

The Story of Cyrus Noble Whiskey Bottles

By Kitty and Russell Umbraco

The Cyrus Noble story is truly a San Francisco success story, with roots in our California gold rush.

Cyrus Noble, himself, had tried his luck in the California gold fields, but unsuccessfully, and had returned to his home in Ohio. There, Cyrus took a job with the Freiberg-Workum distillery, in Lynchburg, Ohio, where his tasting and blending talents were soon recognized.

By 1871, he was made superintendent of the distillery, and at this time, a brand of whiskey was named after him. The exact circumstance is somewhat shaded, but it is said that Cyrus was a famous drinker, and one day, while checking the premium vats, he fell in!

Well, of course, after that, nothing would do but to name the whiskey – “Cyrus Noble.”

At the same time, in 1871, Ernest Reuben Lilienthal, an attorney just out of Cincinnati Law School, decided to go into the wholesale liquor business in San Francisco.

Ernest contracted with Freiberg’s and handled, exclusively, their products under their trademarks, as well as his own.

Ernest apparently liked the Cyrus Noble anecdote, and adopted “Cyrus Noble” as the trademark for his finest whiskey. Another brand that he made famous, and is still surviving today, is “W. A. Lacey.”

The company was initially called Lilienthal and Company. It grew rapidly, and by 1895, it was the largest wholesale liquor company in the West Coast.

The company’s interests were so diverse by 1895, that the liquor interests were split off and were called “Crown Distilleries Co.”

During this time, Cyrus Noble Whiskey became a Western favorite.

Here are two stories concerning Cyrus Noble Whiskey:

Cyrus Noble whiskey’s fame had grown far and wide. In May of 1899, when Admiral Dewey was informed of his promotion to Admiral of the United States Navy, he celebrated thusly – “He then reached for a bottle of Cyrus Noble, a sour mash bourbon, filled two glasses” – and with his friend, drank a toast.

rich mine, and was called the Cyrus Noble Mine, which yielded over \$250,000 in gold.

Crown Distilleries Co. liquidated its assets in 1917, anticipating prohibition, under the direction of Ben Lilienthal, Ernest’s son.

Ben kept the company trademarks until his brother, Samuel, acquired them from him in 1934 for Haas Brother.

With the end of prohibition, Haas Brothers, a wholesale grocery firm, went into the wholesale liquor business, and continues through today.

With the ever-increasing demand for figural ceramic bottles made for collectors, Haas Brothers brought out their first collectible ceramic figural bottle in 1970.

It was the Goldminer, filled with Cyrus Noble Whiskey, and accompanied with a story. In this case, the Cyrus Noble Goldmine Story, Searchlight, Nevada.

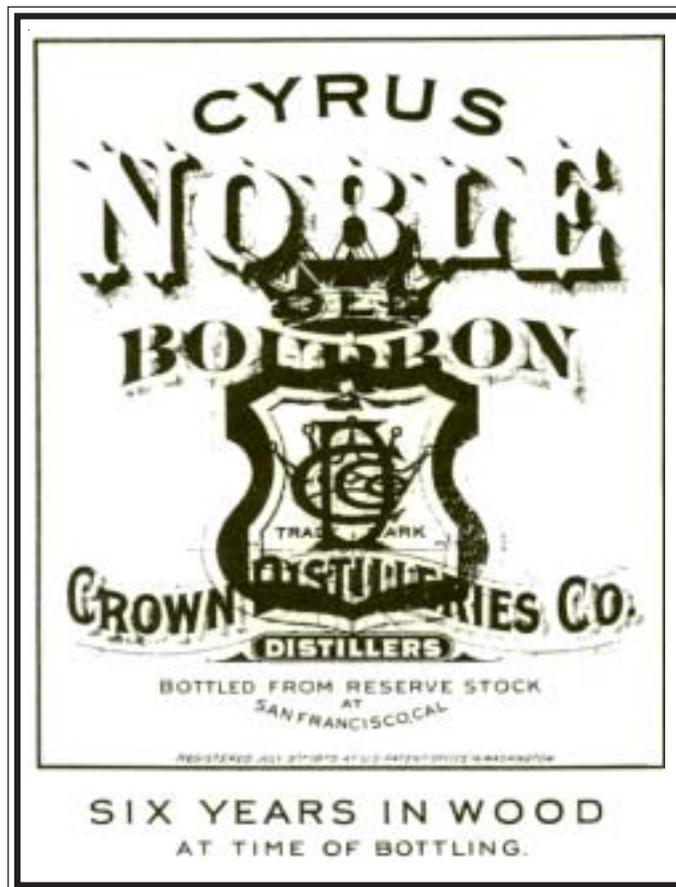
Since the first figural, acceptance was so overwhelming that Haas Brothers, under the direction of Ernest R. Lilienthal – grandson of the founder of Cyrus Noble Whiskey – has continued to produce the figural bottles of the finest quality at a rate of four or five each year.

This is only a part of the Cyrus Noble Story. Collectors of old bottles have about one

hundred different bottles for which to look.

For those who also collect old ads and bar paraphernalia, there are at least another 100 items related to Cyrus Noble Whiskey to search out and find.

And for the history buff, from San Francisco to New York, one can follow the Cyrus Noble trail and the Lilienthal family, who made it famous.



1901, Searchlight, Nevada – a rip-roaring mining camp: John Coleman, a prospector, came to town. As with many prospectors of the day, he was willing to trade his claim for a new grubstake, or whatever else he could get.

In this case, John traded his claim for a bottle of “the best bourbon in town,” which was Cyrus Noble Whiskey.

The claim was later developed into a