

## Tracking Cleveland's Black Cat

by Jack Sullivan

(Special to *Bottles & Extras*)

A young immigrant and former Confederate soldier came to a Northern city shortly after the Civil War to market a product named after a well known symbol for a bad luck. We might assume that his failure was swift and certain. But not if the Johnny Reb was Morris Ullman, the city Cleveland, and the product Black Cat Whiskey. Ullman and his extended family can be tracked through more than 50 years as they rose to wealth and business prominence in Northern Ohio.

A distant relative of the renown physicist Albert Einstein, Morris Ullman was born in 1835 in Baden-Wurtemberg, Germany, and emigrated to the United States in 1851 at the age of 16.

According to newspaper accounts, he first settled in Alabama and then moved to Guilford County, North Carolina, where he became a naturalized citizen in 1857. In 1860, like hundreds of thousands other Southern boys, he joined the Confederate Army and served for the duration of the Civil War.

The role of Jewish soldiers in the Confederate Army generally has been overlooked by historians. Shown here is a caricature of one from *Jewish*



Figure 1 : Caricature of a Jewish Confederate soldier

magazine (Fig. 1). More than 10,000 fought for the South. Gen Robert E. Lee allowed his Jewish soldiers to observe all holy days. Northern generals, including William Sherman and Ulysses S. Grant, by contrast would not.

### The Founding of Ullman Brothers

Morris came North after Lee's surrender and settled initially in Franklin, Pennsylvania, about 50 miles northeast of Youngstown, Ohio. There he met his wife, Lenche, a year older than he. They married in 1866 and their son, Monroe, was born in Franklin later that year. Soon after, Morris and his new family moved to Cleveland. There he was reunited with an older brother, Emanuel Ullman, who already may have been engaged in the liquor trade.

The company they founded dated its origins to 1866, but Ullman Brothers & Co. first showed up in Cleveland business directories three years later, in 1869, located at 69-71 Michigan St. in the Tower City area. From the beginning the brothers demonstrated a marketing flair. Shown here is a highly decorated, etched shot glass with the "U" initial, designating the firm (Fig. 2).



Figure 2 : Ullman Brothers' shot glass

In 1873 their 18-year-old cousin, Herman Einstein, emigrated from

Germany to Cleveland and was hired by the Ullmans as a clerk, bookkeeper and salesman. Herman's older brother, Leopold, had come to Cleveland earlier

**ULLMAN, EINSTEIN & CO.**  
**WHISKIES.**

Figure 3 : Ullman, Einstein & Company logo

and also likely was in the whiskey business. After Emanuel Ullman's untimely death in 1881, the two families merged their efforts and created Ullman, Einstein & Co. (Fig. 3). Herman and Leopold became partners in the firm with Morris Ullman as the managing partner.

### Enter the Black Cat

Almost immediately the partners began to merchandise throughout Northern Ohio and beyond its Black Cat Whiskey (Fig. 4) The label



Figure 4: Black Cat Whiskey bottle

featured the feline and declared the liquor to be "pure" and "old." How old is open to question. Ullman-Einstein were not distillers. They obtained their product from a number of sources, probably in Maryland and Kentucky. The firm may have been involved in "rectifying," that is, mixing a number of lines of straight whiskey into a blend to achieve a consistent taste, then putting its label on the bottle.

However they arrived at the Black Cat, the Ullman-Einsteins advertised it widely. (Fig. 5). They also featured





Figure 5 : Black Cat advertisement

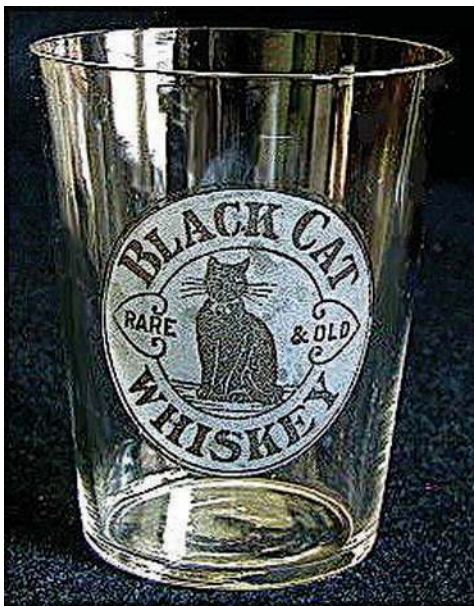


Figure 6 : Black Cat shot glass ("rare...old")



