

# Top Ten Baltimore Shot Glasses

by Jack Sullivan  
(Special to the Potomac Pontil)

At one point in the late 1800's, Maryland, with Baltimore as the hub, was the third largest whiskey producing state in the Nation. The industry spawned dozens of distilleries, scores of rectifiers (whiskey blenders), and hundreds of distributors and dealers, many of them hawking their own brands. This multitude vied for local, regional and even national customer attention with a wide array of merchandising items. A favorite was the shot glass.

As a result, the collector of Baltimore pre-Prohibition shots has much richer pickings than those concentrating on Virginia or the District of Columbia. Sorting through a sample of them, it is possible to nominate the "top ten" examples while knowing that there are many others out there with equal or greater claims. With that caveat, I will take a "shot" at a list.

## Miss Liberty and a Ram

The Columbia Rye shot glass (**Fig. 1**) is notable for its white etched depiction of the Statue of Liberty surrounded by heads of rye grain. It was issued by M. (for Morris) Lasky, a Baltimore wholesale liquor dealer with two addresses – 779 Columbia Avenue and 759 W. Baltimore Street.



Fig. 1: Columbia Rye

Lasky was a dealer and distributor whose flagship brand was Columbia Rye, which he registered for a trademark with the Federal Government in 1901. Baltimore city directories indicate that he began his business about that time on Columbia Avenue, adding the West Baltimore Street location in 1913. Because the firm disappears from directories in 1915 it can be surmised that this glass dates from about 1914.

Rams Horn Whiskey was a product of Philip Lobe & Son, a liquor distributor that had a 35 year business in Baltimore, beginning in 1884 under the name Philip Lobe, located successively at three addresses on W. Platt Street. In 1896, his son joined him, leading to a name change. When a second son joined in 1911, the name changed again to "& Sons."

The changing names allow us to date this highly etched shot glass (**Fig. 2**) as having been issued between 1898 and 1910. The picture is a relief of a ram with long curving horns. The liquor being advertised is labeled as "Maryland Whiskey," which identifies it as a blend. Closed by Prohibition, the Lobe firm last had an address on N. Howard Street.

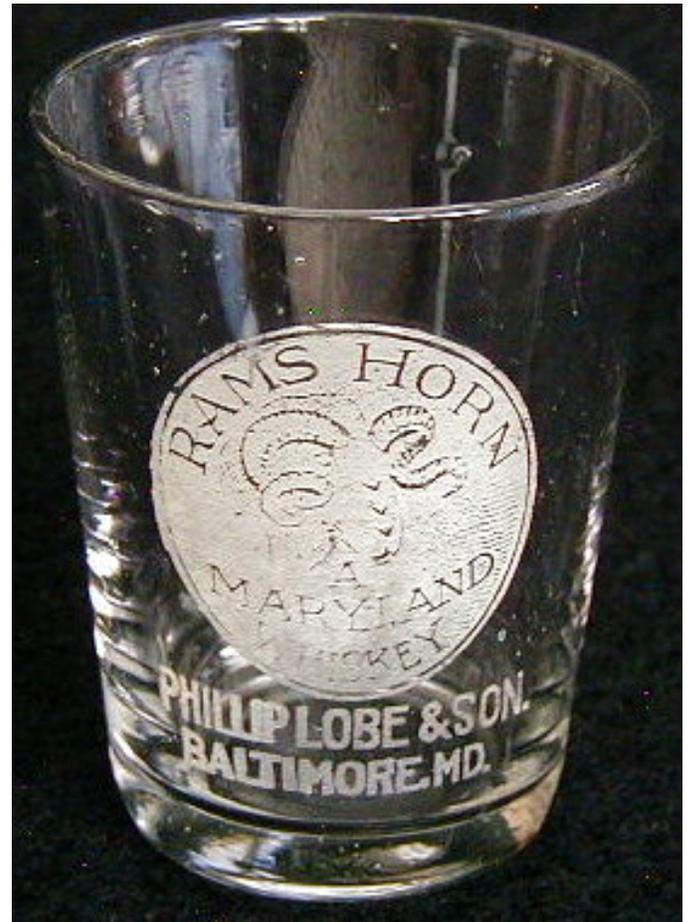
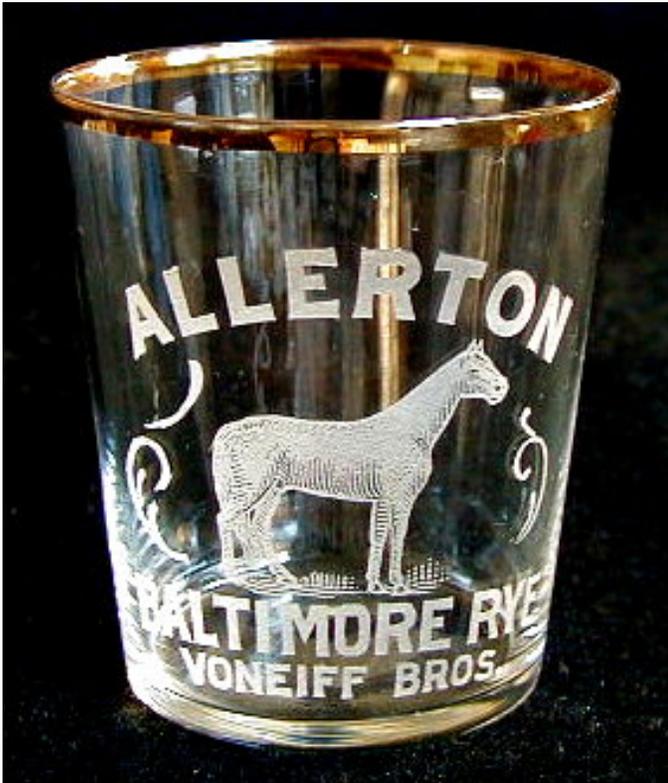


