

The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

February 2014

In this issue:

The Day They Raided DC Saloons for Medicine
by Jack Sullivanpage 2
Upcoming Area Bottle Shows.....page 5

February 25th Meeting

Unusually harsh winter weather has kept some members away from our last two meetings. We hope for a larger turn-out in February, and we also hope to see everyone at the Baltimore show on March 2. Lee Shipman asks that our club reconsider the idea of having some sort of show of our own. She notes that there are now few shows in September due to the loss of the Winchester and Delmarva bottle shows.

Annual Contest

We did not have enough people at our January meeting to hold an anonymous contest, but we still identified our favorite items in each category.

Mike Cianciosi won collector of the year with a unique bottle from W. Bosse, Washington, DC.

Mike also won digger of the year with a Wm. Russell bottle from the great dig that he wrote about in our May 2013 newsletter.

Ralph Jackson won shard of the year with a Frank Hume whiskey that is not listed in our current guide to Washington, DC bottles.

Jim Sears won go-with of the year with a cast iron ring used with wax seal fruit jars to mark the type of fruit in the sealing wax.



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 Day They Raided DC Saloons for Medicine

By Jack Sullivan

[Special to the Potomac Pontil]

On September 18, 1908, a troop of Federal agents swooped down on eight District of Columbia saloonkeepers and liquor dealers to confiscate – not whiskey – but a beverage called Dr. Bouvier's Buchu Gin (Fig. 1). Imagine the fun and excitement of the boys along the bar as the Feds carried out case after case of patent medicine but left their booze alone.

Fig. 1: Buchu Gin labeled pint

That the establishments involved were all run by Irishmen probably was a coincidence. Prominent among them was W. D. Barry who ran the "Reliable Liquor Store" at 2008 14th Street. *Antique Bottles from the Washington, D.C. Area* contains a listing for a Barry flask. More important, Barry was the president of the DC Retail Liquor Dealers Association and later chairman of the national association's "Congressional Liaison Committee." He got the job by promising to "clean up" the liquor trade in DC in response to Congressional pressure. The Feds carried two cases of buchu gin out of his place.

Among others involved in the seizure whose bottles appear in the the club bottle book was M. (likely for Morgan) McInerney with addresses at 1226 7th St. N.W. and 4th & G Sts. NW. McInerney featured "Celtic Club Blended Whiskey." Another place raided was owned by William J. Donovan who is represented in the club book with six bottles and one dose glass. His "Donovan's Reliable Liquor Store" was located at 2003 7th St. He featured "Base Ball House, Columbia Club" brand of whiskey. Other establishments hit in the raid were James Enright at 306 4&1/2 Street; M.O. Donoghue, 1st and O Sts.; P.J. Collins, 5th & N Sts., and W. Connors, 1225 7th Street.



The biggest loss and possibly the most embarrassment was to N. H. Shea at 632 Pennsylvania Av. Of the 109 cases of buchu gin confiscated that September day, Shea lost 65. It figured since Shea was the local distributor for the alleged medicine. He had advertised it widely in local newspapers, slanting the message toward saloon sales: "Don't let them kid you because the doctor says you can't drink. Put your foot on the rail and look wise at 'the doctor behind the bar.' Then simply say Dr. C. Bouvier's Buchu Gin." (Fig. 2)

They'll
Have
Another
Guess

Don't let them kid you because the doctor says you can't drink. Put your foot on the rail and look wise at "the doctor behind the bar." Then simply say

Dr. C. Bouvier's
**Buchu
Gin**

When you have a touch of kidney or bladder trouble, it is just the medicine you need, and it's a mighty good drink at that!

Pure gin of the best quality, mixed with selected buchu leaves and pure rock candy syrup. Guaranteed under the National Pure Food Law.

Should be in every household for the mother and little ones. Telephone to any good saloon or dealer in liquors for a bottle, or go and consult "the doctor behind the bar."

The genuine has the signature (Dr. C. Bouvier) on back label. It is never sold in bulk.

Local Distributor
N. H. SHEA,
632 Pa. Ave. N.W.,
Washington, D. C.

