The COVID Bottles of 2020

By John Savastio

As we're all too aware, the COVID pandemic had a terrible impact on the world in 2020 and continues to do so into 2021. Many of us began to feel its effects in March 2020, when suddenly everyone was required to wear masks in public places. Some people lost their jobs while others were required to telecommute. Many activities were banned, and social events were cancelled. Worst of all, many people succumbed to illness and death.

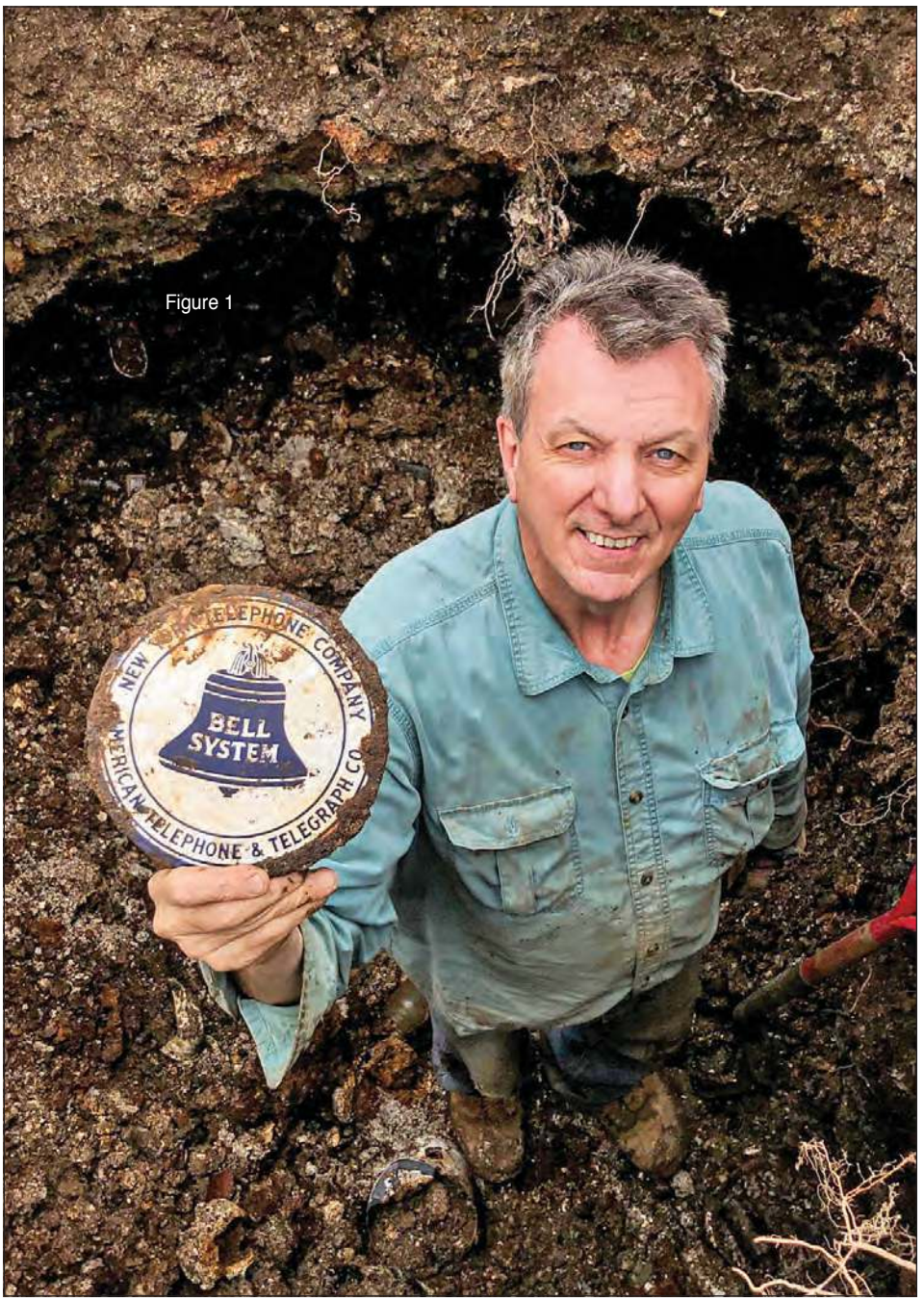

Figure 1

Sign of the Times

However, I don't imagine anyone was surprised when bottle digging was not included on the lists of forbidden recreations. (Dang, let's face it, most people don't even know bottle digging is a thing!) Late March 2020 also happened to be a bit on the warm side for upstate New York, thus the ground was sufficiently thawed for the initial dig of the year.

