

The Eagle Has Landed in Alexandria, Virginia

(Among Many Other Places in the Nation)

By David Kyle Rakes

Image Courtesy of Mike Newman



The bald eagle, America's Bird, has long been a symbol of our nation's power. It caught the imagination of many of America's glassblowers who used stylized embossed eagles, usually in full flight, to decorate several historical flasks of the early 18th century. Happily for collectors of antique bottles, several glass factories also used the bird's image on colorful soda water bottles.

Research reveals that there are more than a half-dozen different eagle sodas, but my focus for this story is on soda water manufacturer J.M. Roseberry in the historic city of Alexandria, Virginia. His bottles and those used by others have one thing in common: each bird figural was modeled after the eagle that adorns the Great Seal of the United States.

The seal was designed by Charles Thomson, secretary of the First Continental Congress. While members of that body created a

committee to design the Great Seal on July 4, 1776, government moves slowly and it took six years before "our" Eagle took flight to become our National Bird. Wings outspread, a shield with red and white stripes beneath clouds and stars, the bird's beak clutches a banner reading E. Pluribus Union (Out of many, one).

The bird's left talon clutches a sheath of arrows signifying war and the right talon holds an olive branch meaning peace. Thomson's heraldry symbol intentionally has the eagle facing left to the olive branch, showing the seal was created out of a desire for peace.

Today, the Great Seal adorns the backs of our \$1 bill, military buttons, plaques and signage used by our embassies and consulates all over the world.

Nineteenth century American eagle sodas vary in design from the

bird on the Great Seal. The eagle facing left with wings spread and the shield in front are the same; however, the olive branch and arrows have disappeared from the talons. On the bottles, the eagle is flanked by American flags on poles, large olive branches cross at the bottom and curve up around the shield like a cup. Lines radiating over the eagle signify brightness.

Let's take a look at the various eagle sodas: One was used by William Heiss Jr., of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His 1850s bottles come in cobalt blue and yellow green and sport iron pontils. His pleonasm bottle is embossed W. HEISS JR'S / SUPERIOR / MINERAL WATERS / No. 213 N. 2nd St. / PHILADA" on one side and the eagle/shield on the other. The bottles may have been blown by the Philadelphia Glass Works.

The Deep South city of Savannah, Georgia sported three soda water bottlers who used eagle sodas. Phillip Young used two different designs on his green eagle sodas, one had a smooth base and blob top, the other iron-pontiled with a collared top. Charles Umbach's two bottles both had smooth bases, one with a blob top and the other a collared top. George Gemenden's hotel bottling plant produced two green bottles, one with an iron pontil and collared top, the other with an iron pontil and blob top. All the bottles were manufactured in Philadelphia.

Two eagle sodas were used by bottlers in Charleston, S.C., likely from Dr. P. Melvin Cohen and Nathan Fields. Cohen's Medical Depot on Meeting Street while Fields was a sailmaker and proprietor of an ice house from 1848 to 1855. One of the eagle sodas is embossed SUPERIOR SODA WATER. The other has no

Image Courtesy of Mike Newman



such embossing. It is known the bottles were blown in Baltimore, Maryland, but there is a mystery: Which bottle is Cohen's and which is Fields'? No one seems to know.

Charleston collectors like to try for color runs of the bottles. There are even bottles which look like black glass, but are actually dark green and dark amber.

Finally we come to J.M. Roseberry whose eagle sodas were blown in Baltimore. I look at these bottles as being more special than the others because of their city of origin. Alexandria was once a part of our nation's capital of Washington, D.C.

Alexandria is located about seven miles south of downtown Washington. It is primarily known for its rich colonial history as the home town of the Father of our Country, George Washington. He had attended court there as a justice of the peace and wor-

shipped at Christ Church. His Mount Vernon home was only six miles south of the city.

The city was a part of the 10-mile-square area created in 1791 to be home of the U.S. Government officially known as the District of Columbia. However, many residents later felt unhappy because the area was hindered from growth and prevented from expansion south of the Potomac River. They also did not like losing their rights to vote in presidential elections and not being represented in Congress. After much debate and some opposition, Congress voted to permit the city to retrocede back into Virginia.

