

The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

October 2013

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Meeting – Tuesday, October 29th at 8 PM

Please join us at St. Mark's Orthodox Church in Bethesda for our first regular meeting of the fall season. If you did not bring your summer finds to the September picnic, we look forward to seeing them at the October show & tell.



Thank you to Lee Shipman for hosting the club picnic in September. We enjoyed good weather, good food, and good company. We also discussed the wide variety of show & tell items shown below.



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 Making and Marking of DC Mini-Jugs

By Jack Sullivan

[Special to the Potomac Pontil]

The issuance of small stoneware jugs bearing the name of a liquor dealer or saloon were a common giveaway in the late 1880s and early 1900s. Since National Prohibition in 1920 and even after Repeal such gift items containing whiskey or other alcoholic drinks have been prohibited by law. Thus many of these jugs already have attained “antique” status or will do so in the next few years.

Mini-jugs as giveaway items are most common in larger cities where the competition for customers was intense. Washington D.C. was no exception. In the past my *Pontil* articles have featured a few of these artifacts. In the past few months I have collected the images of a few more that deserve attention.

The first one shown here in two views is known as a “scratch” jug (Figs. 1,2). The method of manufacturing was to shape the jug on the potter’s wheel. Then the potter put a brown Albany slip over the jug, thrust it into the kiln and fired it, but not too hard. That often was referred to as the “biscuit” stage. The pottery was taken from the flames and a sharp instrument then scratched into the soft glaze, usually with the name and address of the liquor establishment. Then it was baked a final time. The example here was from A. A. Bryan of Washington, D.C., who does not appear in any of my research sources. The Potomac Bottle book records a C.C. Bryan operating at 1413 New York Avenue. That Bryan is listed as issuing a strap-sided flask.



Fig. 1: A.A. Bryan Mini-jug

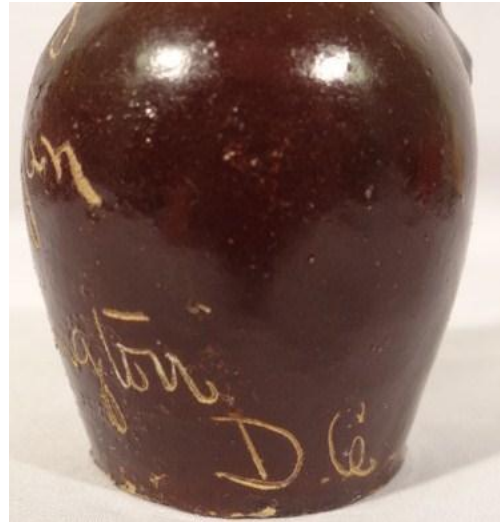


Fig. 2: Detail of Bryan jug

Because the scratch type mini-jugs took a considerable amount of hand labor from start to finish, they tended to go out of fashion as other more efficient processes took hold. The Ernest Brothers jug provides an example of an advance in the technology (Fig. 3). It was a simpler two-step process. First came the biscuit phase of the stoneware with Albany slip for the top and Bristol glaze for the body. This example is unusual because although a miniature, it has “step” shoulders, a form usually seen in larger jugs as a device to make them stack more efficiently in the kiln. A second stage involved the Ernest Brothers label. It was applied by an inked roller, usually rubber, carefully maneuvered over the front surface. In this case the ink was a more expensive cobalt blue. Finally, a clear glaze was put over everything then fired again. All labor was done by hand, yet the finished products were cheap enough to be given away. This mini-jug shows up in the Potomac bottle book under “stoneware.”



Fig. 3: Ernest Bros. jug

The J. Wedderburn Company also is a familiar name to D.C. collectors (**Fig. 4**). Located at 616 F Street NW, this dealer in “pure wines and liquors” has multiple references in Potomac Bottle book. Many of them indicate that Wedderburn was fond of declaring on his labels that his goods were “guaranteed under the Pure Food & Drugs Act of 1906.” In addition to helping arrive at a date for this item, the claim points up a strategy that Wedderburn and other whiskey men of his time hoped would stave off Prohibition forces. The implication was that their liquor was pure and medicinal. Suffice to say, this ploy did not work. The Wedderburn jug has small “ears” which indicates was a bail jug, that originally featured wire and a wood handle.