The season's fun started with a visit to one of my favorite old ash mounds on March 22, with my soon-to-be 19-year-old son Noah joining me. It was a productive day with a cobalt poison, an amber H. Clay Glover veterinary bottle, and a gallon-size Albany slip stoneware jug unearthed. Unfortunately, being early in the season, darkness hit upon us before we could finish the hole, and we had to make plans to return the next weekend.

And thus, the following Saturday, March 28, Noah and I returned to finish

off the excavation. While it was a cloudy day, it was bit warmer than the week before, with a high around 50, perfect for bottle digging. This dig, too, was going well with a few lady's leg whiskies, fruit jars and several soda bottles coming out of the ground, but nothing to get terribly excited about.

All that changed mid-afternoon when my shovel pried up something very unusual, at least for this digger. It was so out of the ordinary, in fact, that it took a moment for me to process just what the heck this small, disk-shaped, concave metallic object lying there seven feet down in the bottom of my pit could be. Was it, by chance, an enameled sign? That would be almost too good to be true, as in fifty years of digging, I had disentombed only one other (a very lovely LENOX SOAP sign, dug in the early 1990s and still hanging on the wall in my bottle room). Excitedly I bent over to pick up the object, and upon doing so, and flipping it over, was thrilled to see that it was a gorgeous Bell Telephone sign! (**See Figure 1**).

Measuring eight inches in diameter, the artifact is inscribed in the top arch, "NEW YORK TELEPHONE COMPANY," and "AMERICAN TELEPHONE & TELEGRAPH CO." in the bottom arch, with the iconic Bell Telephone logo emblazoned in the center. Wow, what a masterpiece of design! My digging year was off to a phenomenal start! The sign cleaned up well, with an acceptable, and somewhat appealing, touch of rust along the edge that adds character and age — or so I tell myself. (**See Figure 2**)

After the excitement of digging up a great piece like this, researching the history was the next best thing. Following are snippets from the Collectors Weekly Telephone Signs website, with some history and background on these fascinating objects:

"Unlike porcelain and tin signs designed to sell a particular brand of gasoline, bread, soda pop, paint, or farm equipment, vintage telephone signs are location-oriented, directing people to payphones in an era when the idea of a telephone in one's pocket was the stuff of science fiction."

The need to identify the locations of telephones goes almost all the way back to the founding of the Bell Telephone Company in 1877 by inventor Alexander Graham Bell, who patented his device in the United States the year before. By 1898, the first payphone as we think of it today — in which coins are inserted into a phone before dialing can begin — had appeared.

Figure 2

A lot of signs were needed to guide people to all those payphones. Some of them were designed to be hung on the outsides of buildings, to alert would-be callers that a payphone could be found within. Typically, these signs were made by companies like Lafayette Steel & Enamel Co. of Ohio and Ingram-Richardson of Pennsylvania, just two of many manufacturers of durable, weather-resistant porcelain signs, in which colorful enamel was baked onto sheets of iron.

As a rule, telephone signs usually featured only a handful of elements, the most prominent of which was the outline of a blue bell. In fact, some of the earliest telephone signs from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries were coated in blue enamel and shaped like bells. The words "Local & Long-Distance Telephone" are often found on these early telephone signs, as are the words "Bell System" and the name of a regional Bell System company, such as the "New England Telephone & Telegraph Company." Or, as in my case, the "New York Telephone Company."

Another website, Classic Rotary Phones Forum, provided more details about my sign, including the age: "The first Bell System sign was introduced in 1889. Because there was no enamel sign production in the United States at the time, it was manufactured in England. The American Bell Telephone Company was re-organized and became a subsidiary of the American Telephone & Telegraph Company in 1908. Around that time "Bell System" was added and American Telephone and Telegraph Co. and Associated Companies" appeared in a circle around the bell. Most had a white border along the outer edge. The 1921 re-design saw a smaller, slightly more stylized bell. "Local and Long Distance" was eliminated and replaced with "Bell System." American Telephone & Telegraph Company was added to the circle around the bell, either at the top or the bottom." OK, so now we know my sign dates to 1921 — not quite as old as I thought it might be, but still an absolutely captivating and highly collectible addition to my bottle room.

