

"BIG JUGS" OF NORTHERN OHIO

By Jack Sullivan
(Special to the Ohio Swirl)

Before plastic were even thought of, and glass was still expensive, the material of choice for larger containers of liquids was ceramic, usually stoneware. This was particularly true of beverages such as whiskey, but larger jugs -- from quarts to gallons -- were used for all manner of wet stuff. This article depicts nine jugs issued in Northern Ohio with brief descriptions of the long ago merchants whose names they bear.

The first example is from a Cleveland whiskey dealership called Mayer & Koepff that did business from about 1875 to 1902 at two locations, 506 Columbus Street and 950 Pearl Street. Its co-founder, Adolph Koepff was a well known local businessman who had emigrated from Germany in 1868, married a local girl, and raised a family of four. Working initially for the Weideman Company, he opened his own wholesale liquor business in Cleveland and ran it for 27 years. It was sold upon his death in 1902.

The Mayer & Koepff jug shown here (Fig. 1) almost certainly held strong drink. It bears a mark on the back that identifies it as having come from the Sherwood Bros. Pottery of New Brighton, Pennsylvania, one of America's premier firms at producing underglaze transferred labels (Fig. 2). Because no address is given on the container, it could have been issued any time between 1875 and

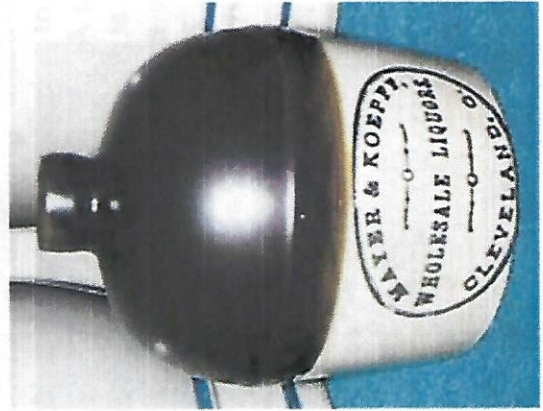


Figure 1

1902.

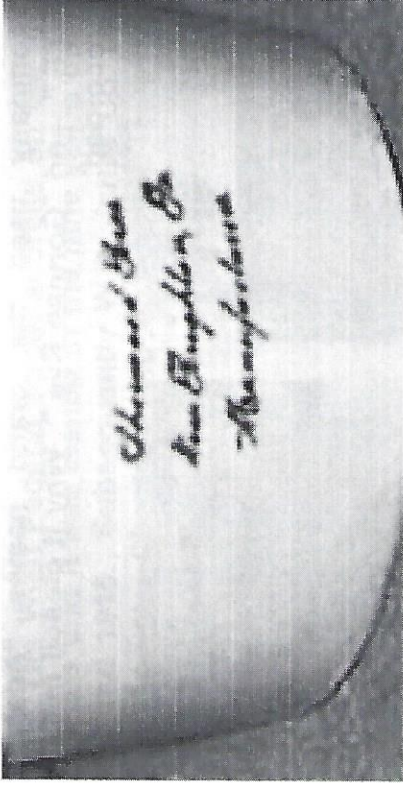


Figure 2

The next big jug, typical with a Bristol glaze white body and an Albany slip top was from Strong, Cobb & Co. (Fig. 3). This was a Cleveland liquor dealer who appeared in local business directories from 1882 to 1910. The company's flagship whiskey brand was "Puritan Club." It did business at several locations in Cleveland on Superior Street and in its final three years on Central Viaduct S.E. The address on the container dates this jug in the short



Figure 3

period from 1908 to 1910.

Similarly the address on the Guggenheim Bros. jug (Fig. 4) allows a reasonably close dating. That Cleveland firm did business at 183 Prospect Street for seven years, from 1897 to 1904, according to directories. Earlier it listed an address on Michigan

Street (1882-1895) and later on Bolivar SE (1905-1909). The company used the brand names "Adalyn", "B.W.O.E.", and "Gorman Rye." Why it closed in 1909 is not recorded.