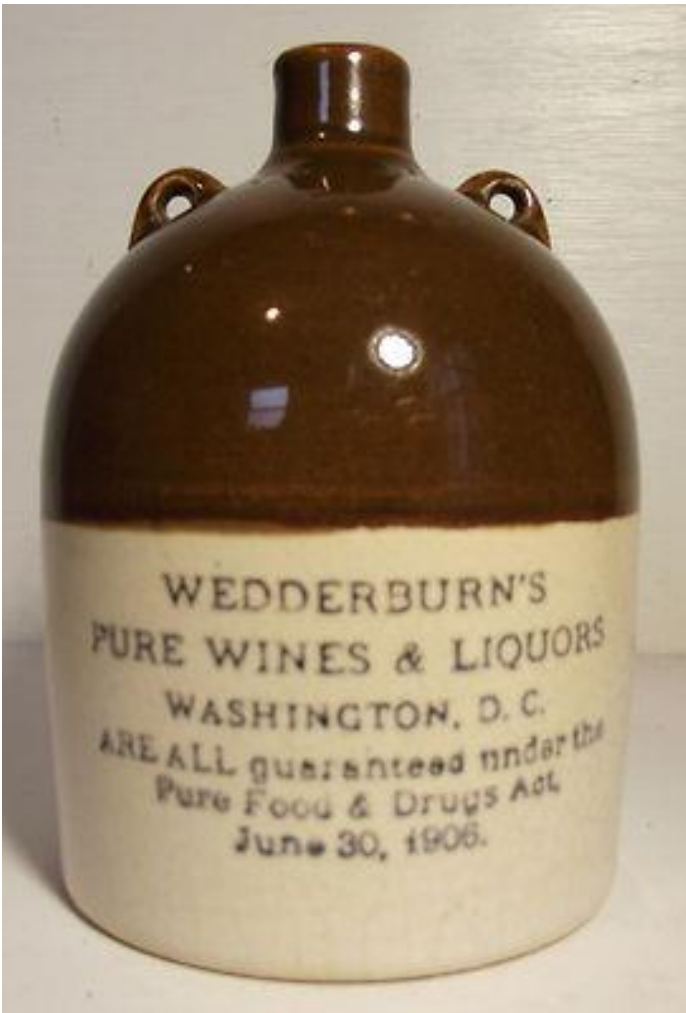


Fig. 4: Wedderburn jug

Many DC whiskey mini-jugs were in the style of the Otto Ruppert miniature (**Fig. 5**). They have a basic stoneware body with an Albany slip top. Like other shown here, Otto’s label made it clear that this was a giveaway item, not to be sold. Ruppert was located at 1402 12th Street NW but my research yielded scant information about his operation. He does not show up in the Potomac bottle book. A Thos. Ruppert was a whiskey dealer at 145 B Street and there may be a relationship.

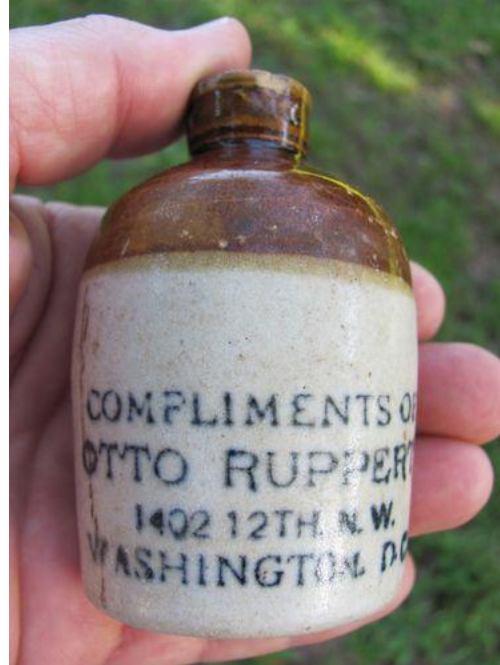


Fig. 5: Ruppert jug

The W.N. Freeman jug is of similar manufacture and may indicate the same pottery was involved (**Fig. 6**). Freeman’s jug located his business at “Good Hope DC.” The town of Good Hope, it turns out, was a village founded around a tavern located near the current intersection of Good Hope Road SE and Alabama Avenue SE, now better known as Anacostia. Good Hope remained little more than a crossroads, however, until World War I. According DC histories, the need for housing during the war brought about by a massive influx of federal workers to the Capital led to extensive development of Southeast Washington and the incorporation of Good Hope as part of the city about 1920.