Fig. 2: Shea's buchu ad

Among spurious claims made for this nostrum was that that was “guaranteed under the National Pure Food Law.” The DC raid, however, had been carried out by Federal food and drug inspectors. A sample of Bouvier Buchu Gin had been analyzed by the Bureau of Chemistry of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the agency with enforcement authority for the Food and Drug Act enacted three years earlier. No surprise, the analysts found the beverage contained substantial alcohol. Sold as a medicine and not as liquor, however, the law required that the label state the quantity or proportion of alcohol the product contained. The buchu gin bottles confiscated had omitted that information.

Moreover, there was real question who and where Dr. C. Bouvier was. The company ads emphasized that the genuine article had the signature of the good doctor on the back label. A substantial factory building stood in Louisville with his name prominently attached to buchu gin as one product of Dr. C. Bouvier’s Specialty Company (Fig. 3). A search of Louisville directories and census records of the time, however, fails to find any physician with that name, or for that matter any Bouvier at all in that part of Kentucky.



Fig. 3: Louisville factory

Research indicates that Dr. C. Bouvier was, in effect, a fiction created by five brothers who were liquor dealers. Their name was Rosenbaum. The brothers, in order of birth, were Leon, Sam, Benjamin, Harry, and Jesse. Shown here is a photo of five men in suits and hats standing by five almost identical Lincoln sedans (Fig. 4). Identified as the Rosenbaum brothers, they are posing in front of homes owned by family members in the exclusive Cherokee Triangle District of Louisville, an upscale neighborhood two miles from downtown. Note that a chauffeur is seated at the wheel of each vehicle.



Fig. 4: Rosenbaums + cars

A Louisville historian credits this display of wealth to a move the Rosenbaums made to close out their liquor business early in the 20th Century and move into the medicinal trade. He says: “In 1905 they changed their company name to Dr. C. Bouvier Specialty Company, manufacturing proprietary medicines, principal among them the buchu gin concoction.” The Rosenbaums bottled their product in labeled and embossed quarts and pint flasks (Fig. 5). They issued shot/dose glasses (Fig. 6) and tip trays (Fig. 7) to saloons and other establishments that stocked their “medicine.” They gifted watch fobs (Fig. 8) and folding tooth picks (Fig. 9) to retail customers.



