

PICTURING THOSE PRE-PRO WHISKEY MEN

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Not long after the 20th Century dawned, eight prominent distillery owners and liquor distributors from the Cincinnati area were featured along with other barons of industry in a book of caricatures. The drawings were by well-known American cartoonists and depict their subjects in representative poses. Shown here with related artifacts, the caricatures provide a fascinating look at these pre-Prohibition whiskey men.

First, some information about the three cartoonists represented here -- Claude Shafer, E. A. Bushnell, and an artist who simply signed his drawings "McNeill." Shafer (1878-1962) was a well-known political cartoonist for the Cincinnati Post. Even after his death a New York publisher printed "Claude Shafer's Cartoon Guide to Ohio," a compilation of his travel articles and cartoons. Bushnell was a longtime political cartoonist for the Philadelphia Evening Star and in 1925 illustrated a book entitled "Leading Men of Cleveland in Caricature." Research fails to provide any information on McNeill but he clearly was an accomplished artist.

Shafer's drawings shown here each have a hollow-eyed dog to accompany the caricature; Bushnell's feature a mangy black cat. McNeill seemed to delight in showing his figures with bulging stomachs -- perhaps the result of sampling their own products. In alphabetical order, here are the whiskey men:

GEORGE BIELER'S SONS

Among Ohio's many colorful distillers, the three sons of George Bieler seem to have stood out. Although they produced their own Bieler brand of corn whiskey and rye and T.W. Samuel's Nelson County Sour Mash, their flagship brand was Brookfield Rye. In some of their ads, George's sons declare themselves "The Brookfield Rye Men," a slogan repeated in the caricature shown here [Figure 1]. It is not clear which of the sons is depicted. But the other hands obviously belong to his two brothers.

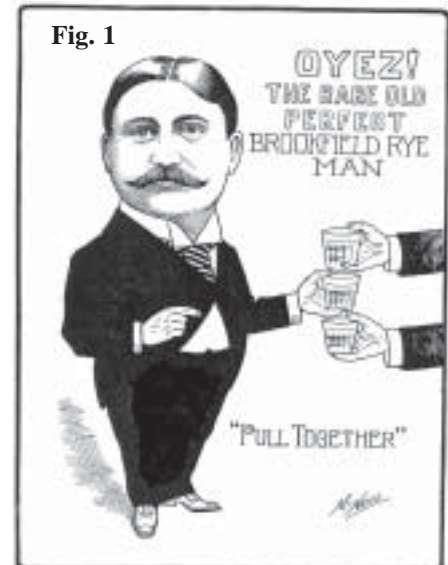
Dating the firm by directory references, their father appears to have begun as a wholesale liquor dealer about 1887. His first location was 343 Main Street in Cincinnati. The following year the operation had enlarged to two adjoining addresses, 343 and 345 Main. By 1899 the company had become Geo. Bieler Sons and had moved to 813 Main Street. The name change suggests that George himself may have died in the interim. In 1903 the operation moved to 707 Main Street. In 1905 the name of the firm was changed to the Geo. Bieler Sons Company. In 1913 the firm moved from Main Street to 126 E. 7th Street in Cincinnati, its last known location before the onset of Prohibition.

The company's flair was demonstrated in its decorative merchandising and advertising. Its liquor bottles featured embossed dragons; its shot glasses were elaborately embossed with designs in frosted glass. Just as important was Bieler's use of decorative ceramics for its whiskey. This includes Brookfield Rye in a miniature canteen and a 13-inch high half-gallon [Figure 2], each with a rich brown glaze and a striking embossed surface. These jugs have been reliably identified as a pottery product of the Monmouth-Western Stoneware Company.

GEORGE DIEHL

Although shown here [Figure 3] in a lordly pose, George Diehl was not the top gun of the Edgewood Distilling Company with which he is identified in this caricature. Cincinnati directories indicate that Diehl's firm, A.G. Diehl Company, had merged with the Paxton Brothers Co. to create Edgewood Distilling. An 1889 listing cites T.W. Paxton as the president of the firm, J.F. Filler as its vice president, and Diehl as its secretary and treasurer.

The business relationships between Diehl and the Paxton Brothers began as early as 1874 when A.G. Diehl & Co., Wines and Liquors, occupied a location at 32 East Second Street. A separate listing for the same address lists Paxton & Diehl, Distillers. From 1875 to 1877 the firm



name became Diehl & Paxton Brothers, to be changed to Paxton Bros. & Co., Distillers from 1878 to 1883. Finally in 1887 the business became Edgewood Distilling at the same East Second Street address. The company moved after 1891 to several locations on Main Street and finally, in 1906, to its last address at 417-419 Elm Street. Its distillery was in Lincoln County, Kentucky. The firm disappears from Cincinnati directories after 1918.

