

## A.R. Champney of Elyria and "Liquid Force"

By Jack Sullivan

Arthur Champney of Elyria, Ohio, was a beverage dealer given to hyperbole. Take for example, his advertising for his proprietary whiskey brand, "Gold Dust Rye." He claimed that it was been "pronounced by (unnamed) expert judges as the best" and prescribed by (again unnamed) physicians "in an article." (Fig. 1).

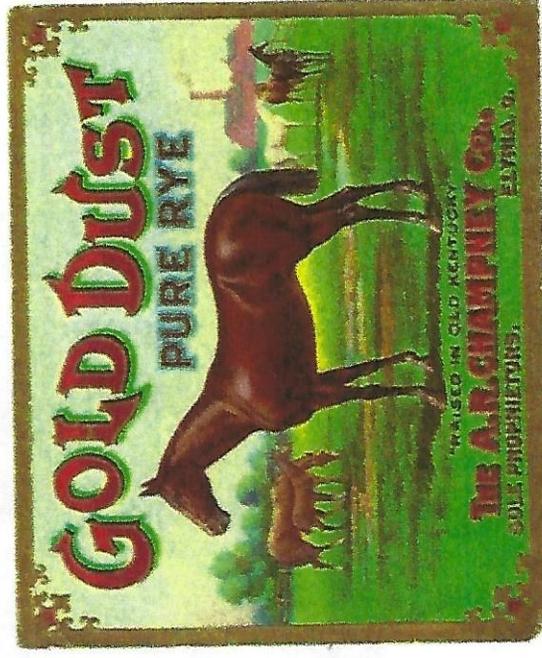


Figure 1

His exaggerations, however, could land him in court; accused of fraud in the sale of stock for a soft drink he invented and named "Liquid Force."

The Elyria man's huckstering probably should come as no big surprise. He began his career and ended it as a traveling salesman. Born in 1870 in Henrietta Township, Lorain County, the 1900 Federal census found him working in that occupation in Elyria, married and with one child. By 1904 Champney had invented and begun to manufacture what he called a "non-intoxicating carbonated health-giving tonic." He called it "Liquid Force," claiming it to be "The World's

**Greatest Health Drink."**

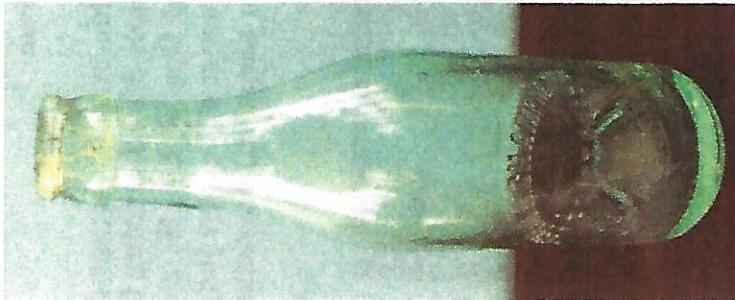


Figure 2

Liquid Force was sold in green glass bottles, likely manufactured in Ohio that carried embossing for "The A.R. Champney Co., Elyria, Ohio. (Figs 2-4). The label also bore the designation "Registered." Although he never bothered to trademark his proprietary Gold Dust Rye, in 1906 Champney trademarked the name, Liquid Force, and the design of the printed label affixed to his bottles. (Fig. 5).

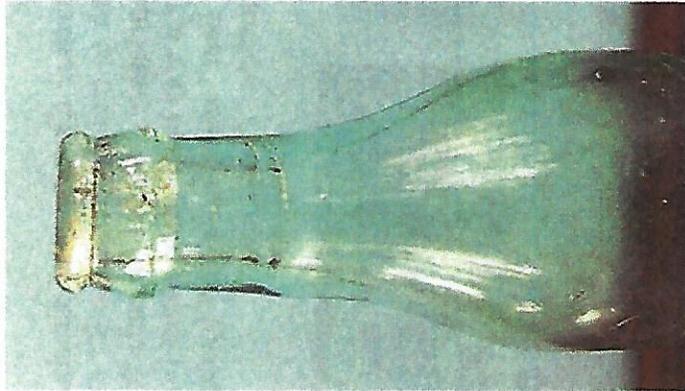


Figure 3



Figure 4

Liquid Force, and the design of the printed label affixed to his bottles. (Fig. 5).

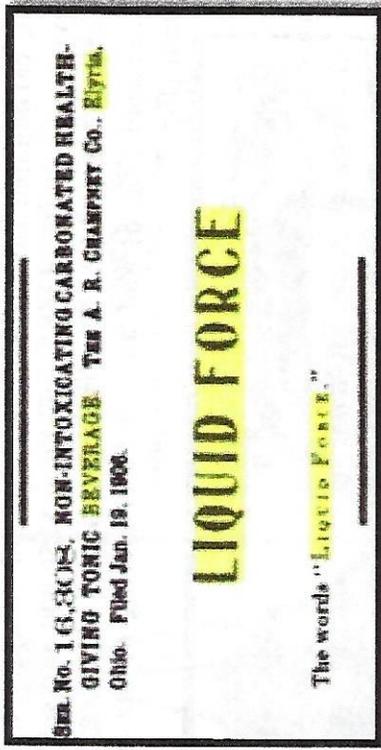


Figure 5

Champney claimed that his tonic was highly successful almost from the outset, with annual gross sales between \$25,000 and \$30,000, and that it had returned a 33 percent profit. So well known was Liquid Force, he claimed that it needed no further advertising and was sold on its merits. He held the "secret formula" for the beverage as well as the good will and trademark, valuing them at \$150,000. At least that is what he told potential stockholders from the Elyria business community.

