

2016 Mobile Bottle Show Report

This year's Daphne Bottle Show fell on the day before Easter Sunday, so it was a busy weekend, beginning with the drive from Tallahassee on Friday afternoon. Torrential monsoons plagued the entire journey making the usual 3 and ½ hour drive closer to 5.

Hydroplaning on the interstate with a trunk load of expensive glass is a good way to stay on edge, and by the time I arrived at the Hotel and quickly unpacked my bags, it was already time to head out to the Daphne Civic Center for the 3 pm dealer setup.



The show was sold out this year with a stage full of tables overlooking the usual layout below. Most every major Southern dealer was there, along with the New Orleans diggers and the Mobile locals. Despite the rain on the way there, Daphne was relatively clear during setup and most everyone stayed dry as they wheeled in the many boxes of Southern glass soon to grace the well spaced and uniformly white-topped tables.

I had my usual spot next to Robert H., and had brought a pretty good selection of fairly high-end repairs for sale, including 4 oversized Charleston sided sodas in exotic colors and a nice yellow green Superior Eagle with a perfect oversized matching top and plenty of original neck.



As I made the rounds and chatted with many old friends, I noticed quite a few good quality items for sale, including a number of slightly damaged bottles with very good prices. Before long I made my way to the Table of Joe P., one of the more prolific New Orleans diggers in attendance. There were a number of tempting bottles on his table, including some high value sodas (a deep green McIntyre and a deep olive amber Superior Eagle) which had some damage, but at real bargain mark downs.

Then it hit me. A dug bottle, never cleaned in an unusual 3-part mold form, whittled to death, looking to be the size of a fifth, or more likely a sixth, in a killer light yellowish citron topped with a completely WRONG short taper saucer lip. I've seen that top on Baltimore porters from the mid forties, but never on a taller cylinder like this one.

As I examined the very top of the lip, it had that "flattened, wrinkled" effect that the German glassblowers in Baltimore were famous for, as well as a nice in making "fold" where the beginning and ending lip edge were "joined", similar to what you'll see on many mid forties torpedos. Finally, the small iron pontil pushed up into the base was just too convincing – all these characteristics were screaming BALTIMORE!! Once again, I was confronted by an absolutely gorgeous mid 40's piece that was almost certainly a product of the Federal Hill Glassworks. And Joe was definitely in agreement as we discussed its likely origins.

