

The Potomac Pontil

The Potomac Bottle Collectors – Serving the National Capital

May 2014

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May 27 Meeting

Please join us at St. Mark's Orthodox Church in Bethesda at 8 PM.

Views of Bill Porter's Coca-Cola Bottles from the April Meeting



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

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)

David Fluharty of Baltimore: Hiding in Plain Sight

By Jack Sullivan

[Special to the Potomac Pontil]

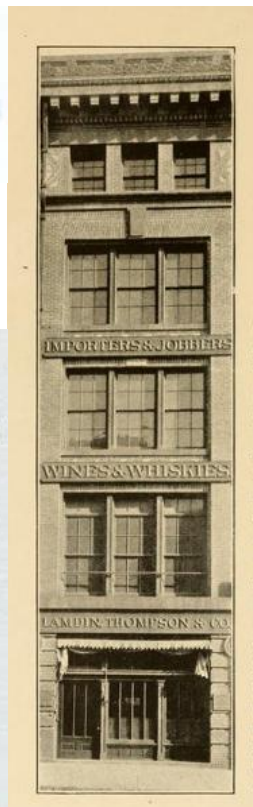
The name on the sign at the Baltimore building said “Lamdin, Thompson & Co.” The name on the rye whiskey label read “Little Corporal,” advertised by a picture of Napoleon Bonaparte with the characteristic hand stuck in his vest. Lurking behind both names was a canny Maryland whiskey man named David Garrison Fluharty. But few Baltimoreans ever knew.

They knew about Lamdin, Thompson & Co., of course. Those names were prominent on the company’s letterhead, as “Importers and Jobbers” of wines and whiskeys (Fig. 1). The firm had first appeared in local directories, located at 34 Pratt Street. *The Baltimore Sun* told its readers about how the Great Fire of 1904 had destroyed that Lamdin, Thompson’s Pratt Street location and, later, how the liquor wholesaler had risen from the ashes only a year later, constructing and occupying a four-story building at Number 117 Light Street (Fig. 2). The drinking public also was aware of the two Lamdin, Thompson flagship brands, “Albion Rye” and “Little Corporal Rye.” (Fig. 3). Fluharty, however, remained out of public view.



Fig. 1: Lamdin, Thompson logo (above)

Fig. 2: Company building 1910 (right)
Fig. 3: “Little Corporal” ad (below)



He had been born in Federalsburg, Caroline County, Maryland, about 1858, and subsequently moved with his family to Dorchester City. According to the 1870 U.S. Census, his father, Samuel, was a carpenter and his mother, Mary Emily (nee Todd), a housewife. Both were native Marylanders. The family was of Irish descent. Their name was a variation of O’Flaherty and originated in Connemara, Country Galway. In 1870 David was recorded with three siblings: Rachel, 10; India, 7; and William, 3. His father’s brother was also living with the family. It is unclear how much education the young David was given. With the circumstances of the family it is likely that he early went to work, probably in the liquor trade and moved from Dorchester to Baltimore.

In 1884, at the age of 27, David married. His bride was Georgianna Flint, age 23, and like her husband, Maryland-born as were her parents. The 1900 Census found them living in Baltimore with two children: William, 15, and Sadie, 14. Fluharty’s occupation was given as “Wholesale Liquor Dealer.”

By 1899, Fluharty had accrued sufficient reputation and financial resources to be included as a partner – albeit a silent one – in a new Baltimore liquor dealership being organized by Abraham D. Lamdin and William A. Thompson. Lamdin had run a similar business for several years in the 1890s, located at 707 East Baltimore. The lead partner, Lamdin died in 1906. Both before and after his death the organization prospered. The company was conducting a “rectifying operation,” blending and compounding whiskeys and other ingredients to achieve smoothness and taste.

Lamdin, Thompson featured a number of brands. Among them were “Collie Malt Whiskey,” “Plymouth Rock,” “Sussex Club,” “Swallow,” and “Village Choice.” As noted earlier the firm’s flagship brands were Albion and Little Corporal, both trademarked in 1905. They were sold in glass containers of several sizes, including the flasks shown here (Figs. 4-6). The company was merchandizing its products widely. A 1910 report on Lamdin, Thompson declared: “...The firm carries a full line of whiskeys and are direct importers of fine wines, gins, and brandies. The facilities of this house for business are unsurpassed, and the territory which it covers is very extensive, having representatives throughout the country.”