Figure 7 : Black Cat shot glass - fluted  
it on a range of giveaway items. The Black Cat was depicted on a variety of shot glasses. With its distinctive



Figure 8 : "Cat won't scratch" shot glass



Figure 9 : Black Cat shot glass



Figure 10 : Black Cat highball glass

whiskers and eyes, the cat projects real personality (Fig. 6-9). Ullman-Einstein also issued several Black Cat highball glass, including one without a picture (Fig. 10). I particularly like an inlaid cloisonné porcelain watch fob in black, white, gold, red and blue that features the cat and the Cleveland municipal



Figure 11 : Black Cat watch fob - front



Figure 12 : Black Cat watch fob - back

flag. (Fig. 11). Even though the item was not cheap to produce, the back of the fob (Fig. 12) indicates that it too was a giveaway.

Unlike popular superstition, the Black Cat brought the cousins good luck and, more important, prosperity. Outgrowing their Michigan Street quarters, in 1892 they moved to Sheriff Street, now known as 4th Street SE. The firm inhabited a building three stories high and more than a half block long. It stood across from Cleveland's New Market House, a hub of the city's mercantile trade. (Fig. 13). Signs on its building declared that rye and bourbon whiskies were among its specialties. Its letterhead (Fig. 14) claimed the company, in addition to being a whiskey distributor and "blender," was a distiller, with a Baltimore facility.





Figure 13 : Postcard of New Market House, Cleveland

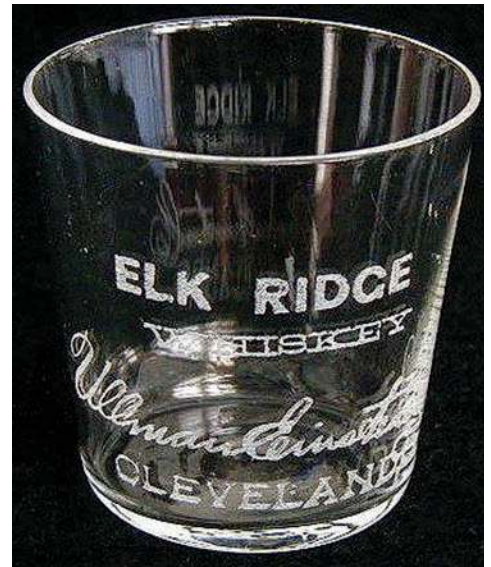


Figure 15 : Elk Ridge Whiskey shot glass

ESTABLISHED 1866.

DISTILLERS AND DISTRIBUTORS OF  
 SPRING GARDEN  
 MARYLAND  
 PURE RYE.  
 DISTILLERY NO. 27  
 BALTIMORE, MD.

**ULLMAN, EINSTEIN & CO.**  
**WHISKIES.**

SOLE PROPRIETORS  
 CLEVELAND, O.

BLENDERS OF  
 FINE OLD WHISKIES.  
 OHIO GRAPE BRANDY  
 A SPECIALTY.

TELEPHONES MAIN 2112. 154-156-158 SHERIFF ST.  
 R. 1154. OPPOSITE NEW MARKET HOUSE.

CLEVELAND. APR 2-1902

Terms  
 Sold to Messrs. Frantz & Beeldt, City.  
 Ordered through.

ALL CLAIMS MUST BE MADE WITHIN 5 DAYS AFTER RECEIPT OF GOODS.

4	gals. Alcohol	2 56	10 24
1	gal. Spirits	1 53	1 53
2	" Run Punch	1 50	3 00
			\$14 77
			9 32
			5 45

*Apr 25 By Cash Potomac*  
*Jaia May 2/1902*  
*Ullman & Co.*  
*Potomac*

Figure 14 : Ullman, Einstein letterhead

**Beyond the Cat**

Although the Black Cat was the flagship of the company, Ullman, Einstein presented a wide variety of brands to its clientele. The firm also was assiduous in registering many of them with the Federal Government to prevent trademark infringement. In 1905, it registered J. Gibbons, McGibben, Union Springs and Euclid

Club whiskeys. In 1906, Black Cat, D.T. Gilmore and Son, UECO Old Nectar, and Wedding March. In 1907, Brook Trout and Walnut Creek, and finally in 1911, Mor Lee. No record exists of its the firm having registered other known Ullman-Einstein brands like Elk Ridge, B.O.E., and Adalyn. U-E also carried labels from other whiskey dealers, notably Spring Garden, with



Figure 16 : Wedding March shot glass - detail



Figure 17 : B.O.E. Whiskey shot glass  
 Cincinnati origins, and James River, from Richmond, Virginia.

