

THE BIG DIG OF 2011

By Bill Baab

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first of a two-part story about the dig of a lifetime for five collectors living in the Augusta, Georgia area).

For more than 40 years, the Augusta Mill Supply Company building and warehouse sat like fortresses atop an early Augusta, Georgia landfill, its management rejecting all efforts from bottle collectors seeking permission to dig within its chainlink fences.

The dump extended for nearly a quarter of a mile around the property and those areas looked like a war zone after excavations by bottle diggers. Members of Augusta's first club – the Georgia-Carolina Empty Bottle Club – employed shovels during the early 1970s when they dug those areas by permission.

The club lost its digging rights during the 1980s when a group of out of town diggers followed a jug trail up to and beneath the chainlink fence, causing a part of it to collapse. Some club members were present, but did nothing to stop the visitors and their lack of action proved costly.

The mill supply company went out of business in 2005 or 2006 and the property was acquired by a firm that renovates vacuum cleaners.

I was acquainted with Mark Branum, a co-owner of the property with Grant Sutton. I invited the two gentlemen to visit my home and check out my bottle collection and then made a proposal to where a limited number of collectors could dig. It was accepted. Later, Branum bought out Sutton's share of the company.

A backhoe was employed and the first dig was conducted over the weekend of March 26-27. Participants were this writer, Mike Newman, of Martinez, Ga.; Bob Riddick, of Lexington, S.C., Pat Oliver, of Martinez; and Jerry (the Backhoe Guy) Newton, of Augusta.

Here's how we fared:



Jerry Newton is ready with the backhoe as Mike Newman (left) and Pat Oliver explore the dump's sides 10 feet down.

March 26, 2011:

Eleven jugs were unearthed, including the day's best find of a signed Edgefield District jug, W.F. Hahn, Trenton, S.C. Bottles included an E. Sheehan crown top (Augusta), E. Sheehan aqua Hutchinson, aqua Augusta Brewing Company mug base Hutchinson, an aqua Clinton Bottling Works (Augusta) blobtop and a rare teal E. Sheehan / 1880 / Augusta, Ga., blobtop with some repairable lip damage.

Others included an Atwood's Jaundice Bitters, three aqua Augusta straight-sided Coca-Colas, an emerald green Saratoga-type tall bottle with none of the usual embossing on the base, a Carter's master ink, a small amber poison, a clear miniature whiskey (Crigher and Crigher Distillers, Louisville, Ky.), an amber Crab Orchard Genuine Salts,

Bottled by Crab Orchard Water Co., Louisville, Ky., and a “cow”-sized blue Bennington marble.

March 27, 2011:

Pottery finds included a Miles Mill (Aiken County, S.C.) stacker jug, a J.O. Flynn (Augusta) mini jig with some damage, a stacker jug impressed Standard Syrup Co., and a 1-gallon cream and tan jug.

Bottles included an Edwards Bottling Works (Milledgeville, Ga.) crown top, a Dixie Carbonating Co. (Augusta) crown top, an Augusta Brewing Co., Pepsi-Cola (rare) crown top, an aqua Reynolds Brothers (Washington, Ga.) crown top and a Star Bottling Co., Nottingham, Pa. Hutchinson.

Augusta drug store bottles found included several LANDs, one J.H. Howard, two Mathenys, one Tischer's, one Ed Sumerau and one C.T. Goetchius. Other finds included an amber Nashville, Tenn., straight-sided Coke, 21 Augusta mid script straight-sided Cokes and a quart Augusta Brewing Co., beer. A Wright & Taylor, Louisville, Ky., whiskey also was dug. along with an unmarked ceramic master ink, a ginger beer, a Rumford Chemical Works, a cobalt Keasbey and a cobalt Peptenzyme (both “Yankee” bottles).

Pat was scrutinizing the area during cleanup and picked up a rare Augusta crown top – Aqua Dist(ributing) & Bot(ting). Co. That company was in business just two years (1912-1914).



