

## Toledo and "The Great Booze Rush"

Contest Winner: 1st Place - Research Article Category  
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The State of Michigan led the way to National Prohibition, banning all sales of alcoholic beverages, by being the first state to break the "Wet Wall." The Wet Wall was the consistent vote of Catholics, the laboring classes and foreign born -- of which Michigan had many -- against so-called "Temperance" efforts. But Henry Ford, the state's leading industrialist with his Model T automobile, was an ardent prohibitionist and funded a pro-Prohibition campaign. After Preacher Billy Sunday conducted his Detroit Crusade, warning sternly of the evils of drink, Michigan in 1918 became the first Northern industrial state to vote itself dry. That was two years before National Prohibition.

Understandably, not everyone in Michigan agreed. Ohio was still "wet" and a thriving interstate trade began in smuggled alcoholic goods. The hubs were Toledo, Ohio and Monroe, Michigan. When a judge in February of 1919 declared Michigan's liquor ban unconstitutional on a technicality, thousands of Michiganders saw an opportunity. Almost immediately Ford's "Tin Dizzies" were lined up bumper to bumper on the Dixie Highway to Toledo, as thousands flocked to stock up legally. "The Great Booze Rush," as the event became known, ended a short time after, when Federal agents arrived to enforce national laws against bringing liquor to officially dry states.

But those lucky folks to arrived in Toledo on Day One found ample supplies to carry back to their Temperance-ridden state. Among those spirituous liquors, we may speculate, were products marketed by Ohio whiskey men, some of whom marketed their products in ceramic containers. Chief among those were the Kaufman Brothers of Toledo.

The first mention of a Kaufman in the liquor trade in Toledo was in 1888, when a city directory lists Rosenthal & Kaufman as whiskey wholesalers at 64 Summit Street. That listing ceased and by the early 1900s, Kaufman Bros. & Co. is cited in the directory as located at 120 Summit Street.

Research indicates that the first names of the Kaufman brothers were Nathan, Emil and Herman. But little, other

information is available about them. Unlike Cincinnati, where whiskey making and selling was a booming industry, Toledo had no major distillery, and only seven or eight whiskey bottlers and wholesalers. The area of Summit Street where the Kaufman's were located, however, was a center for the liquor trade. A Sanborn fire insurance map of 1902 shows 120 Summit surrounded by at least three other whiskey sales establishments. Kaufman Bros. was not a distiller, but rather a wholesaler of whiskey. Their advertisements in local newspapers and directories emphasized that: "We sell only to dealers; positively no goods sold at retail." Among their whiskey brands were Yondota, Josiah Quincy, Old Riingold, Bancroft and Lotus Club. Of these products, Kaufman literature boasted: "Whenever and wherever you may see these brands of whiskies, you may drink them without any anxiety about your health."

Of the several Kaufman brands, our main interest is Lotus Club, a multiple product brand name that included "hand made sour mash" as well as rye whiskey. The firm packaged Lotus Club in at least three different handsome stoneware jugs. Two of the containers bear the painted flowers and gilded letters that appear to have been made by the Fulper Pottery of Farmington, N.J., though neither bears a

pottery mark. One has the dark bottom commonly seen on these items, while the other is unique among these Fulper-style whiskeys in being attractive beige color overall. The third has elaborate gold lettering and designs on an unusual light brown stoneware body.

What motivated the Kaufman Bros. to lavish such attention on their containers? The answer is not clear. Their locations on Summit Street, close to the docks on the Toledo Harbor, off Lake Erie, would not indicate a high-class clientele. Summit Street was a rowdy place, with plenty of bars and cheap hotels. Nearby Archy Allen's Hotel was a hang-out for the local Tavern at Summit and Superior Streets where you could pour your own drink and be served a chaser of clam juice.

Nor does it appear that the Kaufman's had much Toledo competition for fancy whiskey jugs. Because Toledo was a glass center, most whiskey sold there came in bottles. One other regularly seen fancy container from that city was issued by the R. Brand Co., run by Adolph Brand and Guido Marx at 36 Monroe Street. They were importers and wholesale dealers in foreign and domestic wines and liquors. The Golden Hill Saloon, at 520 Monroe Street, specialized in ceramic giveaways. Otherwise, the Kaufman's faced little competition for fancy ceramic containers.

The question remains: When all those thirsty folks from Michigan got to Toledo, did they want fancy containers, or were they totally fixated on just getting their whiskey fast and hauling it back to Michigan? I leave that decision to you.



Left: A Lotus Club jug, where the word "rye" has worn off the smooth dark glaze of the body of the jug. Right: Fancy gold letters let the consumer know that this jug contained Lotus Club Rye, attested to be "PURE."