

The Mobile (Daphne) Show Report

The Mobile Show is always an exciting one because there is always a chance that veteran New Orleans diggers will show up with freshly excavated finds.

This year was no exception.

Russ, Britt and I embarked from Quincy at about 4:30am, arriving at the show around 8:45 Saturday morning. We were tired from the drive (and lack of sleep the night before) but the prospects of a good show helped kick in the necessary adrenaline to keep us going.

As usual, most everyone had gravitated to the “New Orleans” side of the house, where Shank, Willie and Jim’s tables were situated, side by side.

The first thing to catch my eye was an absolutely perfect Pablo Eagle (the one with the fancy frame) on Shank’s table. He had cleaned the bottle himself and had done such a fantastic job that the bottle just looked like an attic find. All the fine wrinkles in the blob top were intact and gleaming. The price was “all in” but would have been well worth it. I was tempted to say the least.



Sitting next to this eagle was a cool black glass cylinder which caught my eye, but I didn’t really feel like I needed another piece of unmarked black glass despite the attractive price.

Just the same, I picked it up in order to inspect what I was sure would be an iron pontil. No sooner had I lifted the bottle off the table, I heard the word “puce” rolling off Shank’s tongue in that peaceful Cajun accent of his, and this caused the bottle to levitate upwards, while still in my hand, ascending toward the bright, high-pressure sodium lights suspended above.

Sure enough, this iron pontiled beauty was a deep cherry puce (seeming almost blood red as I later inspected the bottle against the clear, bright Alabama morning sun).



Most everything about the bottle screamed “Baltimore Glassworks” from the color to the pontil to the mold base, all except for the lip treatment. Still, as eclectic as the Baltimore lip finishes on 1850’s pieces tends to be, it’s as good a guess as any as far as provenance goes, and I was happy to add it to my collection.

As I made my rounds I picked up a couple more items, including a pontiled Carke & White pint and a Green pontiled F.A. Conant soda with a nice top.

I had thought the puce cylinder was going to make the show for me. Little did I know what was in store as I began talking to Jim about his early French Tessier Provost variant and another off-color lime citron French med—also very early. The two were lined up side by side in a little display case, next to an early piece of flint glass. After comparing the two French meds, I remarked—almost as an afterthought—“I guess that last piece is English.”



“No,” said Jim, as he reached in to hand me the bottle, “it’s American.”

Needless to say, when I held the piece in my hand, I was quite impressed:

Clearly, what I had in my hand was a piece of early flint glass marked “Baltimore” from the 1820’s. This was undoubtedly the earliest piece of glass marked Baltimore that I had ever seen, and would no doubt predate all of the marked flasks as well as any medicine I’d ever seen, including the [Houck’s Panacea](#)

which dates to the early 1830’s and uses a similar English style font, as seen here.

Later research revealed that the [Maryland Chemical Works](#) was established by John McKim in 1825. I would date the bottle to the 1825-1827 period, making it one of the earliest marked Baltimore bottles in existence, and of course, rare.

Once again, a rare Baltimore bottle found it’s way into a New Orleans privy, buried for more than 175 years before being unearthed, then transported to Tallahassee by way of Daphne Alabama, courtesy of the 2009 Mobile Bottle show.

I had a fine fresh shrimp “po-boy” for lunch, saw a few good friends, and met some new people, including a local digger/collector who brought a box of rare bottles to the show, including an unlisted

open pontiled Rushton and Aspinwald variant, and four unlisted pontiled squares in exotic colors, each of which I was thrilled to fondle.

Mobile is always sure to please when it comes to rare finds—some to hold, and some to take home. This year's show was one of the best!

Many thanks to the Mobile Bottle Collectors Club, and the attending dealers, for a job well done.