Edgewood Distilling produced a number of whiskey brands, including Edgewood, Bullied, Coney Island Club, Cuvier Club, Island Queen Rye, Paxton's Private Stock, Pearl XXX Rye, Purewater Rye, and Queen City Club. Shown here is a shot glass for Edgewood in old English script [Figure 4]. The firm also used Masonic symbols as part of its marketing, which may account for the fez on Diehl's head, somewhat out of place with the tuxedo he is wearing.

Fig. 3



Fig. 4

MAX FLEISCHMANN

Shown here at the helm of a sailing yacht [Figure 5], Max Fleischmann was a renowned businessman, sailor, world traveler and philanthropist. He had inherited leadership of the Fleischmann Company from his father, also named Max, and his uncle Charles. The elder Fleischmann had come from Austria-Hungary in the 1860s and, with the help of a Cincinnati businessman, created the cake yeast business that overnight revolutionized baking in America. About the same time the three partners began whiskey-making operations. They founded two distilleries in nearby Riverside, Ohio, about 1872, three years before young Max's birth. In time he inherited both businesses, becoming



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

known as America's "Yeast King." A multi-millionaire, and at one time the CEO of the National Biscuit Company (Nabisco), he would own 22 yachts during his lifetime.

As a whiskey marketer, Max was among the first rank, establishing Fleischmann, particularly its gin, as a national brand name. A principal brand was Magnolia, shown here in a 1909 ad [Figure 6]. That brand had been bought from S.N. Pike and Company, which first

sold it in 1849. Fleischmann also marketed a range of liquors in fancy ceramic jugs, as shown here [Figure 7].

But Max, who died in 1951, soon ceased to control the distilling operation founded by his family. It was shut down by Prohibition and subsequently Standard Brands bought the entire company in 1920. In 1940 its new owners bought out a distillery in Owensboro, Kentucky from which it produced alcoholic products under the Fleischmann name. Today some of those brands continue to be offered by the Barton Distilling Company of Bardstown, Kentucky.

SIGMUND FREIBERG

The Freiberg name loomed large in Cincinnati distilling circles for some 65



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

years. Julius Freiberg came to town in 1847 and, in 1855, with his brother-in-law, Levi Workum, started the Freiberg-Workum Company. After their deaths, Julius' son, J.A. Freiberg took over and ran the firm until Prohibition. In 1899 brothers Sigmund and Solomon Freiberg -- their relationship to Julius is unclear -- began operations in Cincinnati. The firm's initial address was at 58 Main St. -- an address also occupied by J.A. Freiberg. By 1906 Sig and Sol Freiberg, Distillers, had moved to 424 West Fourth St. -- their last known address.

As depicted in the cartoon [Figure 8], the firm's flagship brand was Gannymede "76" Rye. In Greek mythology, Ganymede (note the different spelling) was a young shepherd who caught the eye of the god, Zeus, who promptly sent down an eagle to carry him off to Mount Olympus. There he became "an immortal" and served as cupbearer to the gods. While there is no evidence that Ganymede served up rye to his clients, the fact that he was a bearer of spirituous drink probably made his name and image appropriate for the Freibergs' whiskey. Note that he and the eagle both show up in the caricature.

Sol and Sig were prolific in the number of their brand names: They included Manchester, Carnation, Fresno Club, Liederkrantz, Louisiana Purchase, and a dozen others. The company aggressively marketed its products with a number of giveaways and particularly is known for its heavily ornamented shot glasses and whiskey glasses. Those for Gannymede "76" feature a two-headed eagle [Figure 9], perhaps another emblem of the eagle who kidnapped the original Ganymede.

SAM'L KLEIN

Among Ohio's leading distillers was Samuel Klein. Known widely as "Sam'l," this Buckeye was something special. His caricature shows him sitting atop a large barrel with the confident look of a whiskey baron on his face and a bottle of Harvard Rye in his hand [Figure 10]. On his head is an academic "mortar board," symbolic of his Harvard brand. At his feet is a globe showing North and South America, indicating the wide area in which he marketed his whiskey.

With his brother, Sam'l founded his firm about 1875 at 340 Walnut Street. Soon the volume of business caused the firm to move to larger quarters at 49 Vine

Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Street. Further success forced a move to an even larger building at 17 Sycamore St. City directories indicate that about the same time Sam'l took Elias Hyman as a partner and the firm became Klein Bros. and Hyman. The partners did a vigorous business, eventually opening their own distillery in Kentucky. Their brands gained regional and even national attention, including Keystone Rye, Lynchburg Rye, and McBride and Independence whiskeys. The partnership lasted about 10 years. After Klein and Hyman dissolved it in 1897, Sam'l set up again as Klein Brothers, located at 121 Sycamore.