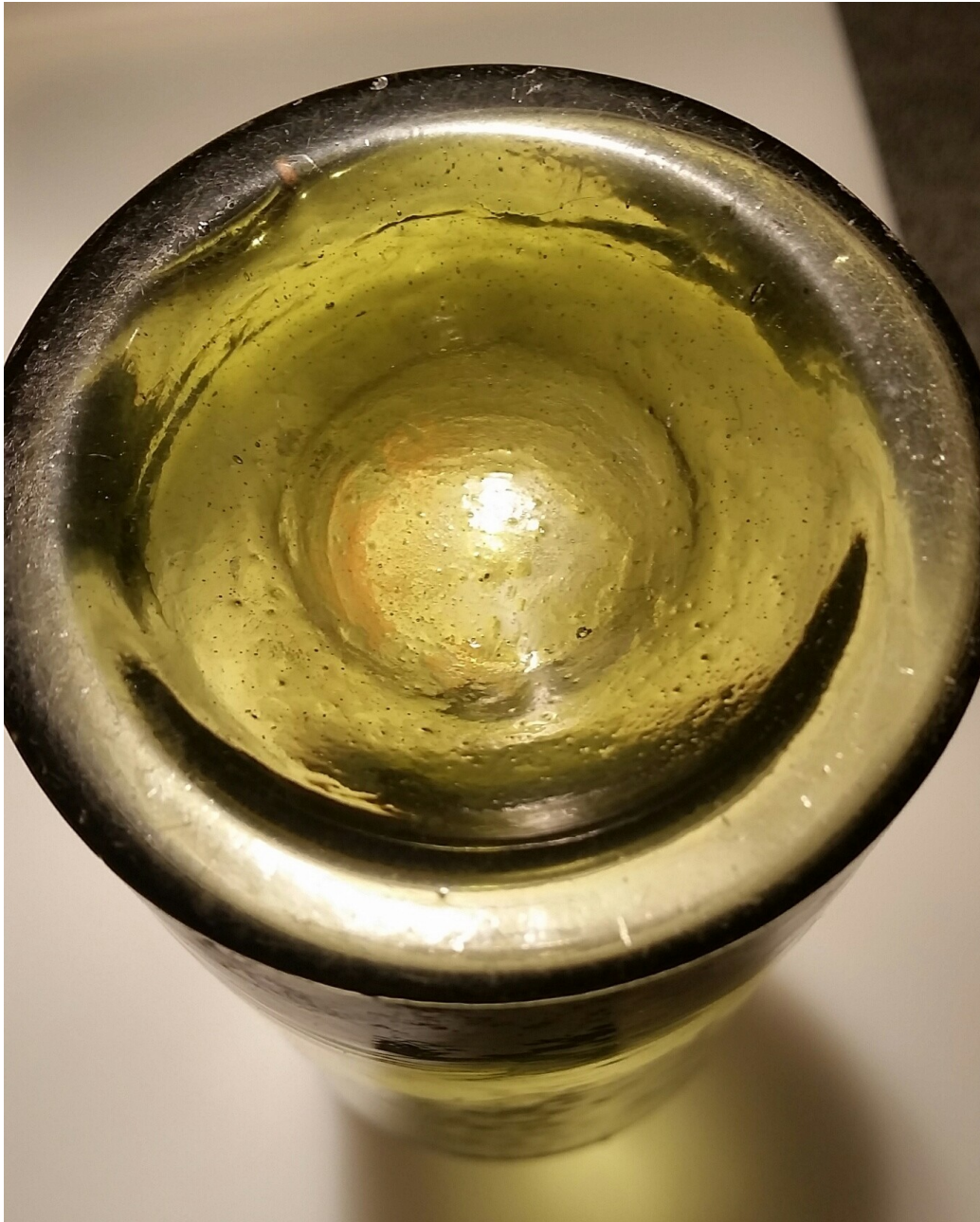




It won't be the first time (and hopefully not the last) that I've been able to add something exceptional to my collection from Mobile. Though I hadn't made the Baltimore show earlier in the month, I have never seen anything quite as interesting for sale there in prior shows from prior years. In fact, in the 28 years I have lived in Tallahassee, I continue to be amazed at the number of unmarked Baltimore Glassworks "sleepers" that turn up undamaged from Southern digs (and for good reason).

Online research of port records from the 1820's to 1840's conclusively prove that Schooners departing from the Baltimore harbor were destined for New Orleans far more often than any other Southern port. No doubt they were loaded with bottles made in Baltimore, and filled in Baltimore. When these were emptied, there was no local merchant to return the bottles to, and so New Orleans is a place where *many* examples of good Baltimore glass go to die.

This is why I love the Mobile show. It's the New Orleans diggers that light my fire every time!



In addition to this great find, I met a fellow Yankee transplant (Pete N.) who really took an interest in my Baltimore sodas. After much “bottle talk” he purchased my unique T & C porter in blue – an extensive repair, but a quality repair, and the only known example of this fantastic pontiled Richmond soda, formerly in the collection of the late Rusty Frye.

With 4 repairs delivered, 5 more picked up, a great sale, a great acquisition, a night on the town in historic Mobile (including a great local beer from Fairhope) and of course the traditional, world-famous shrimp Po boy from *Market by the Bay* ... this year’s Mobile Bottle show certainly DID NOT disappoint.

But of course it’s the southern hospitality of the shows principles like Richard K, Rod V. and Jim S. that really make for a hearty good time, every time.

