

The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

June 2013

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Meeting – June 25th 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.

Below are show photos of show& tell from our April and May meetings.



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) &

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Web Site: www.potomacbottlecollectors.org

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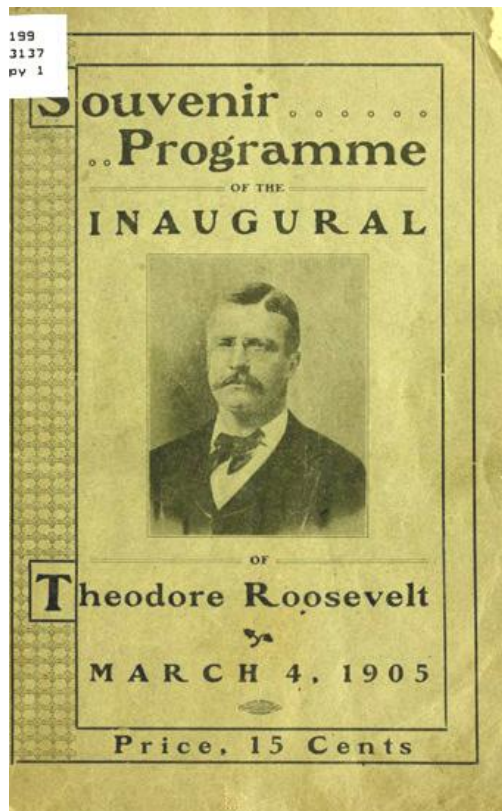
Two Irishmen on DC's "Rum Row"

By Jack Sullivan
[Special to the Potomac Pontil]

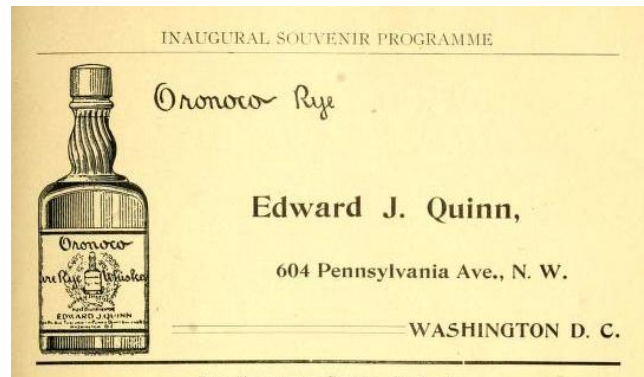
When the 1905 inaugural parade for Theodore Roosevelt stepped off on Pennsylvania Avenue (Fig. 1), many of the spectators held in their hands a souvenir program (Fig. 2). Edward Quinn, a saloonkeeper on the avenue, likely watched the marchers from his business address, knowing that the program held a prominent ad for his flagship brand, Oronoco Rye (Fig. 3). The Irishman Quinn had truly "arrived" in the Nation's Capital.



1. Pennsylvania Avenue circa 1905



2. Roosevelt inaugural program

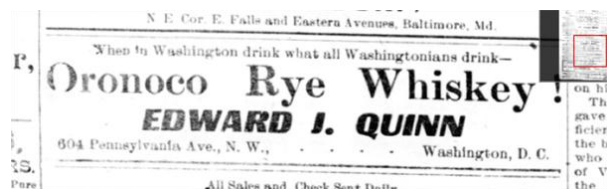


3. Quinn program ad

Quinn's story began in Galway, Ireland, when his father, also named Edward, emigrated to the United States in 1859. Three years later, during the midst of the Civil War, he settled in Alexandria, Virginia, a town then occupied by Federal military authorities. Shortly after the end of the war the Senior Quinn established a grocery business on a tract of land he had purchased lying north of Oronoco Street and west of St. Asaph Street. He married and had a family of seven children, including a son, Edward, whom he brought into the business with him as the boy matured. The father also featured a flagship brand of whiskey which, appropriately enough, he named "Oronoco."

Fast forward a few years. In the late 1800s, Edward J., with his father's blessing and likely financial support, established a saloon and a retail liquor store at 604 Pennsylvania Avenue, strategically placed right opposite the Pennsylvania Railroad Station and adjacent to the National Hotel. The avenue held a plethora of drinking establishments and had earned the nickname "Rum Row." The 1900 Census found Quinn, age 33, living above the saloon with his wife Ellen. With them was his widowed mother, Brigid, and two children, Mary, three years old, and a baby, Helen, who later died in infancy. Two servants were also recorded in the household.

Edward Quinn also had the rights to market the whiskey his father had created. He advertised Oronoco Rye vigorously in the Washington newspapers (Fig. 4) and other media outlets in DC. He boasted that it was "a time-honored stimulant of absolute purity." He suggested that when the doctor prescribed "a little whiskey," he meant Oronoco Rye. "Therefore, it is essential that you always have a supply of Oronoco Rye on hand." Almost as an afterthought Quinn also suggested it was preferred for mixed drinks – something the doctor may not have ordered. Quinn also offered a second brand, "Bluemont Whiskey." He trademarked Bluemont in 1904 and Oronoco in 1905.