The firm issued shot glasses for many of these whiskeys, most of them





Figure 18 : Spring Garden Rye shot glass

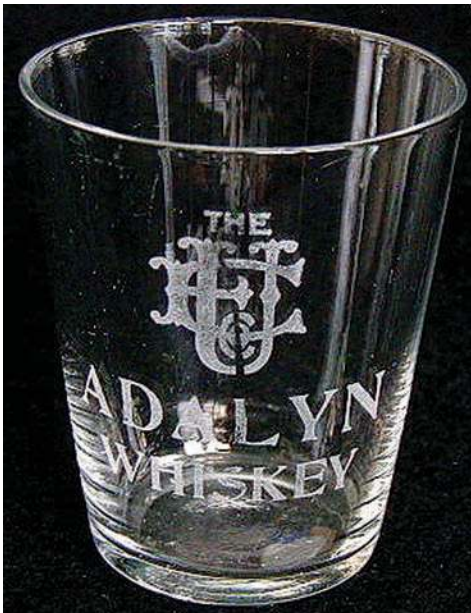


Figure 19 : Adalyn Whiskey shot glass



Figure 20 : Elk Ridge tip tray

bearing the distinctive etched U-E monogram (Figs. 15-19). A giveaway tip tray for Elk Ridge Whiskey featured a famous British painting of a stag (Fig.



Figure 21 : Walnut Creek Whiskey bottle



Figure 22 : Ventura California Port Wine

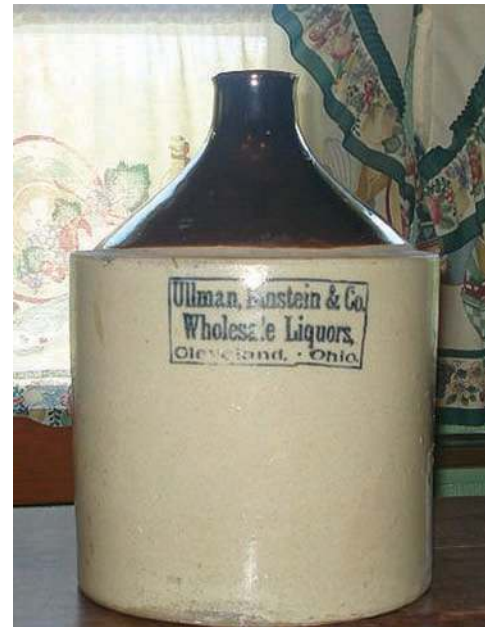


Figure 23 : Ullman, Einstein ceramic whiskey jug

20). For the most part, Ullman-Einstein marketed its products in bottles (Figs. 21,22) but from time to time used ceramic jugs (Fig. 23).

#### Exclusion and Philanthropy

Two U-E brands tell a special story. During the latter part of the 19th Century most Jews in Cleveland, like the Ullmans and the Einsteins, were immigrants from Germany. Numbering only about 3,500, they were generally accepted among the city's heavily German population. Leopold Einstein, for example, strongly championed German cultural interests. In 1888 he was a leading fundraiser for the construction of a new Germania Hall in Cleveland (Fig. 24).

Yet Jewish families faced discrimination from exclusive business and country clubs such as the Union Club of Cleveland and the Century Club. In 1872, twenty-two Jewish businessmen, Morris Ullman probably among them, founded the Excelsior Club. After meeting at several locations, in 1908 the club moved into a new home on Euclid Ave. in the Wade Park district (Fig. 25). The building today is Thwing Hall at Case-Western Reserve University. Both the Ullmans and Einsteins were active members of the club. Perhaps as a result, one of the company whiskey brands was



