

Random Shots

by Robin R. Preston



Figure 1

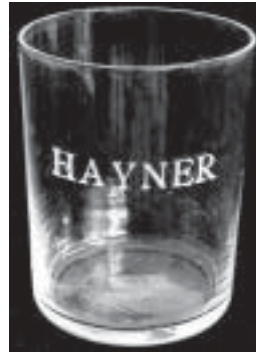


Figure 2

A collector doesn't have to spend *too* much time on eBay before running across an auction listing whose banner heading touts "Etched, pre-prohibition shot glass, VERY RARE, NO RESERVE!!!" Your heart quickens as the modem chatters and the page slowly loads, only to scroll down to find the most common of all pre-pro glasses, a lowly Hayner. You curse the day the word "rare" was applied to anything

other than prime rib, but also wonder just how rare or common well-known glasses from The Hayner, Kellerstrass and Detrick Distilling Companies actually are. This edition of Random Shots attempts to answer such questions by presenting a "Top 10" listing of shot glasses, ordered by frequency of appearance. It also considers how familiarity with a common glass has a way of breeding contempt that is often



undeserved.

The **Top 10** list is presented below. The data is derived from a comprehensive five-year record of glass sales from online auctions and other sources that, as of this writing, includes over 10,000 individual transactions. The complete record can be accessed online at www.pre-pro.com, although membership fee is required for access (trial memberships are available).

It will come as a surprise to no one that our lowly Hayner heads the Top 10 list, although I hadn't appreciated just how common this glass is until I'd crunched the numbers. After doing the math, it's clear that it out-strips all other pre-Pro glasses by a factor of almost two to one, appearing for sale at least once per week on average. Current value is around \$13.25.

The prevalence of this glass reflects the success of The Hayner Distilling Company in advertising and marketing its product

pre-Pro Top 10

| | Inscription | Occurance | Value |
|-----|--|-------------------|---------|
| #1 |  THE HAYNER DISTILLING CO. DAYTON, O. & ST. LOUIS, MO | Weekly | \$13.25 |
| #2 |  O! SO GOOD / RIEGER'S WHISKEY / J. RIEGER & CO. KANSAS CITY, MO. | Every two weeks | \$12.00 |
| #3 |  SUNNY BROOK / THE PURE FOOD WHISKEY (frosted picture of a man in a cap with INSPECTOR on its band) | Every three weeks | \$12.25 |
| #4 |  PAN AMERICAN / EXPOSITION / 1901 / WHEN YOU DRINK / DO OF ME THINK | Every three weeks | \$32.75 |
| #5 |  WOODLAND / WHISKEY / CRIGLER & CRIGLER / DISTILLERS / COVINGTON, KY. | Every month | \$14.50 |
| #6 |  Detrick / REGISTERED / DISTILLERY. / No. 60 / 10 th DISTRICT. OHIO. / DISTILLERS OF / PURE RYE & BOURBON / THE DETRICK DISTILLING CO. / DAYTON, OHIO | Every month | \$11.50 |
| #7 |  Kellerstrass / PURE RYE / DISTILLING CO. / KANSAS CITY. MO. | Every five weeks | \$19.75 |
| #8 |  LOCKBOX 290 / REGISTERED / DAYTON, O. U.S.A. | Every five weeks | \$14.25 |
| #9 |  MYERS & COMPANY / DISTILLERS / FULTON / WHISKEY / COVINGTON. KY. USA | Every five weeks | \$16.75 |
| #10 |  WALSH'S / SPECIAL / No. 4 / 4 FULL QUARTS \$3.00 / EXPRESS PAID / WALSH & CO. / DISTILLERY DISTRIBUTORS / 1828-1834 WASHINGTON STREET / BOSTON MASS. | Every five weeks | \$25.75 |

[e.g. **Figure 3**]. They claimed the title of “largest mail order house in the U.S.” and, indeed, they maintained offices in at least 14 U.S. cities at the height of their power. The company’s decline preceded national Prohibition by several years, largely because a goodly percentage of their income was derived from shipping liquor in plain brown packages across state lines into regions where local laws had already banned alcohol sales and use. The enactment of the Webb-Kenyon act of 1913 and its subsequent enforcement in 1917 closed this lucrative loophole and Hayner’s fortunes declined thereafter, but not before spreading their advertising premiums far and wide. Many of the common Hayner Distilling glasses have survived in mint condition so it’s likely that a warehouse cache of factory-fresh glasses in original wrappings were discovered in the years since Repeal.