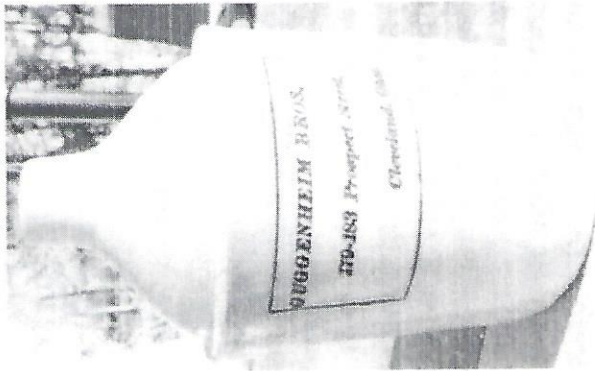


Figure 4



Figure 5

Nor is there much in the written records about the final Cleveland jug, that bears the name F. Moeller and an address of 1543 Lorain Road. (Fig 5). My research indicates that F. Moeller was likely a druggist. Because many druggists at the time sold whiskey, which was considered at the time to be a medicinal substance, this container in high probability contained some form of liquor. Almost certainly the jug is of pre-Prohibition vintage.

Youngstown and Sandusky Liquor Dealers

The next example is from Youngstown (Fig. 6). According to his biography, W.D. Jones was a local boy, raised on his father's farm and educated in Youngstown schools. He then became connected with the liquor firm of E. O. Jones. This Jones was not his father and the relationship of the two is uncertain. With the death of E. O. Jones about 1905, W.D. Jones

assumed control of the firm, changed its name, and was in business as the sole owner from 1906 until 1917. The West Federal Street address on the jug on indicates that it was issued in the nine years between 1906 and 1915. Subsequently W.D. Jones Co. moved to 2034 N. Chestnut Street before terminating operations.



Figure 6

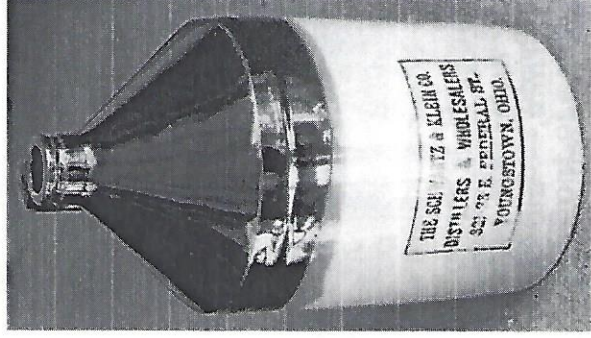


Figure 7

Another Youngstown liquor dealer, Schwartz & Klein were shown in directories as in business from 1904 until 1917. The firm used the brand names, "Regina Pure Rye," "Schwartz Special," and "Idora Club." The address on the jug, 321-323 E. Federal Street, dates the stoneware container to the initial five years of the company (Fig. 7). In 1910, according to directories, Schwartz & Klein moved to 401-403 E. Federal Street, it's last recorded address.

In my Swirl article of October 2011, I briefly discussed August Guenther, a self-described "wholesale dealer in fine whiskies, etc.." located in Sandusky, Ohio (Fig. 8). Subsequent investigation indicates that Guenther also was active in the wine

business in Sandusky, a major center for Lake Erie vintages. In 1895, according to state records, he was charged with adulterating blackberry wine with salicylic acid, pleaded guilty and fined \$200. The chemical additive, sometimes used as a food preservative, had been outlawed as toxic.

