

## Cleveland's Isaac Ettinger Discovered in a Whiskey Jug

By Jack Sullivan

Every bottle has a story, so it is said. When longtime Ohio Bottle Club stalwart Roger Hardesty bought a whiskey jug (Fig. 1) at the 2018 Baltimore Bottle Show, however, he could hardly have guessed at the tempestuous career of Isaac Ettinger, the Cleveland liquor dealer whose name appears on the stoneware.

Ettinger ran a liquor business and saloon in Cleveland for about twenty years, located at several addresses along Ontario

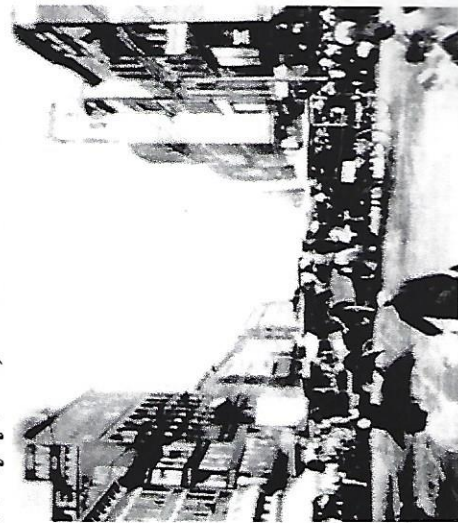


Figure 2

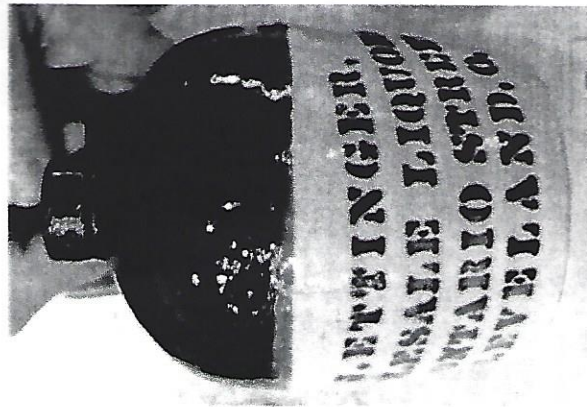


Figure 1

Street, a major commercial avenue (Fig. 2). In the process, through his own stubbornness or just bad luck, he seemed to attract trouble.

Isaac was born in Poland, then part of the Russian empire, the son of Joseph and Dora (Bedin) Ettinger. He immigrated to the United States as a youth and initially settled in New York City where he achieved citizenship in October 1867. He arrived in Cleveland sometime before 1870 when he was listed in business directories as a "tobacconist," making cigars and selling them out of his house at 109 Water Street. By 1879, however, he had left the smoking business and joined the drinking trade, opening a bar and liquor store.

Ettinger made headlines in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* when he, his wife Henrietta, and two of her lady friends, were forcibly ejected from a horse-drawn street car operated by the Woodland Avenue & West Side Street Railroad, the line shown here (Fig. 3). This occurred at 3 o'clock in the morning of February 6, 1893, and Ettinger was arrested. Taken to the police station at that hour, he made bail and the group was not detained. The newspaper commented: "The condition of the weather was scarcely propitious for a long walk at so early an hour, but walk they did."



Figure 3

The dispute arose over Ettinger's staunch refusal to pay the conductor fifty cents for the party to ride until

he was given tickets for them all. Claiming that he was sold out of tickets, the conductor asked for cash. Ettinger argued long and vociferously he would not pay anything until tickets could be purchased. That is when police were summoned and the party was thrown off the trolley. Ettinger quickly filed a damage suit against the company for \$2,000. The case hopped in and out of court for two years before being heard (Fig. 4). I have been unable to find the result.

#### An Old Case Called.

The case of Issac Ettinger against the Woodland Avenue & West Side Street Railroad Co. for \$2,000, was placed for trial before Judge Ong yesterday afternoon. Ettinger's case has hopped in and out of the courts for over two years, but has been delayed and hampered by technical errors. Ettinger's claim for damages is based upon a forcible ejection from a street car on the night of Feb. 6, 1893.

Figure 4

Over the years Ettinger frequently was in and out of court, suing and being sued. In 1881 he sued Rosa L. Block for default to obtain money and land. He himself had faced a bankruptcy suit in 1878. Later a Mathias Nickels sued him for \$10,000 when he claimed that a heavy sign had fallen from Ettinger's saloon, breaking an large arc light in front of the place, and a piece of glass had flown into Nickels' eye. In 1899 one Henry Russon, Ettinger's partner in a firm called Buckeye Hair & Fiber, charged in Cleveland's Common Pleas Court that Ettinger had converted to his personal use the company's entire stock and accounts worth \$2,400. Ettinger, he claimed further, had locked up the store and factory, thereby denying Russon entry to the buildings.

It is unclear how these suits turned out. Meanwhile

Ettinger was a family man. He and his wife, Henrietta (called "Yetta"), had two children, Charles, who later assisted Isaac in business, and a daughter, Debra. She married a man named Sands and gave the Ettingers a grandchild, Doris. It is hard to believe that the benign grandfather shown here (Fig. 5) is the same fire-breathing Issac Ettinger described above.

At the age of 83, Ettinger died in March 1925 and interred Section Lot 23, Grave 5 of Mayfield Cemetery in Cleveland. Buried next to Yetta who died 15 years earlier. Ettinger's headstone is



shown here (Fig. 6).

Figure 5

By the time he died he had been out of the liquor business for a decade, Ohio having voted "dry" in 1916.

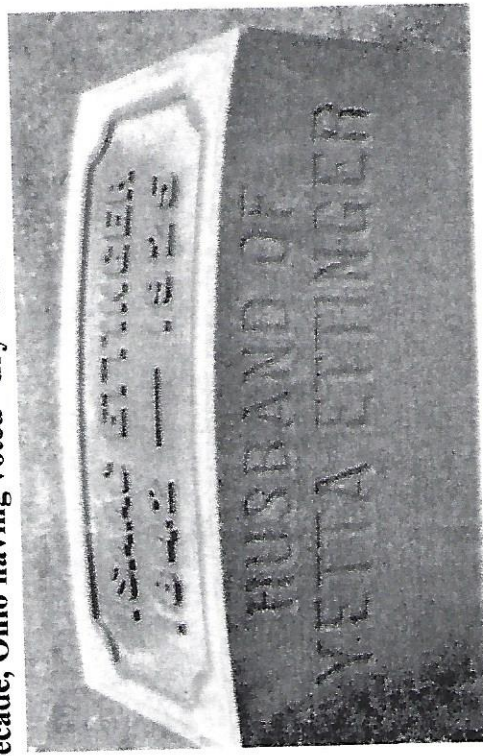


Figure 6

Postscript: I had been intrigued by the Ettinger jug, having watched one put up for auction earlier on eBay. I had never having seen one like it before. The bold cobalt lettering and the general appearance of the ceramic made an attractive package (Fig. 7). Comparing the eBay jug and the one Roger bought, it seems from an identifying chip on the lip that they are one and the same — indicating a certain rarity.



Figure 7

**Illustrations:**

- Fig. 1: Ettinger jug (with human hand)
- Fig. 2: Ontario Street Cleveland
- Fig. 3: Horse-drawn street car
- Fig. 4: Plain Dealer headline
- Fig. 5: Ettinger & granddaughter
- Fig. 6: Ettinger gravestone
- Fig. 7: Ettinger jug on eBay (no hand)