

AS SCARCE AS HEN'S TEETH

Want rare whiskey bottles? Then take a hike

Text and photos by Peter B. Samuelson

Sometimes it takes an early morning ride in the car to clear my mind and put things in order for the rest of the day.

The sights around North Fryeburg, Maine, and on towards Chatham, New Hampshire, are always a pleasure. The mountain views are magnificent. In North Chatham, the main road narrows and heads north up through Evans Notch. The Notch is a mountain pass where there is a paved road leading to U.S. Route 2 at the far end.

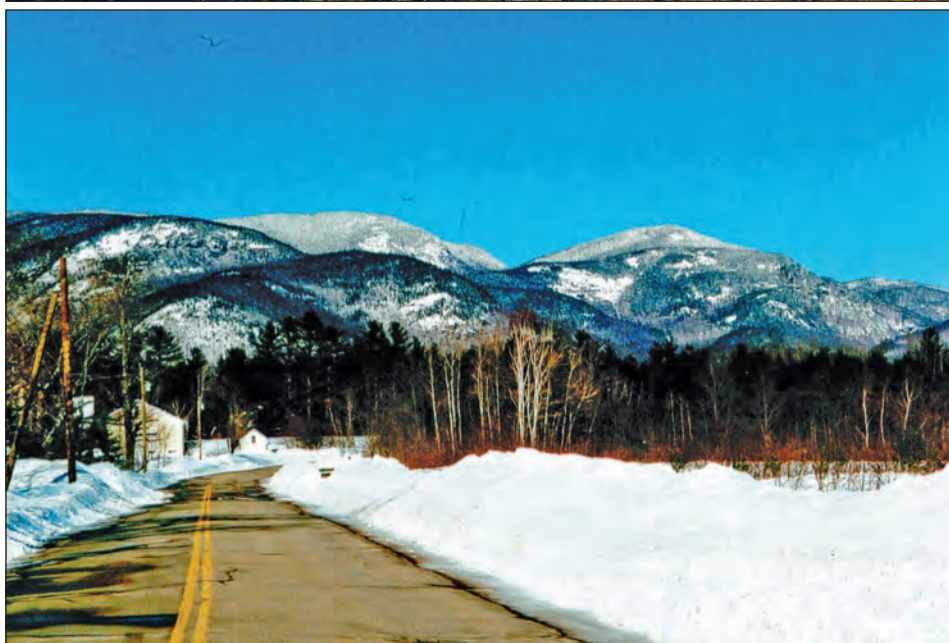
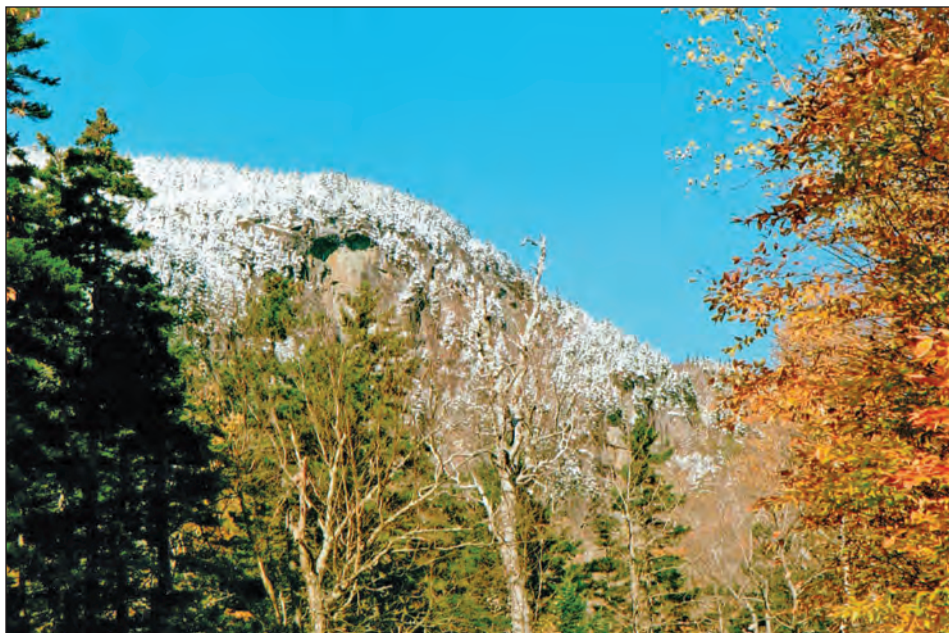
Along the way, there is much to take in, including beautiful mountain scenery, freshwater streams and miles of hiking trails which are all part of the White Mountain National Forest. The road through the Notch was built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The road is steep and quite narrow in places and not maintained in the winter. However, it is open for snowmobile traffic.

My morning ride on October 28, 2018 was an exceptional one. An early-season snowfall the day before had left a coating of the white stuff in the valley, with even more being dumped in the higher elevations, including Evans Notch. I needed no invitation to take in the sights of fresh snow in the mountains. So I grabbed my camera and made a short hike up the road to a vantage point where I took several photographs of the pretty scenery.