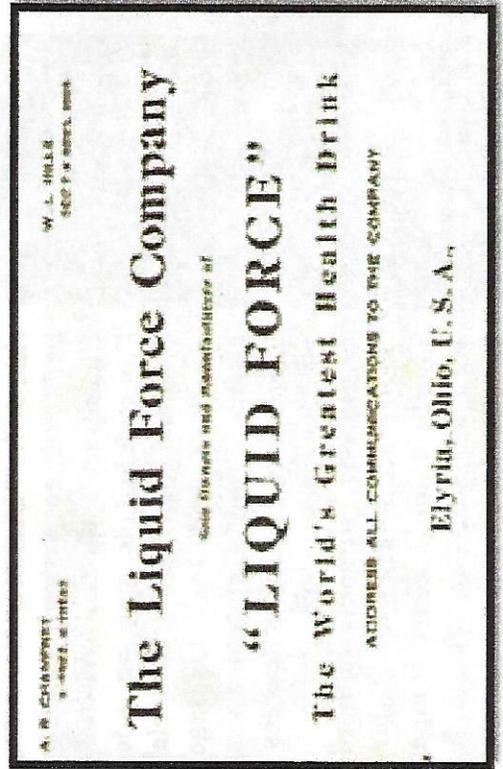


Figure 6

With their encouragement and help, Champney moved to incorporate the Liquid Force Company to manufacture and sell carbonated soft drinks, extracts and syrups. The initial investors capitalized the company at \$250,000 and sold other stock to the public. The resulting firm had an aggressive letterhead (Fig 6) and an artist's rendering of the bottling plant (Fig. 7).

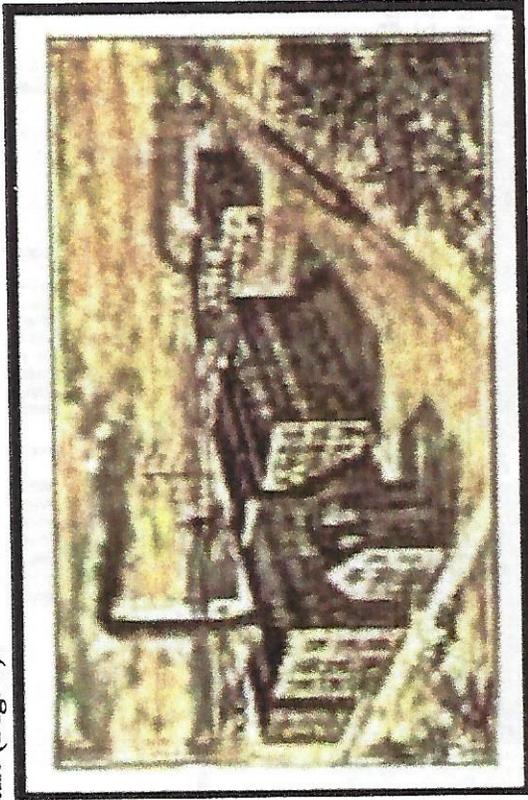


Figure 7

Among those purchasing \$1,000 in shares was Leonora A. Braun, who had been impressed with Champney's claims. When Liquid Force failed to pay an adequate dividend, Ms. Braun sued claiming that she had been damaged by relying on statements that Champney and his colleagues knew to be false or were made "recklessly, without knowledge of their truth or falsity." A jury in a Lorain County court sympathized with her story and found for Ms. Braun.

Whether it was a result of this



Figure 8

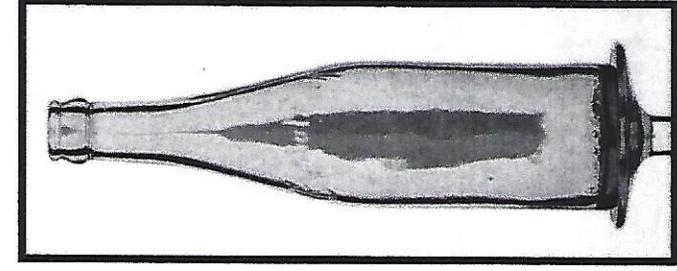


Figure 9

court case or another cause, not long after, when the Liquid Force Company was reorganized, Champney was no longer among the officers, seemingly forced out of company he had started. He retained, however, his local wine, beer and liquor business. As the only wholesaler in Elyria, he had some 32 saloons and cafes to supply in town and dozens more in the county. He was the sole distributor of Crystal Rock beer, a product of the Kuebler-Stang brewery in Sandusky (Figs. 8, 9).

When Ohio went "dry" in 1917, Champney, still a relatively young 47, moved to Columbus and returned to the occupation of "commercial traveler," selling wholesale candy. He never returned to the beverage trade, but eventually came back to Lorain County to be buried where he was born. Arthur Champney lies in Plot Y-R7a-16 in Elyria's Ridgelawn Cemetery; his gravestone is shown here (Fig. 10).



Figure 10

**Illustrations:**

**Fig. 1:** Gold Dust Rye label

**Fig. 2:** Champney green glass bottle

**Fig. 3:** Detail of bottle neck and lip

**Fig. 4:** Detail of bottle embossing

**Fig. 5:** Trademark registration

**Fig. 6:** Liquid Force letterhead

**Fig. 7:** Factory drawing

**Fig. 8:** Crystal Rock bottle with label

**Fig. 9:** Crystal Rock bottle with embossing

**Fig. 10:** Champney gravestone