

BOTTLING WISDOM: THE DETRICK MOTTO JUG

By Jack Sullivan
(Special to the Ohio Swirl)

The idea seems to have started with the British. Beginning in the 19th Century and the reign of good Queen Victoria, the Brits made it a common practice to adorn bottles and jugs, usually of ceramic and holding some kind of whiskey, with wise sayings. American motto jugs are epitomized by the Detrick Distilling Co. of Dayton, Ohio. (Fig. 1). Frank Detrick, the founder, clearly was interested in providing advice both about life and about drinking.

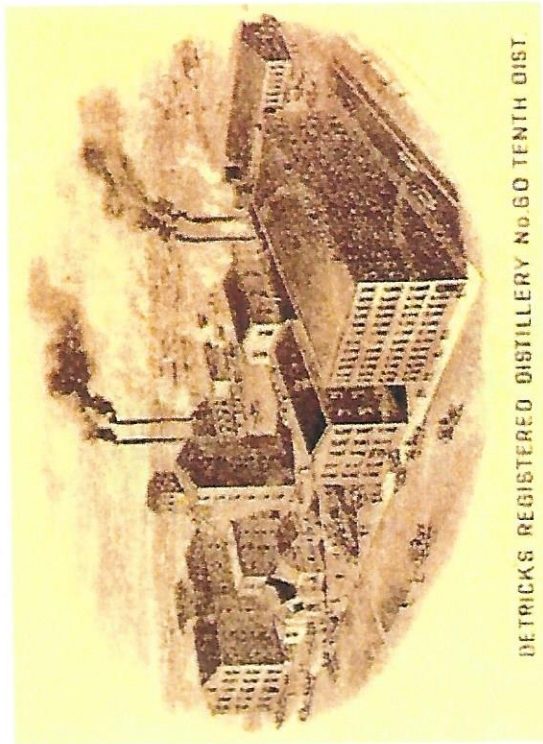


Figure 1

Detrick's pre-Pro distillery issued a dozen different motto jugs. They are almost uniformly 4 1/2 inches high and 2

1/2 inches in diameter. The containers are heavy stoneware with Albany slip tops and Bristol white glaze bottoms. No mark identifies the pottery. As shown here, they come in two styles. Both say "motto jug" but the older has larger type, often in uneven lines. The new style kept words within a rectangular label. They are part of a set of twelve, that can be divided into three categories: downright philosophical, pep talks, and slogans keyed to the whiskey contents. In his promotional literature, Detrick gave each jug a number. By his own ordering system, they are:

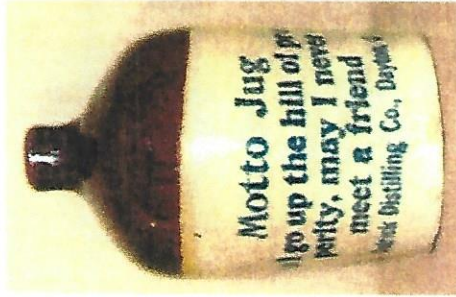


Figure 2



Figure 4

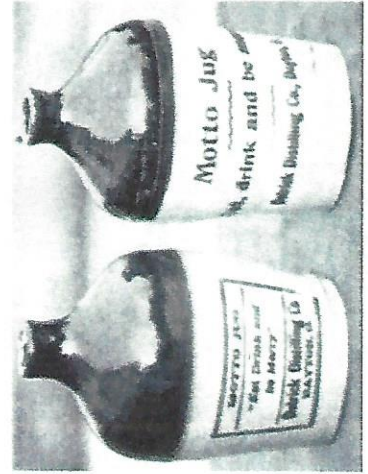


Figure 3

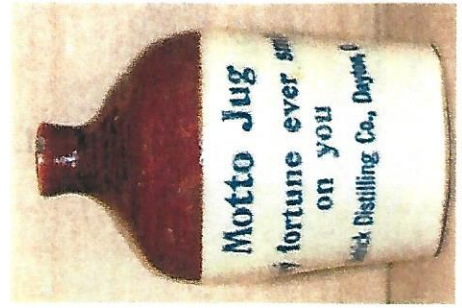
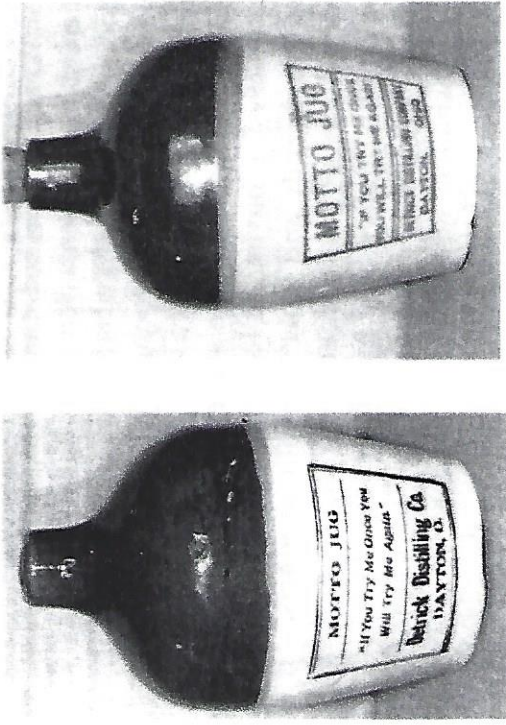


Figure 5



Figures 9/10

1. "As I go up the hill of prosperity, may I never meet a friend" (Fig. 2)
 2. "Eat, drink and be merry" (Fig. 3)
 3. "While we live, let us live" (Fig. 4)
 4. "May fortune forever smile on you." (Fig. 5)
 5. "To err is human, to forgive divine" (Fig. 6)
 6. "There is always more where I come from" (Fig. 7)
 7. "I am always welcome wherever I go"
 8. "A friend in need is a friend indeed"
 9. "When you see me you will always smile" (Fig. 8)
 10. "If you try me once, you will try me again" (Fig. 9,10)
 11. "Drink, weary pilgrim, for tomorrow you die"
 12. "Rye on toast (Try it - Its on the inside of our toast jug)"
- "Toast jug" was another name Frank Dietrick gave to his small ceramics. In an era before "collectibles" were invented, he was promoting these jugs as souvenirs. In a company



Figure 6

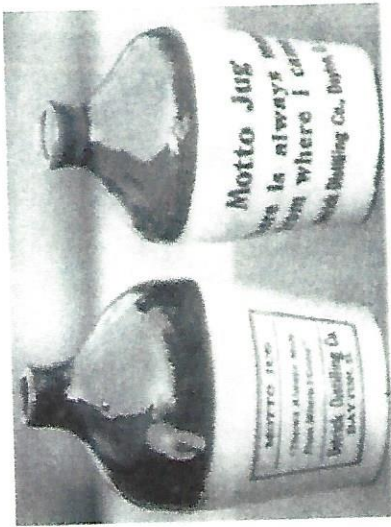


Figure 7



Figure 8

brochure he described them this way: "They make very acceptable ornaments for your library, den or dining room. Besides, each jug is filled with the celebrated Detrick's Special Selected Whiskey -- enough for five or six good drinks." (Author's note: Not really.)

Detrick provided these stoneware containers to mail order customers for buying full-sized bottles of his whiskey, rock and rye, brandy and other alcoholic products. If a customer ordered one gallon of liquor he received one motto jug as a bonus; three gallons and he could choose four.

Detrick prospered during the first part of the 20th Century as his products sold widely in the central United States. He eventually established a separate distribution depot in Chattanooga TN. City directories there list the firm in 1912 and 1913. Like other Ohio distilleries, production ceased in 1918 with the coming of statewide prohibition. Subsequently the Dayton firm concentrated on the milling trade under the name "Detrick Grain and Mercantile."

**Author's note:

Although there are 12 different mottos, unfortunately I have photos for only 9.

Editor's note:

Figures 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8 are not broken. It is a reflection from the picture itself.

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