Familiarity with the Hayner Distilling glass has a way of causing collectors to skip over it when assessing the contents of a display case, but it is an attractive shot that contains all the elements of a classic pre-Pro glass design. Hayner glasses in mint condition are crowned with a wide, rich gold rim [**Figure 1**]. The etched label combines a horseshoe for luck, a whiskey barrel and a generous helping of leafy grain stalks.

The Hayner Distilling glass is unusual in that there are no known design variants, or at least none that are known to the author. It’s also a cylindrical-shaped glass rather than the more common shot that tapers down from a 2" rim to a 1½" base. Cylinder glasses are relatively rare yet Hayner used them for this glass, a glass inscribed with the single word “HAYNER” [**Figure 2**], and for three “Lockbox 290”



Figure 4a

b

c

d

glasses (see Table).

The Hayner Distilling Co. also holds position #8 in the Top 10 list, this time with a glass that is familiarly known as the Lockbox 290 “short tail” variant [**Figure 4a**]. Lockbox 290 was a postal address in Dayton to which customers mailed in their orders. The “tail” mentioned above refers to the fact that in the “long tail” version, the upright on the numeral 9 drops below the line of text to produce a dangling tail, seen in **Figure 4c**.

Both Hayner short- and long-tail Lockbox glasses are easy to obtain and feature in most glass collections. Until recently, I had believed these to be the only two variants and had regarded them with as much respect as the Hayner cylinder that occupies pole position in the Top 10. However, while grooming the sales database prior to releasing it live on the net, I discovered an interesting lineage that may stretch back to George Truog, the artistic genius who founded the Maryland Glass Etching Works of Cumberland, Md., and whose work was featured in the Fall 2004 edition of *Random Shots*.

The link to Truog had originally been suggested by Mary Suplee, the granddaughter of the master etcher himself (Murschell, 2004). She’s long maintained that the horseshoe-and-barrel design is a Truog original (personal communication), even though evidence for such a link has failed to surface and no-one has ever reported finding a tell-tale GT signature on a Hayner glass.

However, the task of preparing the database for public consumption required that I tag every one of the 10,000 or so glass photos in the record with an id# so that they could be grouped for statistical

analysis. In practice, that meant that I had to make side-by-side comparisons of individual glasses to be sure that they were assigned to the correct group. In so doing, I became aware that there are at least four distinct Lockbox 290 glasses, compared in **Figures 4** above and **Figure 5** below. The four glasses are arranged to show devolution of label design and perhaps increasing age, although there is no way of dating any of the Hayner glasses with precision.

The common, “short tail” Lockbox on the far left [**Figure 4a**] appears to be the most recent. Note that the text is a standard



Figure 5a



Figure 5b



Figure 5c



Figure 5d



Figure 3: An advertisement for Hayner Rye appearing in an 1898 edition of Scribner’s magazine.

font with clean, straight verticals and no distinguishing characteristics. The label is notable for a barrelhead that consists of three panels, with the center piece being much wider than the two outer members. Note also the rectangular outline in 5 o'clock position on the barrelhead: it contains a line of three dots [Figure 5a]. The area below the barrel and between the prongs of the horseshoe is empty: the grain stalks that are evident to either side of the barrel do not extend into this area.

The next glass to the right [Figure 4b] is a rare "short tail" Lockbox 290 variant. Although clearly a different glass, most of the distinguishing features noted in the common version are seen here also. Indeed, the main difference between this and the more common version is in the area below the barrel, where we see that it's occupied by stems of the grain stalks [Figure 5b].

The next in the series [Figure 4c] is the familiar "long tail" Lockbox. There are several significant differences between this glass and the previous two. The barrelhead now consists of six distinct panels and the three dots appearing in the rectangle at 5 o'clock appear to have been replaced by three characters [Figure 5c]. These are so small that they are almost impossible to discern, even when the etching is crisp and clear. After having put several examples under a loupe, my best guess is that they represent a small heart with a dot over it, the letter S in an old English font, and the number 9. The area below the barrel is now congested with stems and finally, note how distinctive the font used to spell out the line "Dayton.O.U.S.A." has become. The middle "O" (for Ohio) swells at its center and the entire line is sufficiently crude that it appears to have been etched free-hand. To anyone who has spent time studying George Truog's work, this line positively reeks of the Master's touch.