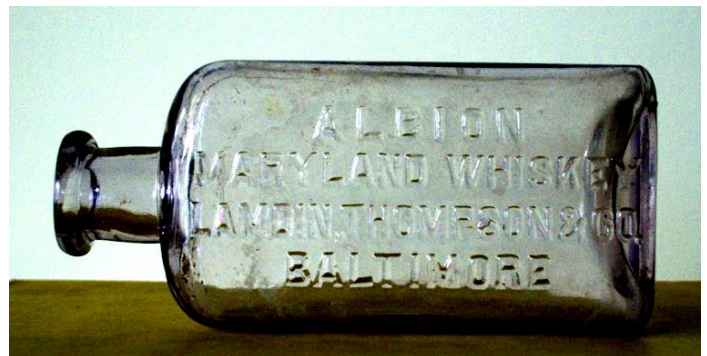


Fig. 4: Albion flask



Fig. 5: Albion Whiskey flask



Fig. 5: Albion Rye flask



Fig. 8: Little Corporal shot glass – plain

Like many Baltimore whiskey wholesalers, Fluharty and his partners provided an array of give away items to favored customers, particularly saloons stocking their goods. Shot glasses were among them. Shown here are two advertising Little Corporal Rye, one in fancy letter, the other plain (Figs. 7, 8). A more expensive gift was a celluloid and metal match safe or “vesta,” that advertised Albion Maryland Whiskey on one side (Fig. 9) and The Little Corporal on the other (Fig. 10).