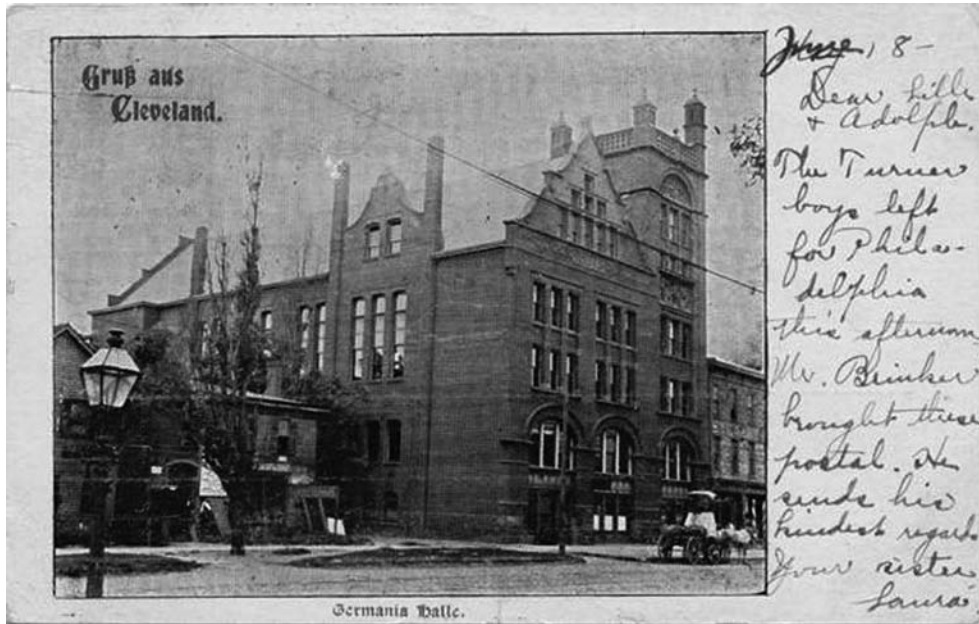


Figure 24 : Postcard view of Germania Hall, Cleveland



Figure 25 : The Excelsior Club, Cleveland

named Excelsior Club. Another U-E whiskey brand, perhaps ironically, was named for one of the exclusionary organizations, Cleveland's Euclid Club (Fig. 26).

Beyond the remarkable business acumen of these cousins was their notable community involvement. The commitment to charitable work and preserving their religious heritage was strong among these early immigrants. In 1873, Morris Ullman was listed as a board member of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. He was given special mention in the 1899 American Jewish Yearbook for his work on behalf of his fellow religionists. Herman Einstein was a board member of Tifereth Israel Congregation. This group had broken away from a more conservative Cleveland synagogue to found their own "reformed" temple.

He also served as treasurer of the Mt. Sinai Hospital, treasurer of the Hebrew Free Loan Assn., and was a member of the Federation of Jewish Charities.

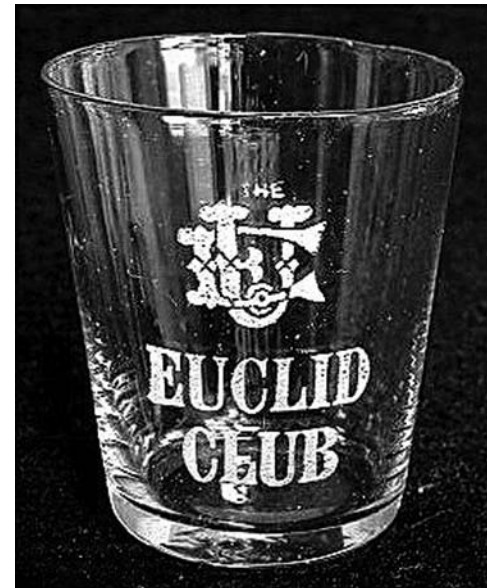


Figure 26 : Euclid Club shot glass

### The Firm Grows and Changes

As the firm grew and flourished, important events were occurring in the lives of two families. Monroe Ullman, educated in Cleveland schools, early joined U-E as a salesman and "traveling agent." In 1892, he married Florence Fuld in Albany, New York. They would have two children. In 1893, Lenche Ullman, mother of Monroe and wife of Morris, died at the age of 59. Jacob Einstein, a son of Leopold, joined the firm during this period.

In 1904, U-E incorporated for the first time. Morris Ullman and Leopold Einstein were its principal executives. Herman Einstein was named secretary and Monroe Ullman, a vice president. The next year the company name changed to Ullman-Einstein, the comma replaced by a hyphen. In 1908 Morris died at age 73. The same year the firm moved to 657-659 Bolivar Ave. SE. Four years later Leopold Einstein died and Herman Einstein succeeded him as president and treasurer. Both Jacob Einstein and Monroe Ullman, sons of the founders, became company officers.

In 1914, the extended family received recognition from their community when all three of the Ullman-Einstein leadership were featured in a 1914 "Book of Clevelanders" that chronicled the city's leading businessmen. Jacob Einstein was singled out as a member

of the board of the National Liquor Dealers Association and a trustee of the Ohio Wine and Spirits Assn. He clearly had become a state and national leader in the distilling industry.