John Mackey Roseberry was born March 16, 1802 in Philipsburg, Greenwich Township, New Jersey, son of Michael Roseberry and Margaret Mackey Roseberry. His mother was proud of her maiden name and gave it to at least four of her eight children to use as their middle name.



Savannah

Charleston

Philadelphia

Virginia

Michael was the son of John Roseberry and Maria Margaret Mauer of England. John the elder had settled in Philipsburg in 1740 and owned about 1,500 acres of land, including where the town now stands. The original homestead is listed on the National Register of Historic Places at 540 Warren Street.

The classic Georgian home has a center hall, is two stories in height and sports three fireplaces.

It was constructed of rough cut quarry stone and built between 1765 and 1783. The family sold 300 acres of the property north of the home to accommodate ever-growing Philipsburg. It is not known how John made a living in New Jersey. In 1825 when he was in his early 20s, he wed Sarah Kline and became parents of four children. Shortly after the sale, John and his family moved to Alexandria.

In 1854, records show John employed in the soda water business with Garret Albertson Cook in the establishment known as J.M. Roseberry & Co. A petition for the company charter was received by the Common Council and referred to the Committee of General Laws and was approved on September 28, 1854.

The company used a trio of bottles, each blown in Baltimore. Bottles without "& Co." were used after Cook left the partnership. There was a porter in yellow-olive with iron pontil, 6-3/4 inches tall with a double-tapered collar and embossed J.M. ROSEBERRY / & CO. / ALEXANDRIA / VA. Another porter is nearly the same except the city name is embossed ALEXA. D.C. Each bottle is extremely rare, with only two or three known. Just two cobalt blue and olive green, 7-1/2 inches tall and 2-1/2 inches in diameter eagle sodas with iron pontils embossed J. M. ROSE-

DRAUGHT ALE.—All persons wanting DRAUGHT ALE by the barrel, half barrel, quarter barrel, or ten gallon Kegs, can be supplied with an excellent article, by calling at J. M. **ROSEBERRY'S** Mineral Water Establishment, Corner of King & Payne streets Alexandria. who will be pleased to furnish customers, both in the City and Country. (Terms Cash.) [sep 25—eo3w] J. M. **ROSEBERRY.**

Ad taken out to advertise Mineral Waters and Ales

FOR SALE.—As I am desirous of leaving Alexandria, I will sell out my MINERAL WATER APPARATUS, BOTTLES, WAGONS, DRAY, HORSES, HARNESS, with all the fixtures, of modern improvement, that belong to the business. Any person wanting to get into a good business, can buy a bargain, by calling on me, at No. 314, King street. jy 9—eotf **J. M. ROSEBERRY.**

By 1857 Roseberry was ready to sell his Soda water business

BERRY / & CO. / ALEXANDRIA, / VA. One example is without the "& CO." and another is a 7-1/2-inch tall, green pony iron pontiled with an applied tapered collared mouth embossed simply J.M. ROSEBERRY in a rectangular slug plate.

Most collectors agree there are less than a dozen Roseberry eagles and even fewer with slug plates. That means there are five different mold variations for the brand.



The classic Georgian home has a center hall, is two stories in height and sports three fireplaces. It was constructed of rough cut quarry stone and built between 1765 and 1783.



Three very rare sodas from Roseberry, early Virginia Bottles

His business was located at the corner of King and Payne streets. He believed in advertising and numerous ads are to be found in the Alexandria Gazette. One placed in 1855 reveals he had continued "Bottling Sarsaparilla, Lemon, Ginger and Capsicum, Pop, Newark and Crab Cider; also, Philadelphia Ale, Baltimore Porter and Ale, also Draughts Ale by the half barrel and would be happy to accommodate his customers both in the city and county, All those having his bottles will please return them. (s) J.M. Roseberry.

Another ad that same year: DRAUGHT ALE – All persons wanting DRAUGHT ALE by the barrel, half barrel, quarter barrel or ten gallon KEGS can be supplied with an excellent article by calling at J.M. Roseberry's Mineral Water Establishment, Corner of King and Payne streets, Alexandria, who will be pleased to furnish customers both in the city and county. (Terms Cash). J.M. Roseberry.

In 1855, John married for the second time, a widow named Mary Ann Conway on July 26. No children were born in this union.