A Little Whiskey Anyone?

Late April found me at another local ash midden. This one is older but also harder hit. Fortunately, my nephew Michael had discovered a shallow, undug vein nestled in a patch of briar bushes that he shared with me. Michael was already having a very good day after pulling out an early double applied collar Warner's Safe Kidney and Liver Cure, and I, too, was doing OK with a local Hutchinson and drug store to my credit. However, the find of the day by far was a very petite barrel

whiskey that I scooped up at the bottom of the hole where dump ash met the clay bottom. I eagerly brushed the ash from the glass and was very pleasantly surprised to find that it was embossed: I.W. HARPER / NELSON, CO. KY. / WHISKEY (**See Figure 3**). The same embossing, in different order is found on the base. There are seven rings both above and below the embossed middle of the bottle. The bottle stands at 4 and ¼ inches in height, and the glass is colorless.

Following is some background on I.W. Harper from Wikipedia: "Isaac Wolfe Bernheim was born in 1848 in Schmieheim, Germany. His early education was as a bookkeeper and he worked as one for a while before meeting some cousins who had returned to Germany from America. These cousins had come home for a visit and Bernheim was impressed with the opportunities they had in America — opportunities that he would never have if he stayed in Germany. In 1867 he decided to emigrate to America and earn his fortune. He was 19 years old and with very little cash in pocket and stayed with relatives when he first arrived.

"Bernheim was fond of telling the story of his first employment as a peddler of "Yankee notions," small items that he carried on horseback to the small towns of Pennsylvania. He met with moderate success but when he wintered his horse after that first year, it died. He could not afford a new horse, so he bought a ticket on a steamboat to Paducah, Kentucky, where he had relatives and planned to start over as a bookkeeper for a whiskey company. When his brother Bernard arrived in Paducah in 1872, they decided that with the help of a silent partner, Elbridge Palmer, they would create Bernheim Bros. and enter the spirits industry. They sourced barrels of whiskey and created their own brands. The business quickly grew.

"In 1879 Bernheim Bros. introduced the I.W. Harper brand. They wanted a brand that sounded American. They knew that the name "Bernheim" was too German and Jewish to be popular with many Americans, and Bernheim saw an article in the newspaper about the famous racehorse, Ten Broek, which was owned by John Harper. He combined the horse owner's name with his own initials to create "I.W. Harper." It soon became their flagship brand. They had both a bourbon and a rye using whiskey sourced from Nelson County, Kentucky.

"The brand I.W. Harper quickly began to win awards in spirit competitions. In 1885 the brand won a gold medal in New Orleans. In 1893 it won gold at the Chicago World's Fair. In 1900 I.W. Harper won gold at the Exposition Universal in Paris France. In 1904 it won gold at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis and in 1907 it won gold at the Greater Louisville Exposition in their hometown. The brand became known as the "Gold Medal Whiskey."

"Bernheim retired in 1915 and the company was sold. It was a huge business by that time. In 1909, Mida's Financial Index listed Bernheim Bros as AAAA, valued at over $1,000,000. Isaac Wolfe Bernheim died in 1945 while summering in California."

I.W. Harper Whiskey was sold in fancily stenciled quart handled stoneware jugs, ID # B39 in Alan Blakeman's *Whiskey Galore* book. From what I could find online, it was also bottled in a wicker-covered ovoid 10" bottle, at least four different miniature stoneware whiskey jugs, and my miniature barrel. I could not find a full-size version of the barrel bottle. Too bad, a quart-sized I. W. Harper barrel in amber would be a beautiful bottle!

Incidentally, a summer and fall on the deck has initiated a photochemical electron exchange between the manganese and iron ions in the glass that has resulted in this once colorless bottle beginning a transformation to a lovely shade of amethyst (**see Figure 4**). Yes, it's back outside for another season of "tanning" now that the snow and ice have melted!

