



VIRTUAL MUSEUM NEWS

By Richard Siri

Mission Statement

The FOHBC Virtual Museum has been established to display, inform, educate, and enhance the enjoyment of historical bottle and glass collecting by providing an online virtual museum experience for significant historical bottles and other items related to early glass.

Virtual Museum News is a new section within each issue of *Bottles and Extras* authored by museum founder, Richard Siri, to give our membership an update on progress for this landmark project.

As most of you know, the Virtual Museum will be a digital and online expression of what one might find in a real 'bricks and mortar' museum. There will be galleries, exhibitions, research, resources and support functions to enhance the visitor experience. The museum will contain, but not be limited to, images of bottles and glass, a written description of those pieces along with dimensions, videos, and when available, the history of the artifacts along with an estimation of rarity. The museum will grow and be expandable.

Let's start off with some basic milestones of late: The Virtual Museum Board elect (Alan DeMaison, Sandor P. Fuss, Steven Libbey, Ferdinand Meyer V and Richard Siri) have decided to start with the Bitters gallery. We had to start somewhere and it seemed logical. Historical Flasks, Spirits and Fruit Jar galleries are planned next. Our board is independent but reports to the FOHBC board of directors.

Alan DeMaison is heading up the imaging component while Ferdinand Meyer V is heading up the visual and web component.

We started our imaging testing on location in Houston earlier this year as Alan has some of his family there and Ferdinand is also located in Houston. We had to test how long it would take, how much it would cost and how much of an effort it would impose on the host. The good news is that a cross-section of 25 bitters was imaged in two days. The photography shoot went very well. Many individual bottle images were posted on the FOHBC Facebook page. Alan's expenses were also very reasonable. This is a small price to pay as Alan is donating an immense amount of time and energy to this project.

When I say cross-section of bottles, note that I am not saying the most expensive or one-of-a-kind bottles. The Virtual Museum, as our mission statement says, is after the most significant historical bottles and other items related to early glass. We have information to give and a story to tell, just like any museum. We want people to see what they normally can not see and learn on the multitude of Facebook and web bottle sites and typically at bottle shows. Of course some of the bottles will be more common or rarer than others.

With confidence gained in Houston, we reached out to a prominent Midwestern collector who was uncomfortable having his bottles filmed. We knew this would happen but it seems like a minority exception. This is fine though we could say 'from an anonymous collection' as they do in museums sometimes. This is not about celebrating one individual or a collection. We could do that later with special exhibits, if we choose.

Next we contacted Sandor P. Fuss in Denver, Colorado and asked for permission for a visit. He said yes, asking that Ferdinand come along with Alan and Terry Crislip to oversee the process. About 12 or so extraordinary bitters and several great flasks were filmed in April.

After these shoots, all imagery was reviewed, cleaned and prepped for 3-dimensional imaging. This takes time as 36 rotational images are used in each bottle rotation.

While this was happening, Ferdinand was leading up a team in Houston to develop the Virtual Museum web site and bitters gallery. Our goal was to present a Beta test version of the site and gallery at the FOHBC 2017 Springfield National banquet. Unfortunately, technical problems with provided equipment at the banquet prohibited a review of the museum. We were, however, able to show the FOHBC board members and visitors to the Virtual Museum showroom floor booth progress at the Springfield National. Alan also imaged many bottles at our national show and is building quite an archive of imagery for future galleries.

This past September, Alan visited with Bev and myself here in Santa Rosa, California and again imaged many outstanding bitters and spirits bottles such as whiskey and bourbon. A few examples of Alan's fine photographs are pictured below.

What's next? Several prominent historical flask collectors have agreed to have parts of their collections imaged out east. Alan is very excited about his next trip!

