013 (Sunday) Harrisonburg, Virginia – Historical Bottle Diggers of Virginia 42nd Annual Antique Bottle and Collectible Show & Sale, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds, U.S. Rt 11 South, (Exit 243 off I-81), Harrisonburg, Virginia, Contact: Sonny Smiley, 540.434.1129, lithiaman1@yahoo.com.

30 May – 01 June 2013 (Thursday – Saturday) Grantville (Hershey), Pennsylvania – 33rd National Association of Milk Bottle Collectors (NAMBC) Annual Convention at the Holiday Inn in Grantville at the junctions of Interstates 80 and 81. For more information visit www.milkbottlecollectors.com or email Penny Gottlieb, PennyGottlieb18@gmail.com.