Figure 3

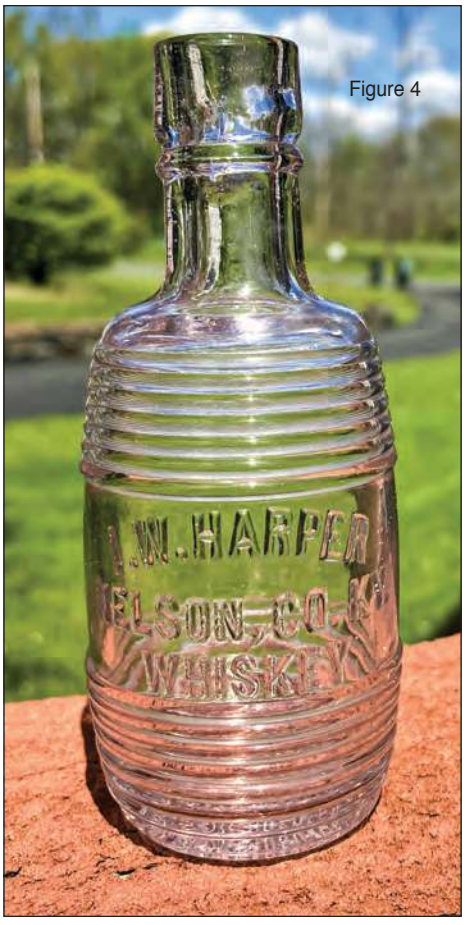

Figure 4

King of Dyspepsia

In June of 2020 I was digging in yet another of our area's venerable ash tips and was encouraged to find a fair-sized undug area. I was digging through the very top humus layer that caps the ash and was quite surprised when a complete blown-in-the-mold rectangular bottle popped out, just inches from the surface. And not just any bottle, it was a very attractive turn of the century S. Grover Graham's Dyspepsia Cure! This may be a common bottle, but in my five decades of digging this was my first, and as I do love cure bottles, this was definitely a keeper. As far as cure bottles go, claiming to cure dyspepsia (aka heartburn) seems like a relatively mundane assertion when comparted to other nostrum peddlers of the day, who professed to cure life-threatening diseases such as diabetes, rheumatism, heart failure, and even cancer. Judging by the number of Graham's Dyspepsia Cure, Remedy and Mixture bottles that are out there, it was a very successful product for at least a few decades, so it seems quite possible that it truly was an effective elixir for indigestion.

I was able to find entries for Graham in three Newburgh, N.Y., city directories. The first is from 1898, indicating this was likely the first year Graham was in the dyspepsia cure business. Oddly, this directory lists Graham's spouse as "Dyspepsia Remedy Graham." Was this an error, a joke or did Graham actually marry his product?

The next city directory entry I could find relating to Graham was from 1909. "Graham Co, G Grover (the) incorporated 1898, capital $100,000 319-321 Broadway, Henry Wilson M.D." Ah, so this confirms the company was founded in 1898. The $100,000 in capital in 1909 ($2,934,659.34 in today's dollars) indicated that business was good! I tried without success to establish the nature of Graham's relationship to Dr Henry Wilson.

The next and last directory I found with a reference to Graham was from 1928, with this simple tidbit: "Graham S Grover Co The (Dyspepsia Remedy) 75 2d." This would mean at least thirty years in business with his Dyspepsia Cure / Remedy / Mixture. A definite indication that S. Grover Graham may have been the equivalent of the Rolaids and Tums king of his day!

From a pamphlet titled *Symptoms of Disorder of the Digestive System,* by S. Grover Graham, published in 1899, I was able to find out more about our dyspepsia hero, S. Grover Graham and his remedy:

"You never need suffer one moment from pain due to dyspepsia or any stomach disorder. We give you our most solemn assurance that if you will try a bottle of our Dyspepsia Remedy, you will be entirely free from physical discomfort from the time you take the first dose, and that by continuing for a short time to take the Remedy you will be permanently cured."

"**Symptoms** - The attack possibly commences with a sour condition of the stomach, with heartburn, followed, as the disease advances, by that indescribable sensation of the stomach, a gaunt, gnawing ache; distension and weight, accompanied by a belching of the wind, with acids, eructations and nausea. The breath is foul and the tongue coated. There is constipation and, in some cases, intervals of diarrhea with intestinal colic and cramps. The sufferer has headache, with attacks of dizziness, and becomes peevish. There is an entire lack of ambition and inability to remember. Frequently palpitation of the heart and shortness of breath is present, followed by fainting or weak spells. In a short time, the patient has become emaciated, the face assumes a yellowish tint, and there is frequently a drowsy feeling, followed by fever and sweats. After the inflammation in the stomach becomes chronic, the sufferer is unable to partake of food without being subjected to terrible pain.