This generation continued the philanthropic work of their parents. Monroe Ullman was a member of the Hebrew Relief Association, the Hebrew Free Loan Association, and the Wilson Avenue Temple. Jacob Einstein was a trustee of the Monteflor Home for the Old in Cleveland. In 1903, he married Ruth Weiner, a local Cleveland woman. She became a well-known leader in the Jewish community for 50 years, responsible for initiating a number of successful charitable enterprises.

### Demise of the Black Cat

Unlike those felines said to have nine lives, Ullman-Einstein's Black Cat had only one -- or maybe two.

Prohibition in Ohio and in the Nation dealt the kitty a death blow. Ullman-Einstein went out of business in 1919, taking with it the cat and all the other U-E brands.

Two family members did not live to see Repeal. Jacob Einstein died in 1919, young at 43. His uncle Herman followed in 1922. In the 1920s Monroe Ullman founded a security dealer and investment firm of which he was president. He continued to be a recognized business figure in Cleveland until his death in 1938 at age 72. His wife, Florence, would live another 25 years as his widow, dying in 1963.

Black Cat Whiskey has had something of a second life. A labeled bottle sold recently on eBay for \$160. That brand and other Ullman-Einstein products also live on in a multitude of collectible shot glasses, watch fobs, tip trays, bottles and jugs. They remind us of an immigrant family who rose to

prominence in their adopted country and community through hard work and imagination. For them the Black Cat proved to be a symbol of fame and fortune.

**Notes:** Information about Ullman-Einstein came from a variety of Internet and other sources, a principal one being [www.pre-pro.com](http://www.pre-pro.com). The force behind that site is Robin Preston who has devoted himself with great energy to preserving the pre-Prohibition data about America's whiskey industry. Illustrations of Ullman-Einstein items largely are through his courtesy. The "Encyclopedia of Cleveland" was another useful resource.

Portions of this article appeared earlier in the Ohio *Swirl*, the monthly publication of the Ohio Bottle Club.

## 39th ANNUAL DELAND M-T BOTTLE SHOW AND SALE

The 39th DeLand M-T Bottle Collectors Annual Antique Bottle, Insulator and Collectibles Show and Sale were held at the Volusia County fairgrounds on March 20 & 21, 2009. The March lion wind was calm, the birds chirped, the weather cooperated and we were spared the duress of the huge all time high gas prices as they stabilized around \$2.00 at the highest, we had a most welcome surprise in the form of another successful show, with 118 sales tables and 3 exhibit tables. The successful annual show and sale preparations began months before the March show. Chairwoman Maureen Pallasch started with the printing of flyers, mailing dealer contracts, numerous telephone contacts and meetings with city and county officials.

Members met early on Friday March 20, to distribute show signs at points around the city while others started the set up of 118 sales tables, chairs and 3 exhibit tables in preparation for the dealers to set up their wares at 1 P.M.

The admission was free and there was more than ample parking at the county fairgrounds. The club offered free bottle appraisals at the show, free handouts on bottle identification, club information and free bottles which were quickly taken by the attending public. The net result was the addition of five new families of bottle collectors uniting with our club.

As usual, there were dealers from around the East, The majority being from Florida, then Georgia, North Carolina, Alabama, New York, Texas and Illinois. The Building was

filled with many bottles, insulators and varied collectibles. The dealers were given a printed sign for their table and a computerized pin type plastic encased nametag showing their name, town and state with attached Gold ribbon with Black lettering for easy identification.

There was a visible air of sadness as the dealers and public learned about the passing on February 17, 2009 of long time club member, digger, past President and bottle show chairman for 17 years, Charles O. Benton. This year's bottle show was dedicated to his memory.

Friday afternoon the dealers were busy visiting old friends and making new ones as they bought, sold and traded. There were tales of bottle digs and finds as they unloaded and set up their sales tables.

There were three excellent exhibition displays for the enjoyment and education by all who attended the show:

### Display Awards

1. Louise O'Quinn of Deland, FL was awarded The Federation of Historical Bottle Collectors Ribbon for the most Educational Display of Florida Jugs.
2. Pickle Jar Display - Mike and Betty Jordan of Ocala, Florida, was awarded the People's Choice for the most unique display of Fruit Jars.
3. Paul Conner of Jacksonville, FL was awarded the M-T Bottle Club Plaque for his display of Milk Glass