

# The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

*April 2013*

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## Meeting – April 30th 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.



Show & tell at our March meeting included a large number of shards from the site of the historic Ball-Sellers House in Arlington, VA (<http://www.arlingtonhistory.org/visit/historic-ball-sellers-house/>). Club members enjoyed trying to identify what bottles the shards came from.

The meeting also featured some unusual Mason jars with embossing errors, which Jim Sears recently added to his collection.



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](http://www.potomacbottlecollectors.org)

Maintained by Mike Cianciosi (chosi@cox.net)

## When the Grand Army of the Republic “Invaded” Washington

By Jack Sullivan

[Special to the Potomac Pontil]

It was not the largest military parade in the history of the District of Columbia. That had occurred in the immediate wake of the Confederate surrender at Appomattox Court House, Virginia. Tens of thousands victorious Union troops had marched down Pennsylvania Avenue on their way to being demobilized and sent home. But the second largest parade in the city’s history occurred in September 1892 when the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) marched through the streets, 80,000 strong (Fig. 1). When that invading throng went home, they carried along a harvest of Washington souvenirs.

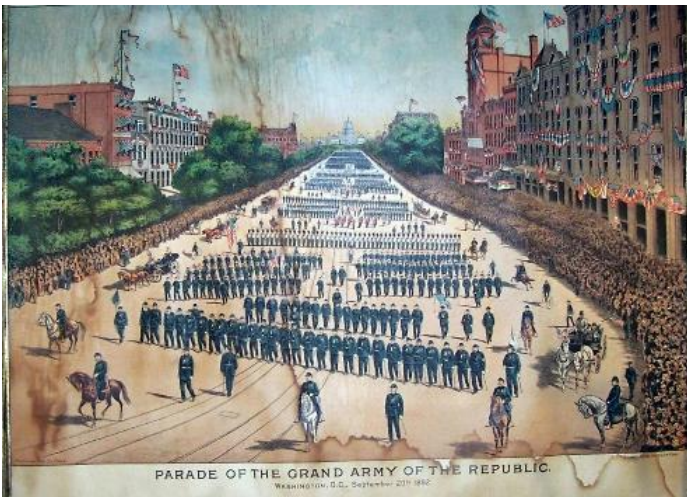


Fig. 1: The G.A.R. march illus.

After the end of the Civil War, organizations were formed for veterans to network and maintain connections with each other. Many of the Union veterans used their shared experiences as a basis for fellowship. Groups of men began joining together, first for camaraderie and later for political power. Emerging as most influential among the various organizations was the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.), founded on April 6, 1866 in Illinois. The Grand Army called its annual national meetings “encampments,” because its members often literally camped out in tents on local open areas.

Washington had been the site of the organization’s Fourth Encampment in May 1870 as the organization was just getting started. The next time it was chosen for the event was 22 years later in 1892. By this time the G.A.R. had grown to almost 400,000 members and were accounted the most powerful political and social organization in America. Closely allied with the Republican Party, the Grand Army’s endorsement was sought by candidates for local, state, and – above all – national office.

The cover of the official program for the Washington 26th National Encampment presented an array of patriotic images to welcome the delegates (Fig. 2). Three American flags were displayed along with symbols for the cavalry (swords) and artillery (cannons). The cover was topped with a depiction of the American eagle. A participant could take one of these home to show the family for a mere dime.



Fig. 2: 1892 program cover

As the delegates arrived, many of them camped in tents on the National Mall and Capitol grounds. Shown here is a picture of a group of veterans, some of whom have brought their wives, standing amidst a group of tents pitched in the shadow of the Washington Monument, which had been completed in 1884 (Fig. 3). D.C. hawkers, no strangers to large groups of visitors, moved among the tents selling souvenirs. Highly popular items at these encampments were flasks and canteens. Among the most attractive flasks was one that involved a label under glass picture of a Union soldier and sailor expressing their solidarity (Fig. 4). It thoughtfully came with a cap that doubled as a snifter – just the thing for those cold nights in the tent.