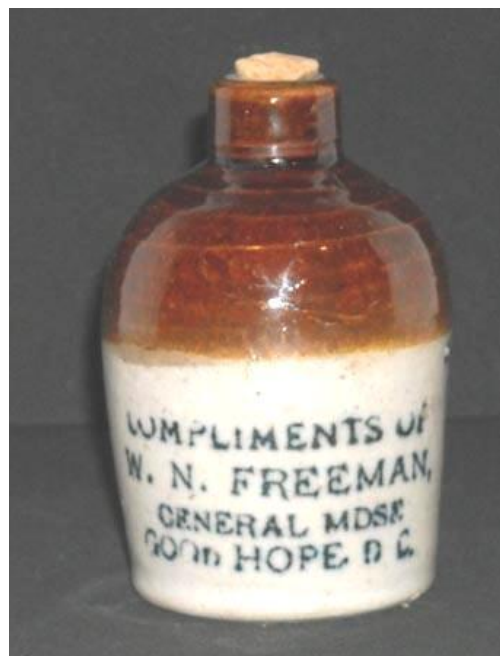


Fig. 6: Freeman jug

The final mini-jug shown here is an echo of the latter two (Fig. 7). Although not listed in the Potomac bottle book, this container shows up fairly frequently on auction sites so the number issued must have been substantial. Bearing the name "T. A. Sonneman," most certainly this jug held some form of alcoholic drink. Not all of these containers, however, came from liquor dealers. At the turn of the 20th Century many grocers, druggists and dealers in "general merchandise" like W. N. Freeman were selling whiskey, wine and other spirituous beverages. Moreover, the liquid inside might have been mixed up in a back room using grain alcohol, coloring and other ingredients such as fuel oil and, by all means, water.

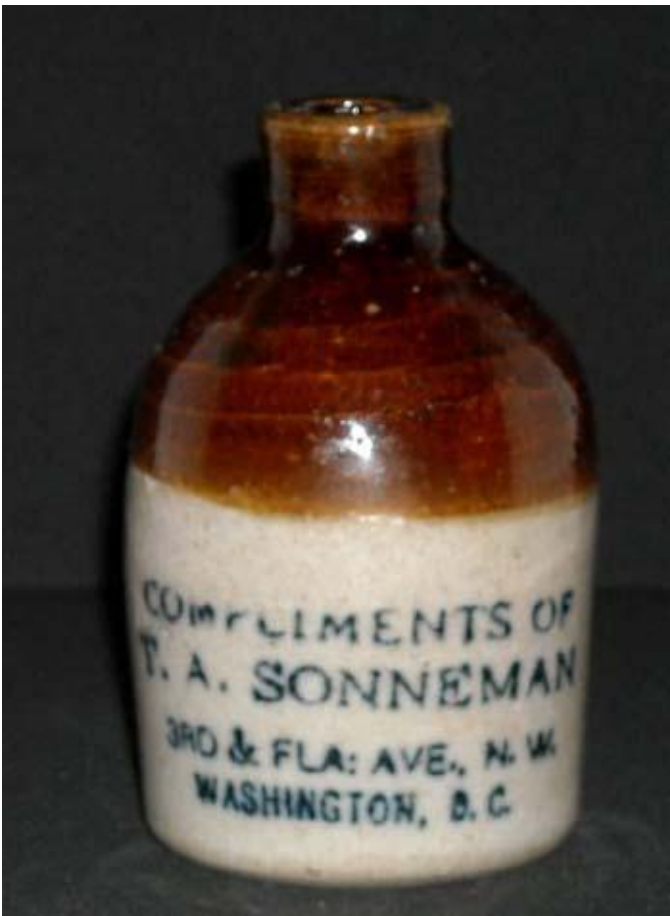


Fig. 7: Sonneman jug

Addendum: As Monty Python would say: "Now for something completely different." Recently I was researching an article for my blog, "Pre-Prohibition Whiskey Men," on the Hentz family, Henry and Henry Jr. Successful Philadelphia liquor dealers, they went on to have the very first lighted sign on Times Square for their flagship brand, Trimble Whiskey (Fig. 8). I discovered that they also for a time had a retail outlet in Washington, D.C. It was located initially on Pennsylvania Avenue four blocks from the White House and later in the Glover Building at 1419 F Street N.W. A 1903 baseball scorecard (Fig. 9) listed Washington as an outlet for Trimble Whiskey. White, Hentz & Co. was the name of the firm; White had made an early departure. I am curious to find out if their bottles ever have shown up with DC in the embossing or referenced on labels.



