



VIRTUAL MUSEUM NEWS

By Richard Siri

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.

By the time you receive this issue of *Bottles and Extras*, Alan DeMaison will have photographed a group of Jerry McCann's jar collection and will be working on cleaning up the raw images. He is also making a light box for Gina Pellegrini, our new second imager, that is like the one he is using. Ferdinand is also working on finishing up the Bitters Gallery and working now on the Historical Flask Gallery and should have them done for a spring showing. It's a lot of work building the finished galleries.

When the museum gets online, hopefully the FOHBC will see a membership increase as the galleries will be eye candy for all bottle collectors. The categories for galleries is huge and I suspect we will be adding to the museum for years to come.

I've asked Alan for a more detailed fruit jar imaging report which you will see below. He will also include a version of his trip report in the Ohio Bottle Club's newsletter.

McCann Fruit Jar Imaging Trip - Alan DeMaison

Plans were made months ago to visit and image Jerry McCann's fruit jars for the FOHBC Virtual Museum. Jerry's collection of some 2,000 specimens and his extensive knowledge made this a perfect candidate for a successful photo opportunity.

With an eye on the weather, Alan DeMaison and Terry Crislip ventured to Chicago on Sunday, November 25th. Earlier weather reports indicated a rainy Sunday followed by a cold front after the rain had departed. The end of a six hour drive was greeted with the expected rain, but within an hour of our arrival, so did the cold front. It was clear that there was going to be a major snow event that evening. Only time would tell how the snow would impact our plans.

The next morning saw 8 to 10 inches of snow covering the once bare hotel parking lot. The Chicago road crews had done an amazing job of clearing the main streets. A short three mile trip to Jerry's awaited us, but the side streets had not even been touched. Hey, we are from the snow belt of Ohio and a little snow is no match for experience and good tires. As we drove through the neighborhood, we noticed lots of tree limbs down (some covering entire yards and driveways). Some of the tree limbs had caused significant damage to both cars and houses.

The unloading of the equipment was made even more dangerous by the rain the night before which now had turned to solid ice under the snow. The wooden back steps caked with ice was especially a challenge. The words of the day were 'slow and careful' for these three senior citizens as Jerry had joined us. Slowly and carefully, the three of us were able to make short order of transporting everything to the second floor up a rather interesting set of interior stairs. The stairs reminded me of a spiral staircase built to conserve space a long time ago. The railing was fashioned specifically for those stairs. It was no time at all before the Virtual Museum imaging equipment was set up and ready to go. After setting up, we became aware that much of Chicago was without electricity. Lucky us as we were to have power!

Every wall was lined with glass shelves and every inch of those shelves was covered with fruit jars. Jerry had assembled a collection of jars that ranged in value from very inexpensive to extremely rare and valuable. The first jars we imaged were easy. The wonderful colors presented no particular problem having much experience with dark colored bitters, historical flasks, and western bitters and whiskeys.

Then came the inevitable aqua jars. Three months ago when I was at Darrell Plank's, imaging the aqua embossing was a real puzzle. What looked like a possible aqua candidate with great embossing became completely unreadable with my back lighting. It took Darrell Plank's display of aqua fruit jars and then viewing the Ken Schwartz collection of clear/aqua western whiskeys to bring me to an "ah-ha moment." Both had bottom back lighting which illuminated the embossing perfectly. After previous months of experimenting and failing with changing the lighting and building gadgets to somehow use bottom lighting, could it be just as simple as turning off the back lighting and adding back bottom lights? My first aqua fruit jar, an aqua Globe, was surprisingly successful at home. The embossing was so beautifully highlighted.

We tackled aqua jar after aqua jar in Jerry's collection with my new technique of bottom back lighting with terrific results. The aqua color took a backseat to the embossing and the results were great. Remember, I am taking 36 pictures rotating to give the illusion of continuous movement so it is not as easy as holding it up to the sun for one great picture. This makes imaging more challenging with a rotating turntable.

Jerry picked some 70+ amazing jars, Terry carefully centered each jar and I did my computer/camera thing. We were honored to have Patricia Sprang add a few of her jars for imaging. She was particularly proud of a Christmas Snowflake Mason jar as she called it. It was \$5 jar with more small bubbles than I have ever seen in any bottle or jar. The camera did it justice by capturing all the bubbles.

With the 35 images from Darrell Plank, we are well on our way to the Fruit Jar Gallery for the Virtual Museum. I would expect editing the collection to be a slow process with all the different closures, but capturing over a hundred images is a great start. After two days of imaging, I offered a suggestion to return this spring with the intention of making videos of the closures. The suggestion was well received by Jerry. I have had some experience with movie editing, so this should take less time to master.

Jerry and Patricia were so kind as to give me my first experience with authentic deep dish Chicago pizza. With a half inch of crust and another half inch of toppings, a large pizza fed four with leftovers for tomorrow. Dinner on Tuesday night was at Lou Malnati's Pizzeria where Terry ordered a large half baked Chicago Deep Dish for his Wednesday dinner at home. With the temperature expected to hit in the teens Tuesday night, there was no need to refrigerate the pizza. The pizza stored just fine in the car. By Wednesday morning the road to Ohio was clear and dry.

Every FOHBC Virtual Museum visit is different and exciting. To visit a collector in their display room and listen to all the interesting stories is truly a memory to be treasured for a life time. Next issue we will share some fruit jar pictures from this trip.