Sam'l's business activities were marked by flamboyant marketing. Klein's Harvard Rye advertising inevitably depicted young men in academic gowns and laid-back

attitudes partying with winsome ladies in low-cut gowns. A bottle of whiskey was prominent on the party table. Many Klein ads were in color, a pioneering uses of multi-hued lithography. Sam'l's use of ceramic containers for his whiskey was in this same tradition of flamboyance. He made use of the artistic genius of Liverpool, Ohio's KT&T Pottery to produce attractive containers for his Spring Lake brand of whiskey [Figure 11]. Keystone Rye was marketed in Fulper Pottery jugs. Both are seen frequently in on-line auctions.

Klein died in 1914, widely mourned as a leading Ohio citizen and philanthropist. He left the whiskey business to family members, his last testament envisioning that the firm he founded would exist well into the 20th Century. But it was not to be. Five years after Sam'l's death, Klein Brothers suspended operations because of Prohibition and never reopened.

EMIL M. MAYER

When Isaac Mayer began the family whiskey dynasty is not clear, but by 1883, he had brought his sons -- including Emil -- into the business and called the firm Isaac Mayer & Sons. It was located at 30-34 Main Street in Cincinnati. By 1886, possibly with the death or retirement of the founding father, this whiskey distributor became Mayer Bros. & Co. Thereafter the firm moved to two addresses on Pearl St. and one on Walnut. Its last location, in 1918, was at 7 Masonic Temple.

The flagship brand of Mayer Bros. was Hudson XXXX Rye, shown here in Emil's hand [Figure 12]. Other brands were Hudson Whiskey (slogan: "Merit Sells It") [Figure 13], Oakwood Whiskey, and Old Oakwood. Like other Cincinnati distillers and distributors the company had a range of give-away items advertising their brands.

H.R. MYERS

Showing Henry R. Myers sitting in a blizzard of letters [Figure 14], this caricature emphasizes the strong success at selling whiskey by mail that Myers & Co. enjoyed. Located in Covington, Kentucky, the company conducted vigorous advertising campaigns in popular magazines and newspapers of the day. According to the firm's 1902 Christmas card, the U.S. Post Office was forced to reclassify Covington from a second to a

Fig. 12



Fig. 14



Fig. 15



< Fig. 13

Fig. 16 >

UNEQUALLED NATURAL ADVANTAGES MAKE FULTON SUPERIOR

BOTTLING DEPARTMENT.
 ORDERS MUST CALL FOR 4, 6, 12 OR MORE BOTTLES IN EACH SHIPMENT.
 You are at liberty to assort your 4, 6, 12 or 24 bottle box with kind of whiskey as thereby liquor that you desire.

DEMIJOIN DEPARTMENT.
 ORDERS MUST CALL FOR TWO OR MORE GALLONS IN EACH SHIPMENT.
 You are at liberty to assort your orders. All shipments from this department are made in 2, 3, 4 and 4 1/2 gallon cases (2, 3 or 4 of these are gallon demijohns and 2 cases of 2 gallon may be packed in one box.)

CASK DEPARTMENT.
 NO CHARGE FOR PACKAGE. For guaranteed white tin cans, 30 gallon casks are bottled 35 and 42 gallon casks are bottled in loose casks. For all such orders of 25 gal. and over, we will allow 5 per cent. discount upon above prices.
 For the nearest branch at the household where Fulton Whisky is shipped in, wood, the seal is bored for spirit and a plug inserted, which may be removed without any loss.

FULTON PRICE LIST.
 All Express Charges Prepaid,* Boxes Free from Advertisement, and Safe Delivery Guaranteed.
 ACCEPT EACH INVOICE AS THOUGH IT WERE A REAL NOTICE, REGARDING OUR PERSONAL SIGNATURE, THAT WE WILL DO EXACTLY AS ASSURED IN EVERY PARTICULAR.

FULTON WHISKY
 Either RYE or BOURBON.

You are at liberty to assort in your 4, 6 or 12 bottle box any kind of Square named on this entire list.