Here's a closeup of the Pine House jug

April 16, 2011:

Bob Riddick, scratching in the “burnt layer” a few feet below the surface, came up with the find of the dig – a face bank of undetermined origin. Pottery experts later attributed the piece to (1) the Mark Baynham Pottery in North Augusta, S.C., or (2) one of the Brown family of potters in Georgia, perhaps Javan Brown.. It had some issues, but the face is intact. It sits on a base that resembles a clown's collar. Another great find was a jug stamped J.W.S. & Co., Pine House, S.C. Pine House was located near present day Trenton in Edgefield County, S.C. The initials stand for John W. Siegler.

Thirty-four straight-sided Coca-Colas (all from Augusta), a Limeola from Tennille, Ga., three E(dward) Sheehan crown tops, a straight-sided Augusta Pepsi-Cola, two Augusta Chero-Colas (early script), five Dixie Carbonating Company (Augusta) crown tops and Augusta Bludwines (aqua with block letter slug plate and clear usual version) were among the other finds.

One of the “criers” of the day was a Dixie Carbonating Company Pepsi-Cola missing its top and sporting a cracked body. Only one other is known – a broken one found years ago by Mike Newman and glued together – and is illustrated in the Ayers Pepsi book.

Towards the end of the day, Newman prevailed upon backhoe operator Jerry Newton to “dig just one more hole.”



Bob Riddick shows an ovoid jug signed J.W.S. & Co., Pine House, S.C.



The author holds an alkaline-glazed stacker jug signed W.F. Hahn, Trenton, S.C.

It was about 5 p.m. So this was done and about a dozen one-gallon jugs dating from the late 1890s-early 1900s were excavated. The dig finished at 7 p.m., prompting Newton to say: "Hurry up before Newman turns on the lights!"

A Frog Pond Chill and Fever Cure from Augusta and local drug store bottles from Perrin & Land, Matheny's Pharmacy, Greene & Horsey's and C.T. Goetchius & Bro., were uncovered. A pint South Carolina Dispensary (SCD monogram) was joined by a base-embossed Congress Water, a Peychaud's Bitters and a Paskola, an amber bottle embossed with a pineapple and "The Pre-Digested Food Co." How gross is that one?

April 17, 2011:

It was a sort of slow day as far as quality bottles go. However, an intact spittoon probably made by Trenton, S.C., master potter Mark Baynham during the last quarter of the 19th century was recovered.

Fourteen more Augusta straight-sided Cokes were added to the ever-growing collection. Another E. (for Edward)

Sheehan crown top was joined by an amber E. Sheehan, 1880 blobtop, a clear Clinton (Augusta) Hutchinson and an aqua Chero-Cola from Columbia, S.C.

A Champlin's Liquid Pearl in a rectangular milk glass bottle surfaced, as did a number of Augusta drug store bottles including a scarce Fargo & Eve and a previously unknown Wade Woodward. Beers included an Augusta Brewing Company Hutchinson, a Robert Portner (Alexandria, Va.) blobtop and an amber Terre Haute, Indiana crown top with amber swirls.

A half-pint South Carolina Dispensary flask (with small lip chip), a Wright & Taylor, Louisville, Ky., whiskey, a clear large unmarked pumpkinseed and a clear unmarked hip-pocket flask also were found.

Then there was a family affair: Your Wife's Salad Dressing and Husband's Calcined Magnesia! Ceramic master inks, including one from Denby Pottery in Great Britain, a Holbrooks' condiment bottle featuring an embossed St. George slaying a dragon, and a three-sided cobalt, ribbed poison also were found.

Nearly a dozen stacker jugs, many without handles (which is why they were thrown out in the first place), were among the finds.

April 23, 2011:

If anyone ever wondered where the Augusta Coca-Cola Bottling Company dumped its outdated straight-sided bottles, we can tell them. We excavated 71, including examples from Atlanta and Savannah, and now have a total of 144. We'll have to be careful and not glut the marketplace. Another amber Nashville, Tenn., straight-sided Coke and three 1915 hobbleskirts joined the crowd.

Other finds included eight Dixie Carbonating Company crown tops, two aqua E. Sheehan Hutches, an Augusta Blutwine, two E. Sheehan crown tops, four Augusta Chero-Colas, one Lime Cola, an Augusta Ice & Beverage Company crown top (circa 1913), a Baldowski Bottling Works crown top (Augusta) and a Buffalo Lick Springs Company crown top from South Carolina.