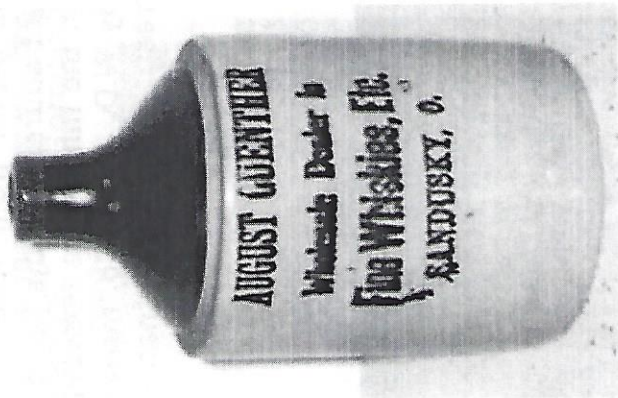


Figure 8

Two Jugs from Tiffin

Our final two jugs are from Tiffin, the first a brown glazed container with a paper label advertising E. B. Hubbard whiskey (Fig. 9). Hubbard was a medical doctor who was born in Chester, Mass., in 1840 and came to Tiffin in 1874. With a partner he established the Hubbard Drug Store, at the southwest corner of Market and Washington Streets. Dr. Hubbard was a pillar of the community, serving in the Ohio Assembly, active in the American Pharmacological Assn., and credited by a contemporary history for contributing to the "upbuilding of Tiffin." This jug is clearly pre-Prohibition.

The final jug from Otto Wagner & Bro. of Tiffin

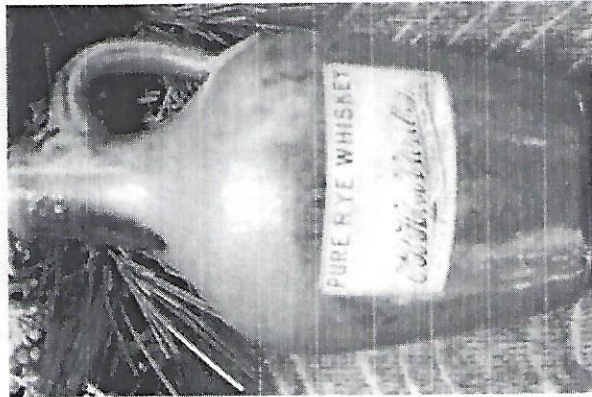


Figure 9

similarly can be dated "pre-Pro" (Fig. 10). Wagner is listed as a liquor dealer in the 1910 U.S. Census. Given the number of his jugs that come up for auction, he must have done considerable business over a number of years. Census data also indicates Wagner was born in Tiffin in 1856, that he was married to Mary Deville and had two young children. Other records indicate he died in 1945, age 80, and is buried in St. Joseph's Cemetery, Seneca County.

Those are the stories, some more elaborate than others, behind nine sizable jugs. Most of them likely held whiskey. No ceramic whiskey containers were issued beyond 1920 during Prohibition and only a few after Repeal. For that reason, and the addresses provided on the front of some jugs,

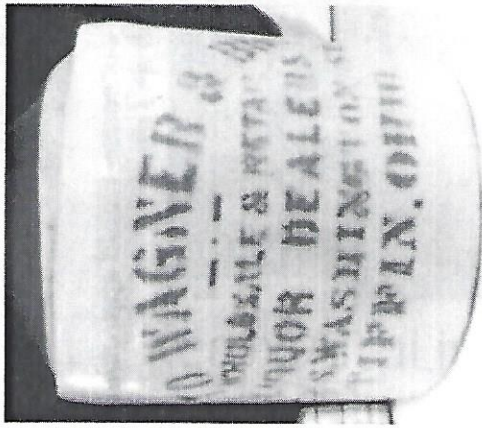


Figure 10

these items with some measure of reliability.

Notes: The material and images for this article has been obtained from a number of sources, particularly Robin Preston's "pre-pro.com" site. The Strong, Cobb jug picture is through the courtesy of Jerry Tebbano of the Ohio Bottle Club.

Illustrations:

Fig. 1: Mayer & Koepff jug

Fig. 2: Detail of Mayer and Koepff jug

Fig. 3: Strong, Cobb jug

- Fig. 4: Guggenheim Bros. jug
Fig. 5: F. Moeller jug
Fig. 6: W.D. Jones jug
Fig. 7: Schwartz & Klein jug
Fig. 8: August Guenther jug
Fig. 9: E. B. Hubbard jug
Fig. 10: Otto Wagner jug