While scanning the ridges, I noticed something quite odd. Looking at me was what appeared to be the face of a monkey!



Two G.O. Blake's Whiskey bottles, sixth size.



TOP: Monkey Face Ridge in Evans Notch, Maine.

BOTTOM: A view of Evans Notch from North Chatham, New Hampshire.

Actually, it was nothing more than two shadows, a piece of ledge and snow-covered trees that created this image. What an unusual photo!

Also, on my agenda for the day was an easy hike to an abandoned feldspar and mica mine in North Chatham, New Hampshire. The mine is where I enjoy digging through the tailing piles or dump in search of aquamarine-beryl crystals. Originally, the mine was worked for potash feldspar which was used in the

ceramic industry. Scrap mica was a minor by-product at the mine.

Beryl crystals, being an accessory mineral, were not of importance to the miners unless they happened to pick one up during blasting operations and it was taken home as a trinket. Most all of the beryl crystals ended up in the dump. My interest in the beryl crystals is to unearth complete, undamaged specimens for collectors, including myself. When blue-green beryl is transparent, it is

called aquamarine and is fashioned into gem stones.

The recent snow had covered the dump, so today was not the time for any digging. Instead, I took a few photos of the mine tunnel and the clusters of icicles hanging from the ledge. By now I realized that I had an appointment in town with my friend, Bob. It was time to go.

“Mr. Bob,” as I call him, is a businessman involved with gems, mineral specimens and jewelry. Actually, he deals in anything that might bring in a buck or two. Arriving at his shop I could see that he had recently purchased a vintage load of goodies from someone who had cleaned out an older home. There were cosmetic tins, old books, metal cars and trucks and a few common early 1900s medicine and spirit bottles.

Away from the floor and resting high up on a wall fixture, I could see what appeared to be two embossed whiskey bottles. They were both cylinders but not the usual quart or fifth size. One was amber, the other, being quite dirty, looked yellow. I asked Bob if I could look at them. I’ve been collecting and researching eastern pre-Prohibition spirit bottles for thirty years but never have I seen two old whiskey bottles with such pizzazz. A quick inspection of the bottle revealed a strike as nice as could be and no damage except for a light scratch or two. A simple scrubbing with soap and water would make them sparkle.

As usual, I wasn’t hauling around a lot of cash, so I did some chin scratching while trying to figure out a reasonable offer to make for the bottles. I did not want to get involved in a major hassle over money, so I handed Bob some cash and waited for his response. He remained silent. Without hesitation, I increased the amount and all of a sudden, just like magic, the bottles were mine!

As soon as I reached home, I cleaned up both bottles and discovered that the

embossing resembled that of a quart whiskey in my collection. The example in my collection is embossed G.O. Blake's Rye and Bourbon Whiskey Adams Taylor & Co. Proprietors Boston & Louisville. It is the common eastern variant circa 1908-15. Nothing fancy or unusual. The two beautiful bottles I had just purchased are embossed: G.O. Blake's Ky Whiskey Adams Taylor & Co. Proprietors Boston & Louisville. On the reverse shoulder is embossed: G.O. Blake's Ky Whiskey. The front panel of each bottle is also embossed with the word whiskey (British spelling) on the barrel. Both bottles are sixth-size and have applied lips.

Off and on for the next several days, I searched high and low for any information on G.O. Blake's Ky Whiskey, sixth-size and applied lip. I found nothing. Whenever I become desperate for whiskey information, I always turn to Jack Sullivan of Alexandria, Virginia. Jack and I have shared information on various whiskey-related subjects, and I am grateful for his help.

Even Jack had been baffled by the lack of information on the G.O. Blake until he turned to a book published many years ago titled *Spirits Bottles of the Old West*, written by Bill and Betty Wilson. That information was relayed to me by Jack. However, Wilson's book has little to say regarding my gorgeous sixth-size Blake bottles. Only one example of the Blake sixth-size has appeared in recent years. An amber example was sold at Jeff Wichmann's American Bottle Auctions on Jan. 8, 2010, Auction No. 49.

For now, there is little left to say about the two stunning G.O. Blake sixth-size whiskey bottles except to thank the unknowing soul who brought them to Mr. Bob's shop. For me, I just happened to be at the right place at the right time, which was one of my better moves in a long time.

Both bottles are as scarce as hens teeth so I am very fortunate to have them in my collection. What a great day!



TOP: Icicles and tunnel entrance at the Chandler Feldspar Mine, North Chatham, New Hampshire.

RIGHT: Close-up of the embossing on the barrel. The word whiskey is actually spelled "WHISKY" (British spelling).

Author's request: Researcher and collector seeks particulars related to G.O. Blake sixth-size whiskey bottles with applied lip. Information should be addressed to: Peter B. Samuelson, P.O. Box 281, Intervale, N.H. 03845-0281.