Fig. 2: Ram's Horn Maryland Whiskey

### Off to the Races

The next two top shot glasses reflect the horsey trades. The first, Allerton Baltimore Rye (**Fig. 3**), celebrates a famous race horse. In 1891 Allerton set a trotting record of one mile in two minutes, nine and one-quarter seconds and became a national icon. Vonieff Bros. were quick to jump on his bandwagon and in 1892 registered the whiskey brand with the Feds. They re-registered it in 1908.



**Fig. 3: Allerton Baltimore Rye**

The firm featured an array of brands, including Family Nectar, Green Spring Valley, Old Janson, Old Monongahela and Quin Foust. Another label with contemporary implications was "Clinton Club." Vonieff Bros. appears in Baltimore directories from 1880 to 1914 at 10 N. Greene Street and later 22 N. Greene.

While Return Rye (**Fig. 4**) does not memorialize a specific race horse, the horse and rider negotiating a jump does suggest Maryland's fox hunting culture. This glass was the product of Thomas G. Carroll & Sons who fell just short of a half-century (1872-1919) in the Baltimore liquor trade.

Another whiskey brand from the firm was Carroll's Carrollton Rye, which memorialized Charles Carroll of Carrollton, one of four Maryland signers of the Declaration of Independence and the only Catholic. What relation Thomas and his sons bore to the Revolutionary War figure is unknown. The Carrolls, located at two successive addresses on W. Baltimore, also featured Baltimore Club Rye and Monticello Whiskey.



**Fig. 4: Return Baltimore Rye**

### Hold the Banners High!

The next pair of shot glasses feature a banner with their names. By far the most famous brand was Calvert, named after Lord Calvert, the first British governor of Maryland. It was the product of the Maryland Distilling Company, an actual distiller, not rectifier or dealer, with a plant located in Relay, Maryland.

The company began operations in 1895 under the leadership of Albert Gottschalk, one of Baltimore's true liquor barons, and established a national market for its rye whiskeys, most of them marketed with the Calvert name, including Calvert Banner (**Fig. 5**). With sales outlets and offices at several Baltimore locations, the company did not survive Prohibition but the brand name has continued to the present day.

Someone at Kelly & Company had a offbeat sense of humor to name their flagship brand, "IT," as displayed on a shot glass with a frosted banner embellished with sunbursts (**Fig. 6**). Note the slogan: "Try IT, It's a Pure Rye Whiskey." This firm began existence as Kelly & Leonard (1896-1900) but became just Kelly & Co. in 1901, located at 322 W. Franklin Street. The company moved to Greenmount Avenue in 1903 and ceased to be listed in city directories in 1908. That dates the shot glass within a five-year time frame.