"**Causes of Dyspepsia** - America is the most dyspeptic country in the world. It is estimated that 65 per cent of the population of the United States suffers from some form of stomach trouble. There are innumerable causes to which this condition can be attributed. Among the most pronounced may be named: Insufficiency of the gastric juices, hastily eaten and irregular meals; sedentary habits or too close application to business; dissipation, viz., excessive indulgence in stimulating drinks or tobacco, late hours, constipation, partaking of improper kinds of foods without regard to their compatibility; and last but not least, rapid eating.

"**The History of the S. Grover Graham Cure** - The Proprietors do not claim that their preparation is a compound of herbs and roots, the wonderful properties of which were accidentally discovered by Indians, Gypsies, or other strange people. The original formula was in use a great many years ago by an eminent physician and surgeon in Ireland. Its production was the result of a vast amount of study and clinical experience. After the mixture had been perfected, it was used in private practice for nearly twenty years. The remarkable cures it effected gained such acclaim that the physician to whom it belonged made a specialty in treating stomach disorders.

"The preparation was first introduced into America about 15 years ago, not as a proprietary medicine, but merely in private practice. Mr. S. Grover Graham, one of the leading members of the firm, had suffered from a most severe form of dyspepsia for many years. He had consulted physicians innumerable in his search for relief. Night and day, he experienced the most agonizing pain. In his anxiety he tried every remedy that he read of, or that his friends recommended, but without benefit. About this time, he was fortunate enough to secure a couple of bottles of the prescription through the kindness of a friend.

"The result is best related in his own words: "It was at this time, I say, that my friend, who merely came over from

England for the summer months, and had frequently heard of my dyspeptic condition, produced the bottles that were to prove of such wonderful benefit to me. They were two ordinary medicine vials, having a small piece of paper pasted upon them, bearing the words in writing, 'a tablespoonful three times a day, or when in pain, 'and under that the request to 'shake the bottle.'

"That day, nine years ago, I was an emaciated wreck, weighing 105 lbs., and never having been free from pains for years. My affidavit, taken three months after the time when I commenced to take the Dyspepsia Remedy, states that I received immediate relief. The burning irritation, ever present in my stomach was allayed; the nausea subsided, the gas, with which I was distended, was belched up; the gnawing and weighty sensation passed away, followed by a most soothing and grateful feeling. The next day I could eat a little, and at the end of the week I was indulged in articles of diet to which I had been a stranger for years. After a short time, I could eat anything I desired without experiencing any inconvenience.

"It is owing to this experience that I undertook to introduce the wonderful prescription throughout the United States."

"The S. Grover Graham Remedy for Dyspepsia is prepared after the McDermott formula, known throughout Europe as specific for stomach disorders. We guarantee it to be identical with the prescription as used for many years by Dr. McDermott, a specialist in diseases of the digestive organs. We have purchased the sole right for its sale throughout the United Stated and Canada. Beware of imitations."

I hope you find Graham's detailed descriptions of dyspepsia symptoms and history of his miraculous restoration to health as entertaining as I did. Is it possible that his statement: "America is the most dyspeptic country in the world" is still true today? I for one consume many over the counter heartburn products, but I sure as heck wish I had a bottle of Graham's next time I suffer from an attack of dyspepsia!

The Graham Dyspepsia Cure bottles come in aqua, but mine is colorless, and like my I.W. Harper, it spent the summer and fall sunning on my deck, and it too underwent an ultraviolet light induced metamorphosis into a lovely amethyst (**see Figure 5**). It's going back out there this summer.

I never found out what the "S." stands for.

Figure 5

A Place Called Dyottville

July of 2020 found me back at the tip where I had found the I.W. Harper. I was working a major excavation that included removing a large overburden to get to the fresh ash. This multi-day project was going well with my having had already found scarce local blob beers, Hutchinsons, and drug store bottles, as well as a pair of cobalt beauties: an exquisite cone ink and an Acker's English Remedy. I was in the middle of my massive pit, at about four to five feet down when my spade popped out a very light yellow amber three-piece mold cylinder whiskey.