In 1857, Roseberry surprisingly listed his soda water business for sale, surprising everyone with this ad in the Gazette: "As I am desirous of



Here is a cobalt version along side a deep green version, both exceptional examples

leaving Alexandria, I will sell out my MINERAL WATER APPARATUS, BOTTLES, WAGONS, DRAY HORSES, HARNESS with all the fixtures of modern improvements that belong to the business. No. 314 King Street – J.M. Roseberry.”

The Roseberrys moved to a farm in Brentsville some 30 miles south of Alexandria by 1860 and John became a farmer. But he and his bride were having marital problems and eventually divorced in 1868.

Roseberry died on Nov. 13, 1874 at the age of 72 and was buried in the St. James Lutheran Cemetery in Warren County, New Jersey. He may have spent the remainder of his days back in Philipsburg.

SOURCES: A special thanks to Mike Cianciosi, Fairfax, Va., for his research on Roseberry and Cook; Bobby Hinely, Newnan, Ga., for information and eagle soda images from the four port cities; Jamie Westendorff, Charleston, S.C., for sharing information and images on Charleston eagle sodas, and Wesley Pippenger, professional genealogist from Tappahannock, Va., for documents on John Mackey Roseberry and family.

History of Alexandria, Va., city website, Discovering the Decades, 1850s, Alexandria Archaeology Volunteer News, 1999.

The Great Seal: Celebrating 233 Years of National Emblem, June 20, 2015, by Jessie Kratz, posted in Declaration of Independence, Revolutionary War, National Archives History.

Great Seal.com, Olive Branch Held by Eagle on the Great Seal. <http://greatseal.com/symbols/olives.html>

Learning Adventures, Great Seal of the United States: 1782, <https://bensguide.>

[gpo.gov/j-great-seal?highlight](https://www.gpo.gov/j-great-seal?highlight)

Birth and death of John Mackey Roseberry (Findagrave.com inscriptions of cemetery stones and Genealogy)

John M. Roseberry first marriage to Sarah Kline (Genealogy.com Re: Roseberry Family of New Jersey)

Garret Albertson Cook timeline (1854 Personal Property Tax list for Alexandria, per genealogist Wesley Pippenger, Tappahannock, Va.; Warren County Marriages; source Garret Albertson Cook died in Greenfield, Minnesota and buried in Greenfield Cemetery.

A petition for J. M. Roseberry & Co. (Alexandria Gazette, Page 3)

NOTICE – The Roseberry and Cook co-partnership dissolved (February 8, 1855, Alexandria Gazette, Page 3)

NOTICE - BOTTLING BUSINESS (Alexandria Gazette Feb 9 1855, pg. 2.)

NOTICE - BOTTLING ESTABLISHMENT (February 15, 1855, Alexandria Gazette, Page 2)

NOTICE - PORTER AND ALE (Alexandria Gazette 14 May 1855, pg. 4.)

NOTICE - DRAUGHT ALE (September 29, 1855, Alexandria Gazette, Page 3, and October 2, 1855, Alexandria Gazette, Page 3)

J. M. Roseberry left the business (July 9, 1857, Alexandria Gazette, Page 2, July 11, 1857, Alexandria Gazette, Page 3, and November 19, 1857, Alexandria Gazette, Page 4.)

NOTICE selling 260 acre farm (January 29, 1858, Alexandria, Virginia, Alexandria Gazette, Vol: 59, Page: 2; and July 13, 1857, Alexandria Gazette, Page 3, February 15, 1858, Alexandria Gazette, Page 1)

John Mack Roseberry residence (1860 United States Federal Census, Prince William County, Post office Brentsville, Page no. 154)

Deed J. M. Roseberry to S. S. Skinner and K. Roseberry (Findagrave biography on Kline Roseberry and Court Proceedings, August 5, 1862, Alexandria Gazette, Page 1)

Property tax assessment to J. M. Roseberry for “House on King and Payne streets (March 2, 1864, Alexandria Gazette, Vol. LXV, Issue 52, Page 1)

John Mackey Roseberry obituary (Findagrave.com and Apollo Newspaper, 11.20.1874, page 3)

DEATH NOTICE for Mary A. Roseberry (FHL Film Number 2115025)