A pottery master ink imprinted Levinson & Blythe, St. Louis, Mo., a half-pint Walton Dairy (circa 1900) milk from Augusta, and a Hubert's Colic Drops bottle from nearby Warrenton, Ga., joined an ovoid jug with an "R" stamped near the bottom and attributed to the Landrum family of the



Here's a closeup of the Hahn-signed jug

Edgefield (S.C.) District.

Bob Riddick's head challenged the backhoe bucket and lost. Happily, there was no double vision, no concussion, just a large "goose egg" on his forehead. The incident was a wake-up call to all concerned to have fun, but stay alert.

In May, we lost our backhoe operator to various jobs, including being a part of the cleanup crew following the devastating tornado in Tuscaloosa, Ala. Jerry Newton is in the construction business which provides him with a living. We understood his situation, but told him he would be treated fairly when came time to make the split. We hoped that he would be able to rejoin us later in the year.

Then Mike Newman and I decided to postpone the digging until temperatures cooled. It's been hot and the weatherman predicted triple-digit temperatures long before official summer (as of June 24). Neither Mike nor I could stand the heat.

August 13, 2011:

The long hot summer was still with us, but temperatures climbed "only" into the high 90s (as compared to several days of triple-digit heat). So plans were made to dig and early morning cloud cover made conditions bearable. Jerry Newton and his invaluable backhoe rejoined the crowd. Then the sun came out, but the intrepid diggers kept digging (and sweating and imbibing large amounts of water). A late afternoon thunderstorm helped cool the torrid conditions and then the sun emerged once again.

Highlights of the dig were a dozen intact jugs, mostly

from the William F. Hahn (Trenton, S.C.) and Thomas Hahn (North Augusta, S.C.) potteries from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Several sported colorful alkaline glazes. Included was a one-gallon jug stenciled M.J. Downey, Augusta, Ga. A Chinese soy sauce pot, a mini jug scratched Compliments of / Joe Summerau and a mini jug stenciled Victoria Rye Whiskey, three Arnold inks with pour spouts from London, England, a ceramic bottle imprinted Vulcanizing Institute, M&M Mfg. Co., Akron, Ohio, and a Dundee, Scotland marmalade jar also emerged.

Sodas included nine Augusta Chero-Colas (one with old style embossing), Camilla Ice & Cold Storage Bottlers, Camilla, Ga., crown, four E. (Edward) Sheehan crown tops and an Augusta Brewing Company Pepsi (rare) with a lip chip.

Straight-sided Coca-Colas from Augusta included five shoulder scripts with no Trade Mark Registered and nine with Trade Mark Registered. The trade mark law came into effect in 1905. The Augusta Coca-Cola Bottling Company was chartered in 1902, so

the early bottles date to 1903-04. Three 1915 Cokes and a Gastonia, N.C. example also were dug.

There were just two spring water examples – amber bottles base-embossed Witter Medical Spring. My research revealed the spring, also known as the Deadshot Spring, was located 20 miles north of east from Ukiah, Lake County, California. The company was incorporated in the fall of 1900 and in 1910, bottles were filed direct from the spring, according to The Springs of California from the U.S. Geological Survey of 1915.

Other interesting bottles were an aqua Dr. O. Fahrney & Co., Hagerstown, Md., Teething Syrup for Babes and an aqua International Hair Regenerator from New York. A tenpin-shaped Virginia Fruit Juice Co., Norfolk, Va., and a small Warner's Safe Cure also were dug.

Drug store bottles included those from Dr. Jas. P. Smith, Tischer's, C.T. Goetchius, LAND's, Cabaniss and a B.F. Matheny Druggists, 1862 Broad St., Augusta, Ga. They were joined by two Dr. Cheney's Expectorants from Covington, Ga., a Simmons Liver Regulator from St. Louis and a base-embossed Abbott's Bitters from Baltimore.