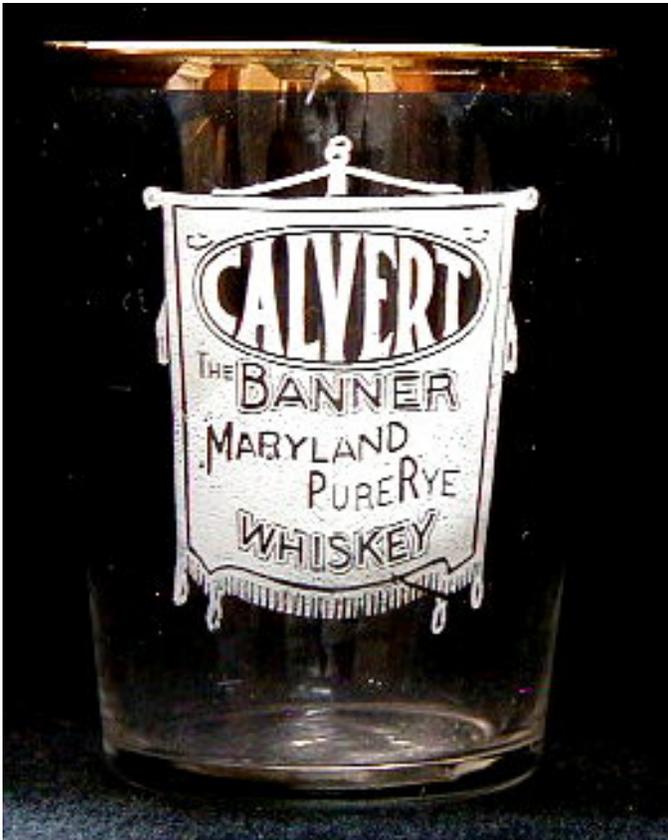


Fig. 5: Calvert Banner Maryland Rye

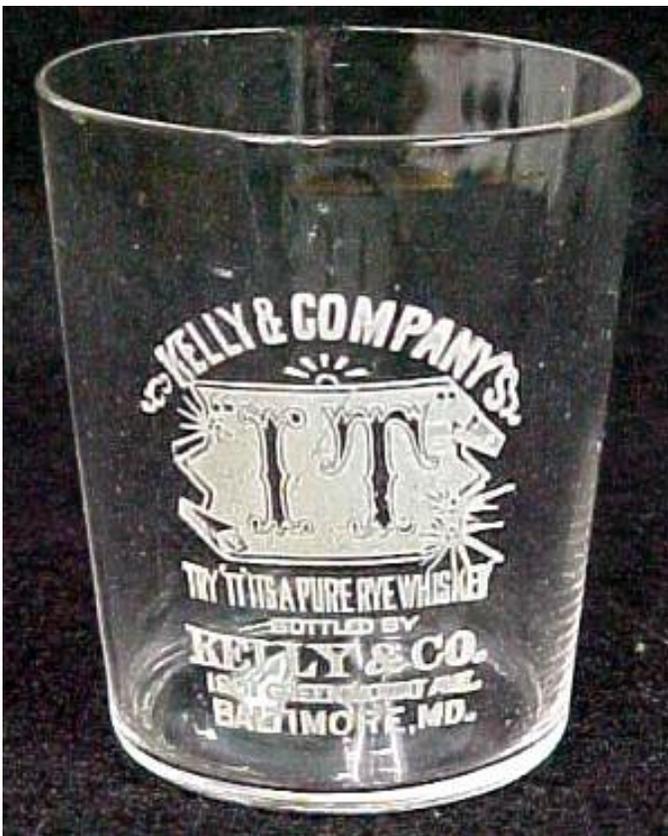


Fig. 6: "IT" Rye

### Balance and Restraint

Fancy etched illustrations are not the only characteristics of a top ten shot glass. Balance in design, restraint in decoration, and quality of the lettering also bestow desirability. This is true of the next two shot glasses, both of them flaunting their Baltimore origins.

The first is the Spring Garden Rye glass (Fig. 7) with its message entirely and effortlessly within an oval, including the brand name, the company name, and the city and state. It came from the Baltimore Distilling Company (1894-1919) which operated from several locations around Warner and Alluvian Streets during its 25 years in business.