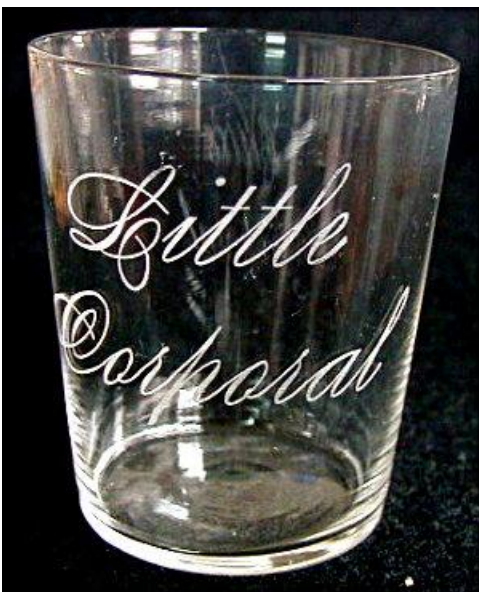


Fig. 7: Little Corporal shot glass – fancy

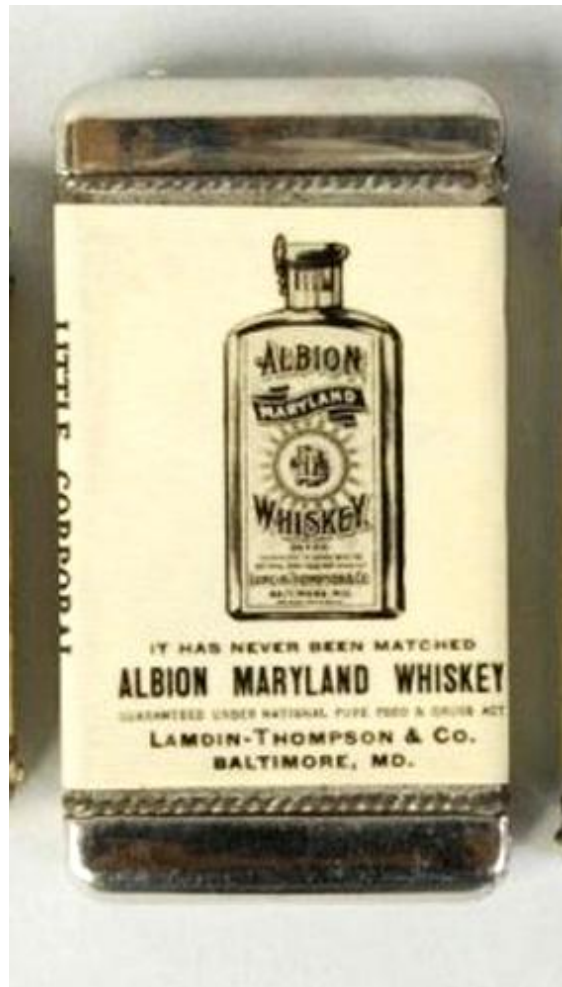


Fig. 9: Match Safe – Albion bottle

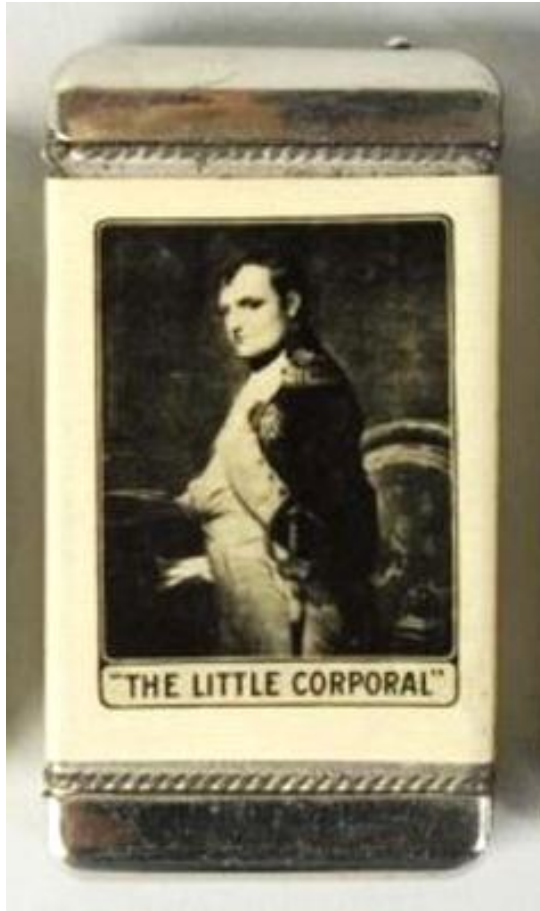


Fig. 10: Match Safe – Little Corporal

Although Fluharty’s name nowhere appears in Lamdin, Thompson literature, he apparently played a key role in the firm. His signature appears on several items of official correspondences I have seen. Moreover, his response to the 1910 census indicates that Fluharty was responsible for representing the company in sales efforts around the United States. Yet he continued to avoid the limelight. An exception was a story from *The Baltimore Sun* of March 28, 1904. Fluharty was relaxing at his home, 1807 Guilford Avenue, on a Saturday night when he heard a noise and went to investigate. It turned out to be a burglar armed with a knife. The intruder threatened David with it and got away. The newspaper headline read: “Drew Weapon on D.G. Fluharty and Made His Escape.”

Living with Fluharty at the Guilford Avenue address, according to the 1910 Census was his wife, Geogianna and both their children. By this time their eldest, William, had married and was residing at the home with his wife, Madelyn, and a grandson, David, obviously a namesake. Fluharty and his partners continued to pilot the Lamdin, Thompson firm through the early years of the 20th Century until closed down by Prohibition in 1919. David Fluharty died in 1922, age 64. He had been the “silent partner” in a highly successful Baltimore liquor dealership, one with nationally recognized brands. Although the firm and Fluharty are gone, the artifacts of those brands remain to remind us of a whiskey man who was able to hide in plain sight.

Upcoming Area Bottle Shows



May 29-31 Grantville, PA (Milk Bottle Collectors Assoc.)
 May 30-31 Butte, MT
 May 31-1 Santa Rosa, CA
 June 7 Ballston Spa, NY
 June 7 Raleigh, NC
 June 14 San Diego, CA
 June 14 Smyrna, GA
 June 21 Tallahassee, FL
 June 28 Reno, NV
 July 12 Richmond, RI
 July 19-20 Adamstown, PA
 August 1-3 FOHBC National in Lexington, KY
 August 17 Poughkeepsie, NY

June 21 Tulsa, OK
 July 12 Leadville, Co
 July 19 Houston, TX
 July 27 Altoona, IA
 September 7 Pekin, IL



Yes, Bill Porter even has some Pepsi bottles.