August 21, 2011:

Boiling hot weather and high humidity greeted the intrepid diggers, Bob Riddick erected a tent-like apparatus and he and Mike Newman brought electric fans. Diggers took many breaks beneath the tent, quaffing large amounts of water.

One pleasant surprise was a cobalt Quinan & Studer

/ 1888 / Savannah, Ga., soda. It was the second one to come out of the dump, the writer having dug one during the 1970s. Trying to date various sections of the dump is impossible. Trash from the 1930s is mixed in with trash from earlier times.

Three Augusta Blutwines, a Limeola from Milledgeville, Ga, two Aqua Distributing & Bottling Co., bottles, two E. Sheehan Hutches, two Dixie Carbonating Co., bottles and an Augusta Chero-Cola with old style script lettering were among the fines.

A Perry Davis Vegetable Pain Killer was joined by nine Augusta drug store bottles including a Cabaniss and a Hansberger's Pharmacy. Straight-sided Cokes from Greensboro, N.C., and eight amber examples from Nashville, Tenn., were joined by 37 aqua ones from Augusta.

An E.P. Caines' Schnapps from Gaffney, S.C., and beers from Robert Portner, Alexandria, Va., and Augusta Brewing Company were found. A broken Portner ceramic mug also survived and is repairable. A quart Garrett wine heavily embossed with an eagle, a nursing bottle and a base-embossed Abbott's Bitters were added to the pile.

A Chinese ginger jar and seven intact jugs were among ceramic items.



Mike Newman shows off a jug attributed to the Landrum Pottery in the old Edgefield District of South Carolina.

August 28, 2011:

Weather predictions were calling for a high of 99 degrees, so we opted to dig behind the warehouse and in the shade of the overhanging roof. The passageway was narrow and posed a problem for Jerry to limit where the dirt could be dumped, but he zig-zagged his backhoe, first to one side, filled it in and then moved to the other. Jerry is so skillful. He handles the backhoe like it was a part of himself.

Sodas found included an R & R, an Augusta Brewing Company Pepsi-Cola (damaged lip, but rare), an aqua Clinton Bottling Works blobtop, Chero-Colas from Augusta and Barnwell, S.C., and an unusual bottle from Columbia, S.C., embossed with a quarter moon.

Criers included cracked bottles from Osteen Bottling Works, Denmark, S.C.; Davis Bottling Works, Allendale, S.C., and a Baldowski Bottling Works, Augusta. A pair of LANDs, Perrin & Land and C.T. Goetchius & Bros. made up the sparse drug store bottle findings. Another crier was a broken Barry's Malarial Antidote from Augusta.

Sixteen straight-sided Augusta Cokes, two without TRADE MARK REGISTERED (1903-04) were added to the ever-growing collection. Two Augusta Brewing Company Hutchinsons, quarts in blobtop and crown top and an Augusta Brewing Co., Bottling Dept., crown top were excavated.

Three South Carolina Dispensary flasks, all monograms,

were joined by a Harris Lithia Springs crown top from Harris Springs (Laurens County), S.C. Quart, pint and half-pint Stafford's Inks in cobalt were found, a half-pint amber master ink embossed Design Patent Feb. 16, 1886, a pottery ink from England and a Carter's master ink joined the crowd.

A milk glass Hagan's Magnolia Balm, a McIlhenny & Co., Tabasco Sauce from Avery Island, La., a Durfee Embalming Fluid from Grand Rapids, Mich., and a fruit jar, base-embossed Lightning / Putnam, were dug.

Bob Riddick and Pat Oliver have eagle eyes when it comes to spotting jugs. Six Hahn stacker jugs, one signed HAHN on the shoulder, were joined by a mini jug stenciled Parker Rye, Louisville, Ky., three ginger beers, a small pot with both handles broken stenciled Moutard Parisienne, Prepared by Alexis Godillot Jr., (France), Bordeaux (Gironde), a Chinese ginger jar and an unmarked wax sealer attributed to the Hahn Pottery Works were found.

Crier was an Augusta Brewing Co., Belle of Georgia mug, most of which was shattered. An unusual piece was a Hahn stacker, its handle broken long ago, bound by a homemade wire harness carrier which had stayed intact.

(To be concluded in the May-June issue)