Fig. 5. Bouvier quart - detail

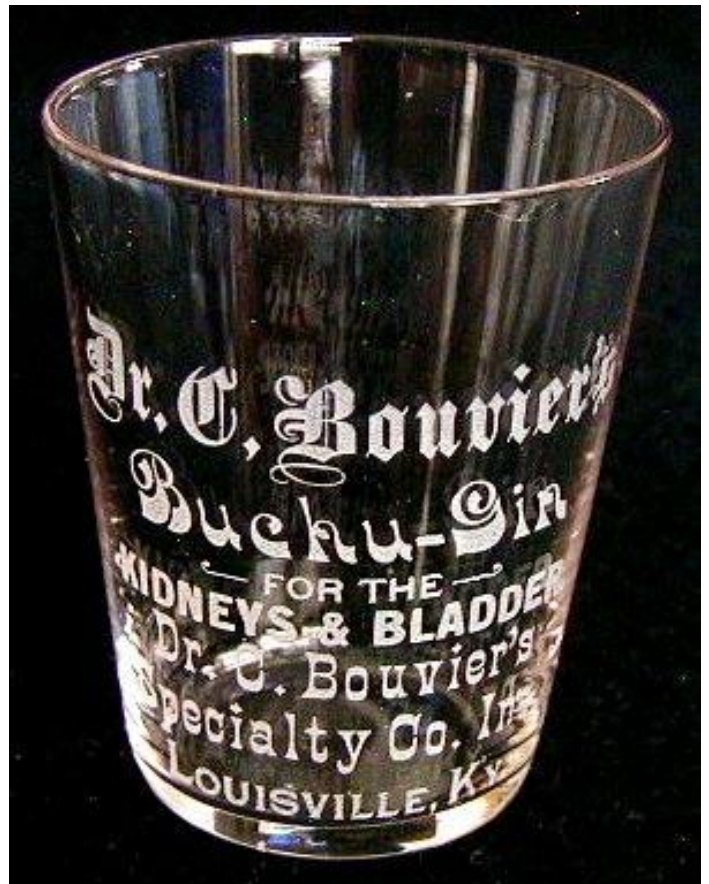


Fig. 6: Bouvier dose glass



Fig. 7: Bouvier tip tray



Fig. 8: Bouvier watch fob



Fig. 10: Bouvier tooth pick

Although the Rosenbaums had found financial success in claiming health giving attributes for their gin, Federal authorities were on their trail. Hence the DC seizures of the 109 cases (1,306 bottles). Hauled into the Federal District Court of the District of Columbia, the Rosenbaums conceded their violation and were fined \$1,200, more than \$25,000 in today's dollar. Upon payment the cases of gin were released to the brothers for relabeling and potential return to the DC outlets for sale.

At almost the same time the Rosenbaums were hauled into the Circuit Court of Franklin County, Kentucky for failure to pay a state liquor tax on its buchu gin. Found guilty, they appealed. In April of that year the Kentucky Court of Appeals registered its decision. In the process the court described the brothers' process for making Bouvier Buchu Gin: *"It is manufactured by pouring pure gin upon a bed or mat of buchu leaves and allowing it to percolate through; then add distilled water and syrup, the gin comprising some 50 percent or more of the compound."* Not surprisingly, the court found that the beverage was liquor, not medicine, and that the Rosenbaums owed the state liquor tax. They paid.

Obviously some irony existed, not lost on the Rosenbaums, that their buchu gin had been cited by Kentucky state authorities for being liquor, not medicine, and by the Feds for being medicine, not liquor. (In that day liquor did not need to list its alcoholic content.)

Nonetheless, those troubles apparently wrought a change in the Rosenbaum's business practices. The name of the company was altered to "Bouvier Specialty Company." The

ever elusive “doctor” was gone. In 1919 with National Prohibition the company and buchu gin both disappeared. The eight Irish liquor dealers and saloon keepers in DC had shut their doors two years earlier when Congress voted Washington DC “dry.” The story of the 1906 DC medicine raid lives on, however, in the annuals of the Food and Drug Administration as Notice of Judgment No. 160, Misbranding of “Buchu Gin.”

Upcoming Area Bottle Shows



- Feb. 28 Phoenix, AZ
- March 2 Baltimore, MD
- March 7-8 Chico, CA
- March 14-15 Deland, FL
- March 15 Athens, GA
- March 16 Flint, MI
- March 16 St. Louis, MO
- March 23 Bloomington, MN
- March 30 Brewerton, NY
- April 5 St. Clairsville, OH
- April 6 Dover, NH
- April 11-12 Antioch, CA
- April 12 Memphis, TN
- April 26-27 Old Greenwich, CT
- April 26 Aiken, SC
- April 27 Rochester, NY
- May 3 Gray, TN
- May 10 Mansfield, OH
- May 18 Washington, PA
- May 31-June 1 Santa Rosa, CA

- Mar 28-29 Morro Bay, CA
- March 30 Enfield, CT
- April 5 Daphne, AL
- April 6 Hutchinson, KS
- April 12 Kalamazoo, MI
- April 13 Tylersport, PA
- April 26 Salisbury, NC
- April 27 Brick, NJ
- April 27 Harrisburg, VA
- May 4 Antioch, IL
- May 17 DeFuniak Spr., FL
- May 18 Coventry, CT
- June 7 Ballston Spa, NY

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



The
BALTIMORE ANTIQUE BOTTLE CLUB
Presents its
34th Annual Show and Sale
Sunday, March 2, 2014







Doors Open 8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.

Physical Education Center
Essex Campus
Community College of Baltimore County
7201 Rossville Blvd. (off exit 34, I-695)
Baltimore, Maryland 21237

Free bottle appraisals
Bottles, Jars, Stoneware, Advertising, Breweriana, Small antiques
The Largest one-day Bottle show in the world!—over 300 tables
Admission \$3

For Information Contact:
Rick Lease - Show Chairman
Telephone: 410-458-9405 Email: finksborg21@comcast.net
For Contracts: Andy Agnew
Telephone: 410-527-1707 Email: medbotls@comcast.net
www.baltimorebottleclub.org



Clay bottles by local artist Matt MacIntire (above)

“Go-withs” at January meeting (left)