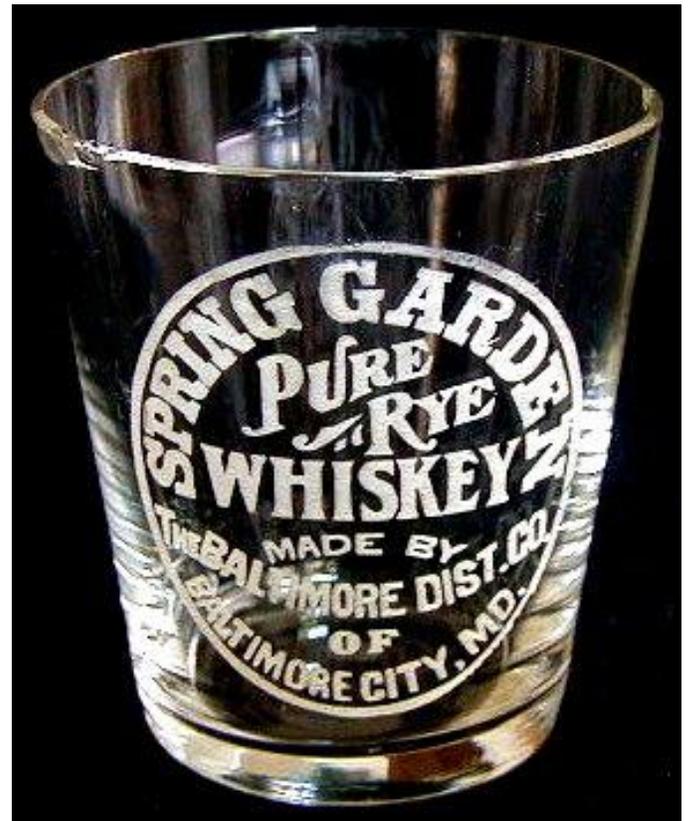


Fig. 7: Spring Garden Rye

It likely was a rectifier, not a true distiller, with brands names such as Balto Rye, Dundalk, Old Manor Pure Rye, and B.P.R. Spring Garden was a name used by several liquor merchants around the U.S. It had been trademarked by the Star Distillery of Cincinnati in 1905. It is unclear whether the Baltimore firm was a licensed distributor or a claim jumper.

Another well-designed shot glass advertised Cream of Baltimore Whiskey (Fig. 8). It features an etched flower-like design at the center and attractive lettering. It was issued by Henry H. Rosenheim & Son, Baltimore whiskey dealers from 1872 to 1919. Over that 47 year period, apparently as Henry's boys came and went in the firm, the name changed until 1888 when it became the same as shown on the glass.

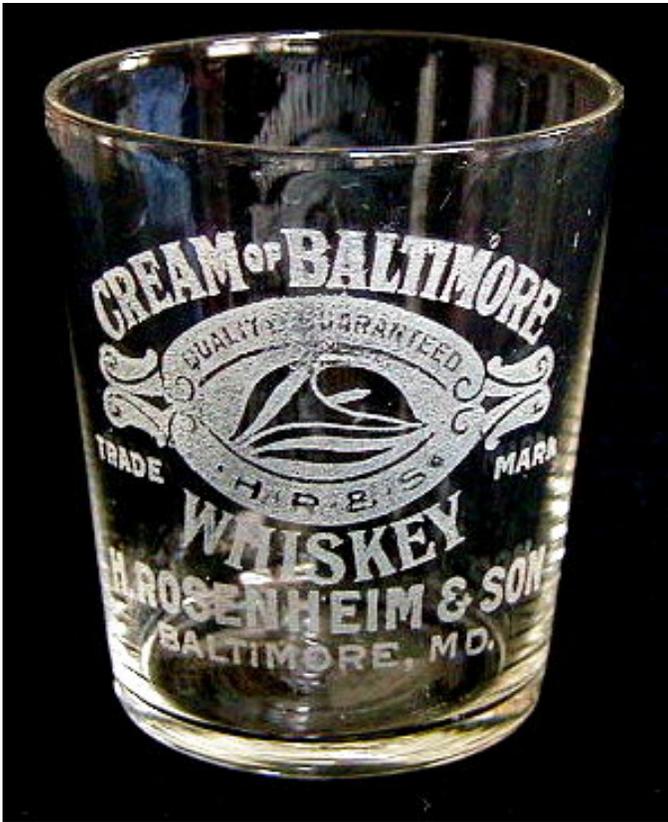


Fig. 8: Cream of Baltimore Whiskey

In addition to Cream of Baltimore, which it registered in 1906, the Rosenheim firm featured several brands. They included Brutus, Diamond Back, and Spring Dale whiskeys. For most of its existence, Henry H. Rosenheim & Son was located in the 300 and 400 blocks of W. Baltimore St.