3 Year Old	Per Full Quart, \$.75
6 Year Old	" " " .81 1/2
7 Year Old	" " " .87 1/2
9 Year Old	" " " .93 1/2
Selected Reserve Stock	" " " 1.25

Orders must call for TWO or MORE GALLONS in Each Shipment, at these prices:

6 Year Old	Per Gallon, \$2.50
7 Year Old	" " " 2.75
9 Year Old	" " " 3.00
9 Year Old	" " " 3.25
9 Year Old	" " " 3.50
Selected Reserve Stock	" " " 4.50

SUNDRY LIQUORS

PRICE LIST OF FULTON BRAND.	PER GAL. PER 1/2 GAL. BOTTLES.	PER 1/2 GAL. BOTTLES.
DOMESTIC WINES.		
Canada (California)	\$4.00	\$ 6.00
France (California)	3.00	4.50
Spain (California)	2.00	3.00
Argentina (California)	2.00	3.00
California (Spain—Five Year Old)	3.00	4.50
IMPORTED WINES.		
Port (Very Old)	3.00	4.50
Sherry (Very Old)	3.00	4.50
Malaga (Very Old)	3.00	4.50
Tosny (Very Old)	3.00	4.50
BRANDIES.		
California	3.00	4.50
Apple (California)	3.00	4.50
French (Maryland)	3.00	4.50
Imported Cognac XXXX	4.00	6.00
Raspberry (California, Old Own)	3.00	4.50
GINS.		
Imported (England)	3.00	4.50
Fulton Brand (Maryland)	3.00	4.50
Londonberry (Old Own) (Bottles in the gallon)	3.00	4.50
Londonberry Extra Dry (Bottles in the gallon)	3.00	4.50
RUWS.		
Malted	3.00	4.50
St. Louis	3.00	4.50
Imported	4.00	6.00
MISCELLANEOUS.		
Rice and Bran	3.00	4.50
French and German	3.00	4.50
Imported French Whisky	4.00	6.00
Old Whisky	3.00	4.50
Cherry Brandy	3.00	4.50
Blackberry (California)	3.00	4.50
Apple—In a barrel, being twice, when already processed and bottled	\$2.00 Per barrel, 24 bottles for \$50.00	

* BOTTLES—each shipment for Ariz., Cal., Colo., Ill., Mo., West. Va., Minn., Nev., Tex., Utah, Wash. and W. Va., must call for 6 gallons or 24 quarts, by freight prepaid. Write for Export Cases.

10, 20 and 40 Gallons.

first class post office because of the volume of mail the company engendered.

Myers & Co.'s major brand, Fulton Whiskey [Figure 15-16], had been pioneered by a Scotch-Irishman named Malcolm Fulton. The distillery he founded in 1817 had stayed in the Fulton family until 1887 when the entire operation was purchased by the Myers family, headed by Henry Myers. He continued to feature the Fulton Whiskey brand, which he registered in 1906, but cut off the jobbers through which it previously had been marketed in favor of distributing it directly to the consumer through the U.S. Mails.

Henry Myers and his company appear to have been ahead of their time in employee benefits. Their materials boast of giving employees leave for all holidays, hot meals for every lunch, and profit-sharing. No matter their philanthropic attitudes, the passage of the Webb-Kenyon Act forbidding mail order sales of whisky into "dry" areas seriously damaged their business. The coming of Prohibition shut the firm down for good in 1919.

SIDNEY PRITZ

The symbolism of this caricature is puzzling. It depicts Sidney Pritz pulling the cork from a bottle marked "Old Rye" while two apparent empties and a peanut litter the floor, while more bottles wait on a shelf [Figure 17]. Pritz was an executive in a firm which began sometime before 1866 in Cincinnati as F. Strauss and Bro. In 1875, it became Strauss, Pritz & Co., and later Strauss-Pritz Co.

Like other Cincinnati-based distillers and distributors, the firm advertised widely its principal brands of which Lewis "66" Whiskey --not "Old Rye" -- appears to

have been its flagship [Figure 18]. The firm moved its offices frequently with its final listing in 1918 being 703 Union Trust Building.

Take another look at them. Here are eight whiskey barons -- confident, prosperous, and seemingly masters of all they survey. We can imagine their pride at being depicted by well-known artists in a book devoted to leaders of industry. Yet, very soon they would experience a common disaster as their businesses were shut down, casualties of National Prohibition.

**Fig. 17**

Bob Snyder of Amarillo, Texas, who has labored over a lifetime to identify pre-Pro whiskey brands, distillers and distributors, sent these caricatures to me some years ago. Photos of shot glasses are from Robin Preston's collection. Robin also helped me identify the locations of several

**Fig. 18**

companies by researching Cincinnati and Covington directories.

Other information provided here was available from the Internet, newspaper archives, and a range of printed sources.