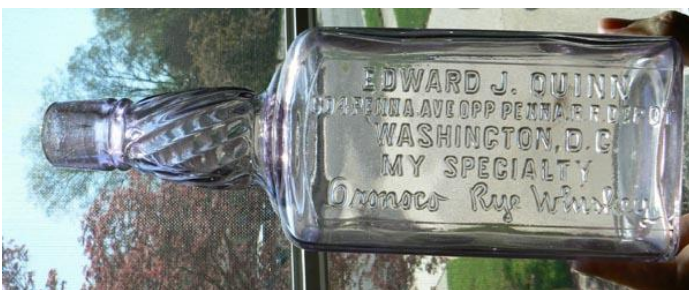


4. Quinn newspaper ad

In addition to selling Oronoco behind his bar, Quinn retailed it in glass bottles. Some like the one shown here had a fancy label that described the Irishman as the “sole distributor.” (Fig. 5). He also featured fancy embossing of many of his quarts and flasks, again bringing his Oronoco brand to the fore (Figs. 6-8). Like many other Washington whiskey men, Quinn found it expedient to provide giveaway items to favored customers for his whiskey. Such gifts principally found expression in fancy etched shot glasses for bartender use. Those also prominently advertised the Oronoco brand (Figs 9,10).



5. Labeled quart bottle



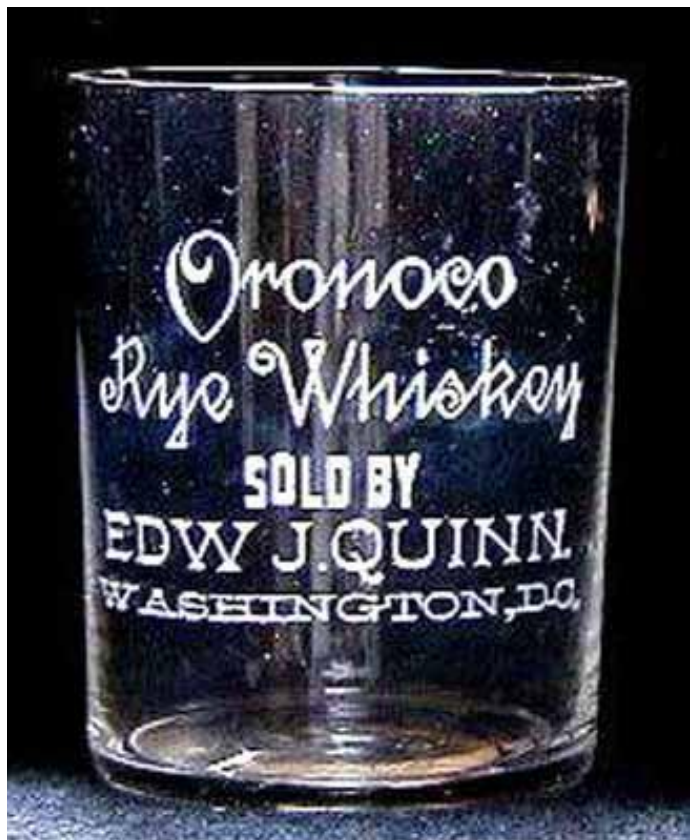
6. Embossed quart bottle



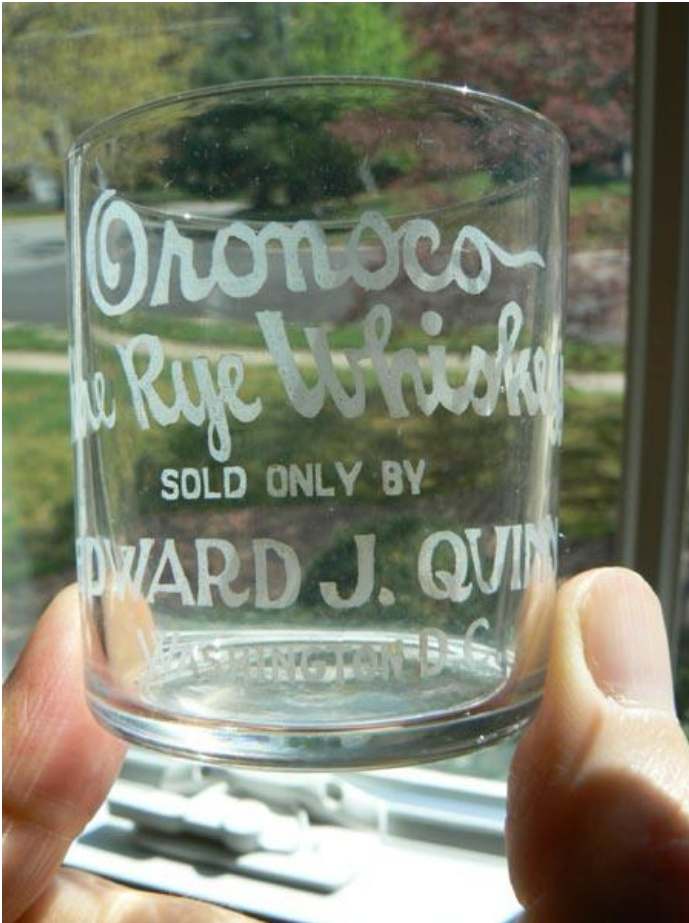
7. Embossed flask - horizontal



8. Embossed flask - vertical



9. Quinn shot glass #1



10. Quinn shot glass #2

A Republican like his father, Edward must have been proud to have his ad in the program for Roosevelt's inaugural. We can imagine him standing in the doorway of his saloon waving as the President-elect rode by in the parade. His whiskey sales were making him increasingly prosperous. As a result Quinn found it possible to move his family to a real home. By the time of the 1910 census the Quinns had moved to a house on fashionable Massachusetts Avenue, number 1234. In addition to wife Ellen and daughter, May, he now also had a son, Edward, age 4. His mother, now 73, was still living with them as were two boys named Cox, possibly relatives of his wife.

Quinn, however, was not long to enjoy his riches. About 1911, he died and his widow, with young children to raise and clearly needing money, almost immediately sold the Pennsylvania property and business, including the rights to Oronoco Rye. The buyer was another DC Irishman named D. J. O'Connell. The latter lost no time in making the switch of identification. Shown here is a bottle of Oronoco Whiskey in which the regular label has been pasted over with a second label identifying it as D.J. O'Connell's (Fig. 11).



11. O'Connell over pasted bottle