### Fancy Calligraphy

Another way in which a shot glass can be “special” is to bear some fancy calligraphy. Our final two top ten nominees have that attribute. The first is the simple but elegant Little Corporal glass (Fig. 9). It was issued by Lambdin, Thompson & Co. which first shows up in Baltimore directories in 1899 at 34 E. Pratt. Company officers were Wm. A. Thompson, W.G. Bond, and D.G. Fluharty. Lambdin, Thompson registered the Little Corporal brand in 1905, the same year it moved to 117 Light Street. It also featured such other labels as Albion, Plymouth Rock, Sussex Club, and Village Choice whiskeys. Probably rectifiers, the firm existed for 20 years until becoming another victim of Prohibition in 1919.

The Altamont Whiskey glass, with its name in slanted script, has a similarly sophisticated look (Fig. 10). One variant bears a gold rim. N.W. Matthews & Co. was the issuing dealer. This outfit was listed in Baltimore business directories from 1888 to 1912. It moved with some frequency, being located successively on S. Calvert, two locations on E. Pratt, and, before terminating, on E. Lombard.

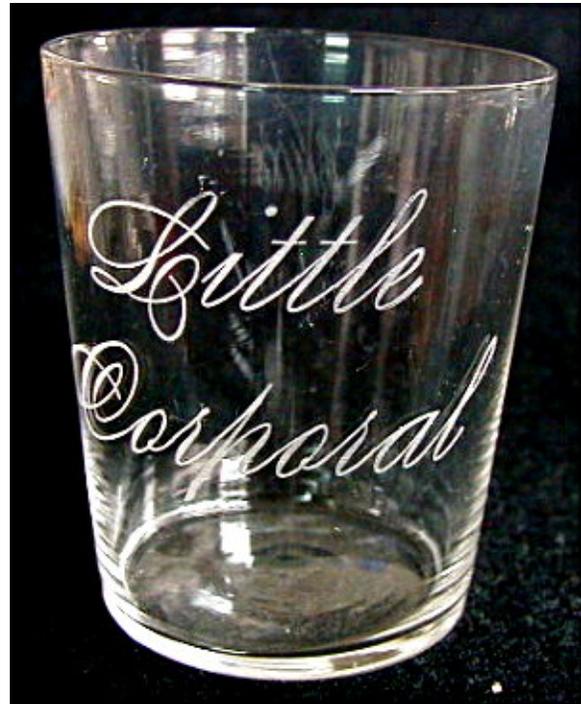


Fig. 9: Little Corporal Whiskey

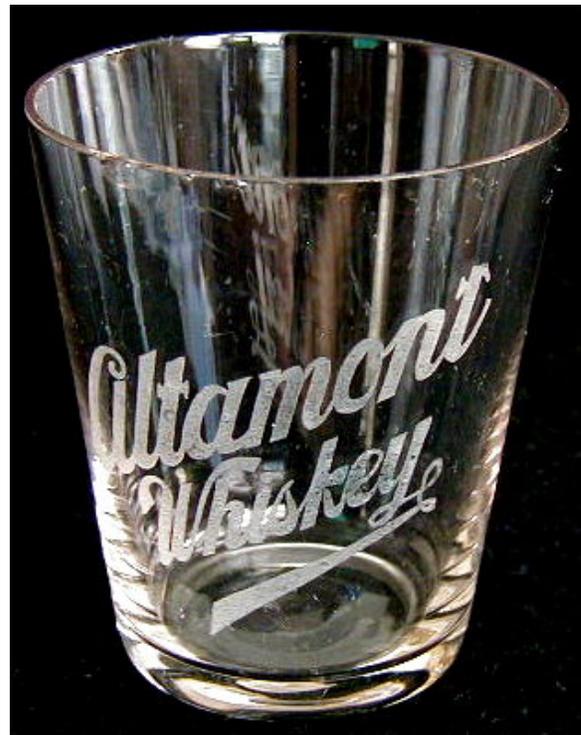


Fig. 10: Altamont Whiskey

There they are: My picks as the top ten pre-Pro Baltimore shot glasses. Let the challengers step forth!

**Notes:** The shot glasses for this article are through the courtesy of Robin Preston and his [www.pre-pro.com](http://www.pre-pro.com) website. The site features hundreds of shot glasses, including dozens from Maryland. Information about the issuing dealers and other brands also comes from Mr. Preston's energetic efforts in synthesizing material from other whiskey researchers and old business directories.