Fig. 3: DC Encampment photo



Fig. 5: Canteen #1 - side one



Fig. 4: GAR label-under glass flask

The Washington Encampment was particularly notable for its canteens. Shown here are both sides of a metal container (Figs. 5,6). One side shows the U.S. Capitol building. The other side bears the Grand Army initials and the dates of the conflict. The busts above apparently are those of the organization's top officers. Note that it was closed with an attached cork. A more fragile vessel was a ceramic canteen celebrating the encampment (Fig. 7). Another medal flask spoke a message that was a traditional motto for the G.A.R.: "We drank from the same canteen" (Fig. 8).



Fig. 6: Canteen #1 - side two

Another big seller at encampments were souvenir medals and pins and Washington was no exception. One showing Gen. Philip H. Sheridan probably was most popular with former cavalymen (Fig. 9). By the end of the war Sheridan commanded those units. A Navy veteran by contrast would want a streamer that signaled his service, as well as his participation in a National Encampment (Fig. 10). A rifle stick pin was a sign that the wearer had been part of the infantry (Fig. 11). As one observer has noted about these items: "Something a veteran/delegate was proud to wear, well after the convention."





Fig. 7: Canteen #2 - ceramic



Fig. 9: Sheridan medal



Fig. 8: Canteen #3 - metal



Fig. 10: Navy ribbon



Fig. 11: Rifle stick pin

Another pin-on was simply labeled “souvenir,” to be worn by any service member or his wife or anyone wanting association with the G.A.R. (Fig. 12). A participant might also want to take a something home to his wife waiting at home. For him there was a teaspoon with all the familiar symbolism and the event date and place engraved in the bowl (Fig. 13). Because of the large number of participants in the 26th Encampment, these and other souvenir items of the Washington event are evident regularly on auction sites and available for collecting.



Fig. 12: “Souvenir” medal (left)  
Fig. 13: Spoon (right)

The 1892 Encampment apparently was successful because only a decade later the organization held its 36th national gathering here in 1902. By that year time and mortality had taken its toll on Civil War veterans and G.A.R. membership numbers had dipped to 263,745. Souvenirs of that meeting are more rare. The last time the Grand Army came to Washington was in 1936. The conflict had been over 71 years. Membership had dwindled to 4,391. A mighty small “invasion” occurred that year. The organization, however, tottered on until 1949. With only 16 members left, the Grand Army of the Republic finally disbanded.

## Upcoming Area Bottle Shows



Apr 27 Aiken, South Carolina

May 4 Gray TN

May 5 Antioch, IL

May 11 Mansfield, OH

May 17-18 DeFuniak Spring, FL

May 19 Washington, PA

June 1 Ballston Spa, NY

June 2 Brick, NJ

June 8 Raleigh, NC

June 22 Tallahassee, FL

June 28-29 Reno, NV

May 5 Utica, NY

May 17-18 Kent, WA

May 18 Coventry, CT

May 30-June 1 Hershey, PA

June 1 Butte, MT

June 8 Atlanta, GA

June 8 San Diego, CA

June 22 Tulsa, OK

July 20-21 Manchester, NH

**30 May – 01 June 2013** (Thursday – Saturday) **Grantville (Hershey), Pennsylvania – 33<sup>rd</sup> 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](http://www.milkbottlecollectors.com) or email Penny Gottlieb, [PennyGottlieb18@gmail.com](mailto:PennyGottlieb18@gmail.com).

**20 & 21 July 2013** (Saturday & Sunday) **Manchester, New Hampshire – FOHBC 2013 National Antique Bottle Show**, at the Radisson New Hampshire Expo Center, 700 Elm Street, Manchester, New Hampshire 03101, 1.800.967.9033. Banquet is on Friday evening, 19 July 2012. Visit [FOHBC.org](http://FOHBC.org) for more information or contact Michael George, 603.765.8079, [earlyglass@gmail.com](mailto:earlyglass@gmail.com).