A 1912 "puffery" article from the Washington Herald expunged any mention of Quinn and made it seem as if O'Connell had always been at the helm of the business that "has long catered to the Washington public and it enjoys an enviable reputation...." The article went on to say that Oronoco whiskey was a brand "that Mr. O'Connell prides himself on. This whiskey is largely sold to connoisseurs." It added that the saloon had a buffet, likely a free lunch for drinkers. Like his predecessor, O'Connell also issued a shot glass, once again touting Oronoco Rye (Fig. 12).



12. O'Connell shot glass

Whatever prosperity O'Connell gleaned from his saloon and package sales would be short-lived. Temperance advocates had targeted Washington for prohibition, knowing that a simple vote of Congress which governed the District could do the job. Accordingly on March 3, 1917, by vote of Congress, DC officially went "dry." At the time there were 267 barrooms in the city, among them O'Connell's. All of them, including those on "Rum Row," were forced to close. The Washington Times estimated that the District thereby lost 2,500 jobs and \$500,000 (in 1917 dollars) in revenue.

That was the end of the booze business built by two Irishmen on Pennsylvania Avenue. For the next 17 years no parade down that storied street would pass by a saloon, "sample room," beer joint or any semblance of a watering hole. The memory of that pre-Prohibition time and those enterprising Irishmen, however, is kept alive by the artifacts in bottles and glass still to be seen in local collections.

Note: The bottles shown in this article are through the courtesy of Dr. Richard Lilienthal who also is responsible for the image of the O'Connell shot glass.



Jack Sullivan shared this photo of a milk truck in the Luray Caverns museum.

Upcoming Area Bottle Shows

May 30-June 1 Hershey, PA
 June 1 Ballston Spa, NY
 June 1 Butte, MT
 June 2 Brick, NJ
 June 8 Atlanta, GA
 June 8 Raleigh, NC
 June 8 San Diego, CA
 June 22 Tallahassee, FL
 June 22 Tulsa, OK
 June 28-29 Reno, NV
 July 20-21 Manchester, NH
 July 27 Leadville, CO
 August 10 Vicksburg, MS
 August 17 Houston TX
 Sept. 14 Downieville, CA
 Sept. 21 Santa Ana, CA
 Sept. 22 Buffalo, NY
 Sept. 29 Greensboro, NC
 Sept. 29 Richfield, OH



July 27 Birmingham, AL
 July 28 Altoona, IA
 August 17 Urbana OH
 Aug. 18 Poughkeepsie, NY
 Sept. 20-21 Aurora, OR
 Sept. 22 Indianapolis, IN
 Sept. 28 Memphis, TN
 Sept. 29 Lowell, MA
 October 5 Richmond, VA

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 for more information or contact Michael George, 603.765.8079, earlyglass@gmail.com.



We could not identify this shard with the letters "BF."