I liked the bottle a lot for its color, but this one was most likely going to go in the "for sale" box. However, I had just seen my friend Gary's antique bottle collection and for the first time saw his recently gathered assemblage of cylinder whiskies just like this one. What made them stand out was that many were base embossed with the glasshouse. Until that moment, I had not realized that base embossed cylinder whiskies were even a "thing," but I was impressed and thought to myself that yeah, I'd like to dig one of those! With this recollection in mind as I held the freshly dug bottle, I thought what the heck, check the base, there's always a miniscule chance it might have a glasshouse embossed there (even though I'd never found one in five decades of digging!). So, with the lowest of expectations, I flipped the bottle over, and was thunderstruck with joy to see "DYOTTVILLE GLASSWORKS PHILA A" elegantly embossed in a circle on the base (**see Figures 6 & 7**)! In an instant, this bottle's destiny had gone from the "for sale" box to a coveted spot on the backlit shelves.

Communicating online with the experts at the Facebook forum, Antique Whiskey Bottles, the consensus seems to be these glassworks base-embossed cylinders were made in between 1860 and 1880. Fort Trumbull Glass Co. and Whitney Glass Works are examples of other glasshouses

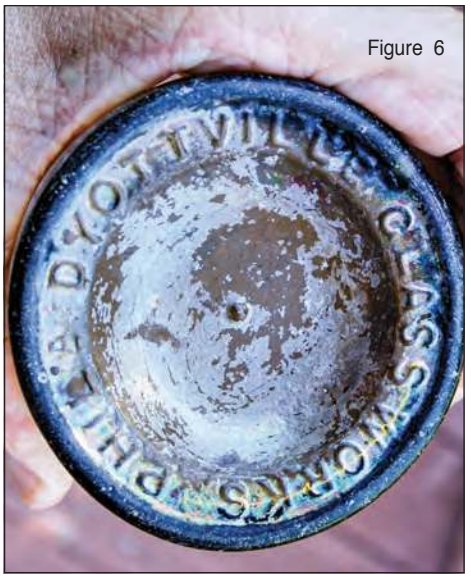

Figure 6


Figure 7

that made these bottles. They come in a wide variety of molds and colors, and some have the word "PATENT" embossed on the shoulder. There are also at least two Dyottville cylinders with seals on the shoulders, but these are exceptionally rare and very valuable.

This summary of Dyott and his glassworks comes from *The Society for Historical Archeology*: "Born in England in 1777, Thomas W. Dyott began his working life as an apprentice to an English pharmacist." He came to Philadelphia ca. 1805, making and selling boot black (shoe polish). Dyott eventually adopted the soubrette of "Doctor," although he did not attend medical school. He claimed that his grandfather was a Dr. Roberson and compounded remedies using that name. From these somewhat humble beginnings, Dyott built a large commercial sales force and set up his own practice where he gave free advice but recommended his own products. His business spread until he was selling medical concoctions at least as far south as South Carolina and west to St. Louis. He partnered with John G.O'Brien in 1815 to form O'Brien and Dyott and became concerned about finding enough bottles and vials to support his business. Thus, Dyott was soon involved in the glass trade.

The Kensington Glass Works was built in 1816, by Hewson, Connell & Co. "on the lot adjoining the Old Glass Works in Kensington." By 1819, the firm's name had changed to Hewson & Connell, and, in October of that year, they (along with the Olive Glass Works and the Gloucester Glass Works, both in New Jersey) advertised that Dr. T.W. Dyott was their sole agent. Despite his absence from the firm name, it seems that Dr. Dyott, the first of America's patent medicine kings, invested in the factory in 1818 or 1819. He evidently had the controlling, if not sole, interest by 1821, while Hewson was noted merely as the superintendent of the works.

By 1828, there were three factories and four a year later, while the firm built a fifth factory in 1833. In 1831, these factories formed the most extensive bottle works in the country, melting 4 tons of glass per day and producing 120 tons of product per year. The plants produced such wares as vials, bottles, demijohns and window glass. The firms first advertised figural flasks in 1822, although they had undoubtedly been made earlier by this and other factories. In 1833, with his glass enterprises enjoying great success, Dyott decided to incorporate them as part of a planned community which he named Dyottville. Because of Dyott's demands that his workers limit their drinking, the plant became known as "Temperanceville." Dyott noted at that time that "the articles now manufactured in the United States are superior in quality, workmanship, and regularity of sizes to any that can be imported."

