

Eugene Bode Saloon Owner Fredericksburg, Virginia

By Jeff Eastland

They say every bottle tells a story. This particular one tells several, though you wouldn't know it to look at it.

Pictured is an 1890s clear strap side flask, a plain bottle except with a rare original label for "Fine Old Gray's Rye Whiskey E. BODE Fredericksburg Virginia."

The Bode family, of Fredericksburg, Virginia, is a quintessential American immigrant tale of triumph and tragedy.

Eugene Bode was born on Sept. 16, 1854, to August and Bertha Bode, in what was then Breslau, part of the German Empire, and is now Wroclaw, Poland. The Bode family emigrated to the United States, with young children in tow, in 1855, and settled in Fredericksburg, Virginia, a town with a large German/German-American population.

Shortly thereafter the Civil War broke out and father August enlisted as a private in the 30th Virginia Infantry of the Confederate Army. August was wounded at the brutal battle of Antietam, Md. on Sept. 17, 1862. He continued to serve in the Confederate Army until July 29, 1864, when he suffered a terrible accident and died while boarding a freight train in Chester, Va, slipping underneath the train and becoming mangled. He was 38 years old with a wife and three small children.



1890s clear strap side flask, a plain bottle except with a rare original label for "Fine Old Gray's Rye Whiskey E. BODE Fredericksburg Va."



Here is an image of, 600 Commerce St. (now William St.) in Fredericksburg where this flask would have been sold.

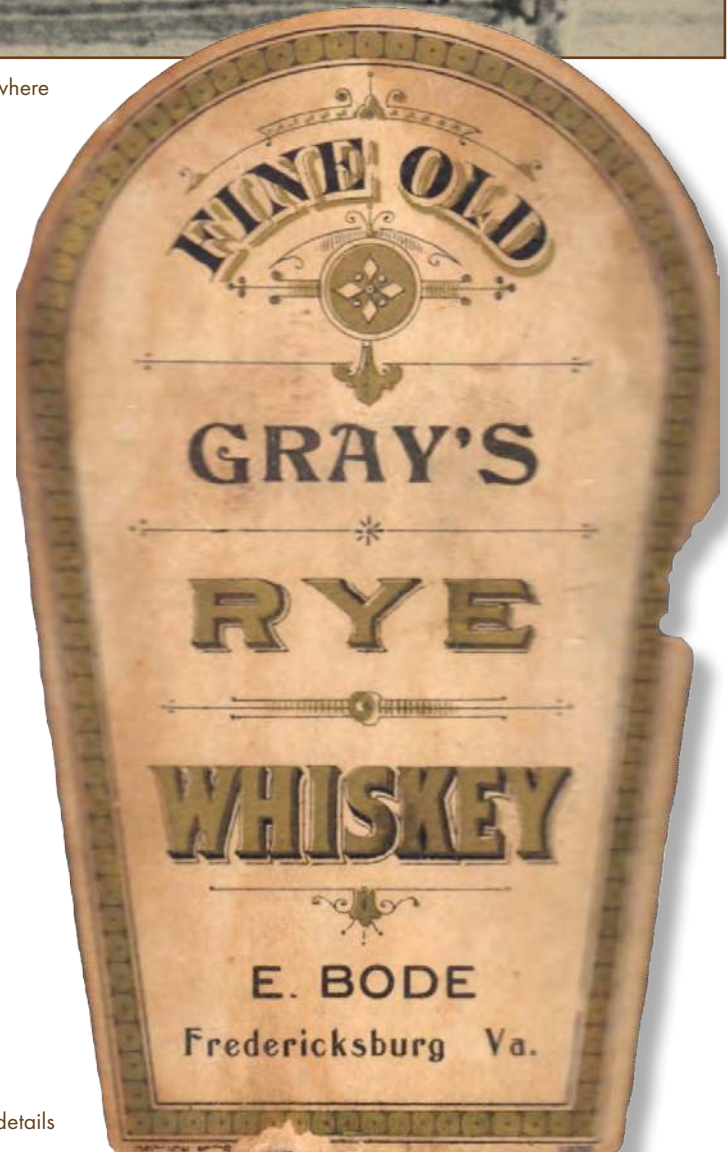
One imagines the difficulties the young widow and her three children faced, in a new land, without the patriarch. But they, as so many have, persevered.

Eugene Bode went on to become a successful businessman in Fredericksburg in the late 1880s, opening a grocery and liquor business, and a saloon, located at 600 Commerce St. (now William St.) in Fredericksburg. This strap side flask was sold out of the location pictured.

Bode's Liquors is listed in the 1892 and 1899 Fredericksburg city directories.

Eugene Bode's brother, Richard, died in 1883 and Eugene married his brother's widow, Augusta (Miller), in 1886. They had two children, Freda, and Richard.

Incredibly, and ironically, Eugene suffered the same fate as his father, 40 years later. On Sept. 6, 1904, while attempting to board an R F & P passenger train pulling away at the Fredericksburg depot, Eugene slipped and fell under the train. His body, caught in the wheels, was badly mangled, literally cut in half. Witnesses described the awful scene. Women fainted on the train platform. The train had to be jacked up to remove his body parts.



The label of the bottle shown here, enlarged to show the details



An older image of Scotty's Pastry Shop, a popular local business for many years.



This building and if the walls could talk, now occupied by Primavera Pizza.



The building still stands today, now occupied by Primavera Pizza.

Eugene Bode was 49 years old when he died

The city of Fredericksburg mourned one of its most prominent as well as one of its most beloved citizens. The family carried on the business for several years. Eugene's widow Augusta remarried Harry Lane in 1914.

Despite the tragedies that cut short the lives of both August and Eugene, the rest of the family had tremendous longevity. Augusta lived until 1958 before passing away at the age of 96. Eugene's son Richard lived until 1962 and his daughter Freda lived until 1973. By then the old building that housed Bode's Saloon and Liquor store housed Scotty's Pastry Shop, a popular local business for many years. The building still stands today, now occupied by Primavera Pizza.

One final note. Eugene Bode's grandson, Richard Jr., served in the U.S. Army during World War II.

On August 8, 1944, 40 years after his grandfather died, and 80 years after his great-grandfather died, Richard Bode Jr. stormed Omaha Beach as part of the D-Day invasion. Richard Jr. lived all the way until 2007, passing away at age 92 as part of America's Greatest Generation.

From Immigration to the Civil War, from the rise of America during the Industrial Revolution as an economic entity to World War II, the Bode family story is a classic American one.



This image shows his gravestone in Fredericksburg.