The final glass in the series [Figure 4d] is an exceptionally rare example that I've seen in vitro on only two occasions. In stark contrast to the other Hayner glasses described above, the label is etched on a regular shot rather than on a cylinder and both glasses that I've had a chance to examine have been shot through with the spider-web crazing that I associate with extreme age. There are very subtle variations in design between this and the previous glass, but the handiwork on this glass is even more strongly reminiscent of Truog (note the number 2 on the upper line

for example: it would look completely at home on one of his Victor Liver Syrup glasses). But there is no tell-tale GT signature.

This interesting story would have ended here were it not for a glass that I recently encountered among Ken Schwartz's collection [Figure 6]. It's not a Hayner, but it is another uncommon cylinder glass. The label advertises Cabinet Bourbon supplied by Geo Buento Shipping Co., origins unknown. The resemblance between the horseshoe-and-barrel-with-grain-stalks design on this glass is obvious even to an untrained eye, even though the details of the barrel head seen on Hayner glasses is lacking here. Most importantly, however, this glass was designed and signed by George Truog: a tiny transparent GT appears on the right-hand prong of the horseshoe below the barrel.

Although evidence is circumstantial at best, we might speculate that the design that Truog created for Buento Shipping was recycled with minor modification for the Hayner Lockbox 290, and later, with further tweaking, for the Hayner Distilling glass at the head of our Top 10 list. The converse is equally possible - that the original design was for Hayner and that it was this that was modified for use on the Buento cylinder. Regardless, it is probably significant that the Hayner family had registered the distinctive horseshoe-barrel-grain-stalks design as a trademark and was using it on company letterheads in 1894 and probably earlier [Figure 7]. Truog established his Maryland Glass Etching Works in 1893 but had been designing glasses for other glass houses since 1883 (Murschell 2002, 2004). We have no further information about Buento Shipping Co., but see the inset on the next page [Figures 8 - 9] for more on the suggested link between Truog, cylinder



Figure 6

[Photograph courtesy of, and copyright Ken Schwartz, 2006]

glasses, and the horseshoe-barrel-grain-stalk design.

We'll re-visit the Top 10 list in some future edition on Random Shots because there are other stories here worth telling. Meanwhile, don't be so quick to hit the your browser's "back" button when that eBay listing with a heading "MINT, etched pre-Pro shot glass, VERY RARE, NO RESERVE!!" features a Hayner cylinder. It might very well be rare glass after all.

Robin is an enthusiastic collector of shot glasses and maintains the collector's website www.pre-pro.com. He can be reached at: 245 N 15th St., MS#488, Philadelphia, PA 19102, E-mail: oldwhiskey@pre-pro.com.



Figure 7

The classic horseshoe-barrel-grain-stalk design on a Hayner billhead dated 1894.

The cylinder is a relatively uncommon pre-Pro glass form, accounting for less than 2% of the total number of known glasses. 75% of these include a Truog signature or are have been linked to Truog, suggesting that they were preferred for application of his designs. Given that they avoid having to compensate for the distortion associated with etching a tapered glass [Figure 8], one can easily understand

why this might be so.

The Green Brier glass at left [Figure 9] is yet one more example of a cylinder being etched with a horseshoe-barrel-grain-stalk design. While there has never been a suggestion that this glass might have Truog origins, the coincidence is striking. This glass was issued by Chas Nelson of Nashville, Tenn., and is in the Ralph Van Brocklin collection.



^ Figure 8

Creating a label for a common shot requires that the artist adjust the design to compensate for the reduction in area as the glass tapers down from rim to base. In practice, this meant designing on an arc, as seen in this original Truog sketch for the 1905 Souvenir glass.

Reproduced from Murschell, 2004, with permission



< Figure 9

Courtesy and copyright of Ralph Van Brocklin, 2005

References:

- Murschell, D. (2002) *Glass of Cumberland Maryland Area*; self published
 Murschell, D. (2004) *George Truog and His Art*; self published.