Dyott opened the Manual Labor Bank on February 2, 1836, and even issued bank notes, at least one of which had a drawing of a glass furnace and Dyott's picture on the right. However, the firm ran into trouble in November 1837, when a rumor caused a run on the bank. By the fall of 1838, Dyott declared bankruptcy. On June 1, 1839, he went to trial for charges related to the bank failure and was convicted.

Interesting that while this was the end of Dr. Dyott's involvement with the glass making industry, the Dyottville Glassworks name was used by succeeding glassworks on the same site through roughly 1897. After Dyott's departure, the glass factory was again up and running in 1841, when a trusteeship was set up for Dyott's estate, and Henry Seybert acquired one (or perhaps two) of the old Dyott factories and began to make mineral water bottles. I can personally attest that bottles made at this site during this era were marked with the traditional moniker because I dug a beautiful cobalt blue soda from an Albany, N.Y. privy in the early 1990s embossed: "DYOTTVILLE GLASS WORKS / PHILAD.A / A. W. RAPP / NEW YORK // MIN-

ERAL WATERS / R / THIS BOTTLE / IS NEVER SOLD." This bottle dates to 1840-I860, and there are of course many other sodas and historical flasks from this era also embossed with the DYOTTVILLE signature. Seybert sold out to Benners, Smith & Campbell in 1844, with Henry Benners eventually becoming the sole proprietor. The last contemporary listings for the Dyottville Glass Works are found in trade literature from 1897. (There are some reports that Dyottville remained in business until the 1930s, but directories do not support this).

I was very happy to have had the fortune to dig this wonderful DYOTTVILLE GLASS WORKS jewel just for the sake of its beautiful form and color. But now, with a better understanding of the extraordinary history of the long-lived and prolific factory from whence it was produced, it makes for me a tenuous connection to Dr. Dyott and those who worked in the glass factories bearing his name. That enhances the bottle's appeal to another level.

That Good Ole Irish Whisky

It was Saturday, one week later, and a hot and humid July day. Though in one sense oppressive, the bright side in digging in the heat is I will be nice and loose. Besides, I was in a shady spot in a deep hole and I had plenty of cold drinks. I was still working my massive pit excavation, and two nice Hutchinsons, a large doll head, and an 1858 Mason jar had already emerged, as I continued to work my way deeper. Once again, just like with the Dyottville whiskey cylinder from the week before, my shovel suddenly and unexpectedly pried up and popped out my next exciting find, an Irish whiskey jug! (**See Figure 8**) Instantly in my hands and in front of my eyes, I was enthralled with the elaborate design of the transfer, which read "CRUISKEEN LAWN / MITCHELL'S / OLD / IRISH WHISKY / TRADE MARK / BELFAST / GUARANTEED ONE IMP'R QUARTR GAL 'N'" The extravagant detail that surrounds the lettering includes: a crown, a coat of arms, flowers and vines.

This style of two-tone, quart-sized transfer jugs were primarily produced in Britain between 1880 and 1920. In *Whiskey Galore*, by Alan Blakeman & Paul Bloomfield, the jug is ID# B426: "A very common jug, produced in such prolific number of variants, some of which are difficult to find. At least four different potteries made this jug with variations in the transfer. Sizes vary between 7 and 8 inches in height, with the larger sizes being one quart in capacity."

Figure 8

"Mitchell & Co (ltd) was formed in 1871 by William Charles Mitchell and David Mitchell becoming incorporated in 1883. They were partners in the Connswater Distillery (The Irish Distillery Ltd) along with Kirker, Greer & Co Ltd, and James Wilson & Son Distillers. The Distillery was built in 1886 and closed in 1929. Their famous brand was 'Cruiskeen Lawn' which means 'the full little jug' but they also produced the "Shamrock" brand.