Fig. 8: Sign -Times Square

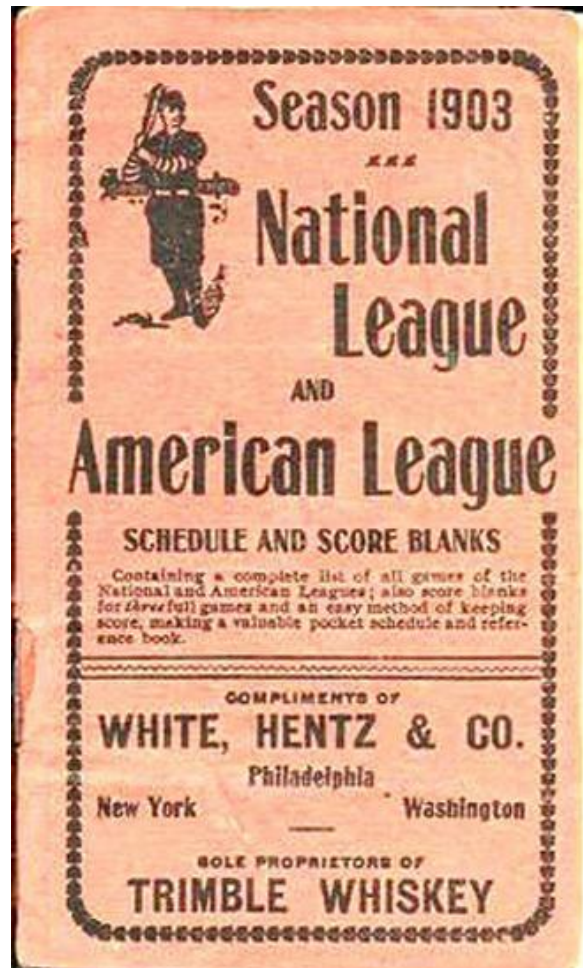


Fig. 9. 1903 Trimble Whiskey Baseball schedule

Upcoming Area Bottle Shows

- Oct. 27 Glendale Heights, IL
- Nov. 3 Coventry, CT
- Nov. 3 Elkton, MD
- Nov. 9 Jacksonville, FL
- Nov. 9 Royal Oak, MI
- Nov. 10 Albany, NY
- Nov. 10 Pittsburgh, PA
- Nov 10 Oakland, NJ
- Nov. 15-16 Kent, WA
- Nov 23 Milford, OH
- Dec. 1 Bethlehem, PA
- Dec. 8 Enfield, CT
- Jan. 12 Muncie, IN
- Jan. 18 Jackson, MS



- Nov. 23 Terre Haute, IN
- Dec. 7 Roseville, CA
- Jan. 10-11 Palmetto, FL
- Jan. 2 South Attleboro, MA
- Jan. 25 Anderson, CA

November 3, 2013 (Sunday) Elkton, Maryland - The Tri-State Bottle Collectors and Diggers Club, Inc., 41st Annual Antique Bottle and Collectibles Show and Sale will be held on from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm at the Singerly Fire Hall, Routes 279 & 213, (I-95, exit 109A), Elkton, Maryland 21922. Admission – \$3.00 – Children under 12 Free. Contact: Dave Brown, 302.738.9960 or Email – dbrown3942@comcast.net.

March 2, 2014 Baltimore, MD

August 1-3, 2014 FOHBC National Show in Lexington, KY



Lee Shipman displayed mementos including a picture of her home back when she and husband Karl had filled the windows with bottles.



Bill Porter and the Mannings: we were particularly happy to see Randy Manning at the club picnic since he has been unable to attend bottle shows for some time.



Scott Gordon displayed fossils as well as bottles at club picnic. He brought the tiny blue ink bottle in the center of the photo as a gift for our hostess, Lee Shipman.



Lee was able to abandon her oxygen tank while hosting the club. We hope she will be able to get around without it by our next meeting.