The jug is marked, in an oval on the base, "Port Dundas Glasgow Pottery." Per Blakeman & Bloomfield on page 9: "The Port Dundas Pottery Glasgow was owned by James Miller from around 1845. On the 25th of January 1876, a patent was issued to James Miller for printing on unfired stoneware prior to glazing and single firing. The company became incorporated in 1905 and closed around 1930. They were by far the most prolific producer of transfer printed whisky jugs and were responsible for some of the classics: House of Commons, My Queen, Forty Second and Cluny whisky are a few for which they are noted. Port Dundee seems to have used only a single pottery mark throughout their history."

"The growth of popularity of blended whiskey coincided nicely for collectors with the perfecting of transfer printing on stoneware. A patent was granted to James Miller of Port Dundas pottery in January of 1876. This growth in the market, combined with the new transfer process, led to some superbly designed jugs. Throughout the 1880s, and most of the 1890s, the whisky industry was a boom market, and over thirty new distilleries built in the 1890s alone."

So how exactly did this transfer process work? How did they produce such exquisite, detailed designs on these jugs on such a massive scale? Per Wikipedia: "Transfer printing is a method of decorating pottery or other materials using an engraved copper or steel plate from which a monochrome print on paper is taken, which is then transferred by pressing onto the ceramic piece. Pottery decorated using the technique is known as transferware or transfer ware.

"It was developed in England from the 1750s on, and in the 19th century became enormously popular in England, though relatively little used in other major pottery-producing countries. The bulk of

production was from the dominant Staffordshire pottery industry. America was a major market for English transfer-printed wares, whose imagery was adapted to the American market.

"The process starts with an engraved metal printing plate similar to those used for making engravings or etchings on paper. The plate is used to print the pattern on tissue paper, using mixes of special pigments that stand up to firing as the "ink". The transfer is then put pigment-side down onto the piece of pottery, so that the sticky ink transfers to the ceramic surface. The paper is either floated off by soaking the piece in water or left to burn off during the firing. This can be done over or under the ceramic glaze, but the underglaze ("underprinting") method gives much more durable decoration. The ceramic is then glazed and fired in a kiln to fix the pattern."

Like most collectors of antique glass and pottery, I love rare, historical objects for my collection. However, an even more important quality towards my keeping and displaying an artifact is desirability. So, while the Mitchell's Old Irish Whisky jug may be "very common," I find its ovoid form, two-tone glaze, and elaborately designed and finely executed transfer extremely appealing (**see Figure 9**). Furthermore, while these Mitchell jugs may not be rare, it's the first one I've ever dug! It looks very impressive on my stoneware shelf.

Yes, My Master

It was Friday, September 11, 2020, a cool sunny day with a high of 64, and I had the audacity to take the day off work to dig for antique bottles in the middle of a deep Victorian rubbish tip. The day was going well. I had discovered a fair-sized undug section and had already found a Bixby barrel shoe polish in deep olive green along with two excellent local Hutchinson's. It was just after 3 p.m. when at about seven feet down my shovel revealed a large, teal-colored cylinder-shaped bottle. This looks like a good one, I said aloud to myself, as I felt my heartbeat begin to elevate. At first, I thought it might be a Saratoga. However, as I slowly chipped away at the surrounding ash, the two ribs at the base had me thinking master ink. A few moments later, when I was finally able to safely wedge it out of its resting place, my supposition was validated. There, as I held it up to the sky, I saw the big, bold lettering: "STAFFORD'S INK!" Hell yes, this one was a keeper! (**See Figure 10**)

Over the years, I have dug the set of three cobalt blue Stafford master inks, that have "MADE IN THE U.S.A." embossed on them. They are very cool, but this one is older, and a little more dazzling with its teal color and bubbles.

The following summary of Stafford's was taken from Baybottles.com.

"Samuel Spencer Stafford was a graduate of Union College, and Albany Medical College, but he never practiced medicine. After receiving his medical diploma, Dr. Stafford went to San Francisco in 1849, during the height of the gold-rush. He stayed there until 1854, when he returned to New York City. During this period, the NYC Directories list him as an accountant (1855-56) and an engineer (1856-57). In 1858 S. S. Stafford bought the trademark and stock of Conger & Field, who, while noted as the first company to manufacture writing fluid in the U.S., had suffered from declining sales."

CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE!

Join us next month as John Savastio continues his narrative describing his exciting finds. We'll finish learning about Stafford master inks, and move on to more fascinating discoveries that John unearthed in 2020.

Figure 9


Figure 10