



FROM  
HERE

The pedigree of *One* bottle is proof beyond doubt,  
doubt is unreasonable unless the reason for doubt is  
circumstantial proving doubt is reasonable by not proving  
doubt is unreasonable to the pedigree of *One* bottle.

FROM  
HERE





# Optimistic CYNICISM

– Steven R. Libbey  
(*mrbbottles*)

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Before a bottle is found it must be, “*Lost.*”

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(*Imagined*) As the 17th Madison, Wisconsin Infantry organized at Camp Randall March of 1862 one company member packed pulmonic balsam knowing more than any weapon or warrior, disease was the most prolific killer of The Civil War. Pulmonic balsam immediately cured the most-violent Coughs, Colds, Croupes and all complaints of the Lungs and Throat, as if by magic. A few others packed mineral water to reinvigorate on their journeys. We can’t say what the mineral waters did, they weren’t well enough documented here in Wisconsin.

Where did the patriots of Madison’s heroic 17th ‘get’ these bottles full of goodness? Wherever the bottles were lost, ONE, started in Wisconsin.



Camp Randall Wisconsin 1862




Bottles without cities, unfettered by concrete documentation, regardless of assembly of circumstance, have too wishful effervescent flavors for my palate. It's always colored or pontiled or one of a kind Civil War era or earlier bottle pedigree 'proven' circumstantially.

Wisconsin collectors have no cobalt, pontiled, sided soda bottles UNLESS the city-less iron pontil Taylor Bro. from Chicago is Milwaukee

time. Could they have commissioned bottles? This super city-less bottle with super sketchy documentation is purported to be the oldest, rarest and best ever Wisconsin soda bottle. I'll save my faith for the sweet baby Jesus until conclusive evidence is found on bottles, is all.

City-less colored sided pontil bottle heritage is purposeful, regardless of accuracy.

## "Wisconsin collectors have no cobalt, pontiled, sided soda bottles UNLESS the city-less iron pontil Taylor Bro. from Chicago is Milwaukee too"



too. Yes, Taylor Brothers had an office in Milwaukee AND a huge business in Chicago with a half dozen Chicago marked pontiled bottles. If Anheuser-Busch sells a bottle of beer in Milwaukee is the bottle from Milwaukee? We have no green pontiled mineral water bottles unless a business opened late enough to not be in the 1849 directory and out of business soon enough to not be in the 1851 directory, ordered embossed bottles from the East Coast? An M. Kom lived thirty miles south west of Milwaukee roughly the same trip in 1850 as driving Milwaukee to California now. He traveled EAST for two days to get to his Great WESTERN bottling works. AND he moved to Chicago from Burlington in 1852. There was a ship and a spring and a railroad named Great Western at that

Once a bottle has an accepted pedigree based on circumstantial conclusions, interest and values rise. I've witnessed the king makers who lay royal scepters atop some bottles declaring, MILWAUKEE review equally inconclusive evidence of bottles they don't own with cynicism. Optimistic/circumstantial documentation of antique American glass does move research forward. The optimists, like bloodhounds, get onto the scent of gun smoke and follow it directly to the conclusion they started with. Somehow it seems to always boil down to ownership. Many times owner optimism leads to indisputable proof, many times 'optimistic-validating-conclusion of-bottle-origin' requires others to suspend disbelief.

Furious? Thinking, "Why you baggen on the hard work and the doubtful conclusions historian collectors are forced to make after bottlers or glassworks or label makers forgot the city mrbottles?" Consider, if every antiquity had a cynical historian as gate keeper to its documented history, many artifacts would struggle for collector attachment. 'This' works, 'documentation' motivates collectors to carry the objects forward to future generations like Cuckoo bird eggs compel loving care.

Who better to make a cynical collector rethink faith in 'The Ethereal Origin of Local Bottle That Doesn't Say Local' than an LSU campus minister?





—The Prodigious Louisianan Ande Johnson History Hunting Family

## "I think I found the BEST BOTTLE of my LIFE!!!"

Enter **Ande Johnson**, "When I was interviewing to come to Baton Rouge I had seen a 'ditch' or dry creek bed I wanted to check out. For many reasons (3 small children included) I didn't get around to it. Research proved there was history in that ditch dating back to the 1700s. I just never got there until a couple of weeks ago. It was going to be a long week. I had a window after work and decided to finally go check out this place.

As soon as I got there I noticed some really good Civil War-era bottles broken in half. I was excited hoping to find a dump or a trail to the Mother lode. The Mother lode never materialized in terms of quantity of bottles. (Author's note – YET!!!) After walking some 50 yards I saw aqua right in middle/side of the ditch. Laying on the side of this ditch was partially covered in dirt, a small aqua medicine bottle. My first thought was it's a TOC medicine like so many I'd found. When I picked it up I immediately saw the open pontil mark on the bottom of the bottle. I was almost in denial as I wiped the dirt away with my shirt

to see it was embossed, Dr Bourbon's! It looked like it was in incredible condition. I carefully put the bottle in my pocket, scared to death I might trip and break it. I looked around for a few more minutes. My thirty minute window of hunt time was up, I got in my truck.

On the way home I stopped to get fuel (Author's note – as a digger diver I have to wonder is Andy talking carbohydrates or gas?) and started googling Dr Bourbon's, Balsam, Pulmonic, Medicine, etc. At that point after getting very little/ no matches on Google I realized I might have something very special. I went home so excited to tell Owen and Knox my 7 and 5 year old boys AND treasure hunting partners.

My first words, "I think I found the BEST BOTTLE of my LIFE!!!" They were as excited as me. That evening I did more searches and found the only info on a Dr Bourbon's at Peach Ridge Glass. I got on antiques bottles.net, a site I love, to check in and learn at. I was excited,





## "I looked at the post and assumed it isn't likely the same manufacturer. The bottles I knew said Bourbon and then apostrophe S"

I finally had something to post and get feedback on. When I woke up the next morning I was amazed at the feedback. At this point I emailed mrbottles who owns the two Dr Bourbon's pontiled bottles referenced on Peach Ridge Glass to get his thoughts on if these bottles could be related."

What happened to the bottle forum? (Topic for a FOHBC article?)

I received three emails about a forum post at Antique Bottles.net. (Once, the most vigorous conglomerate of excited active American bottle collectors) I looked at the post and assumed it isn't likely the same manufacturer. The bottles I knew said Bourbon and then apostrophe S. The bottle in the forum said Bourbon. So a guy in the 1850s with a proprietary cure decided not to use the possessive on his Pulmonic Balsam bottle like he did on both of his Forest Bitters bottles? Sure, the only thing that didn't seem 'right on' was that the bottle was not colored and figural. AND the guy who posted it "Adhdigger" didn't bother to post pictures of the side or sides embossed Pulmonic Balsam. Kind of key to the bottle description he wrote, I thought, and a pretty huge omission. I figured

Adhdigger saw my bitters bottles, assumed it was the same Bourbon, added the S to his posting because his picture didn't have one and that he had seen a very similar bottle with pulmonic balsam embossed and assumed it was the same-kind-of-bottle even though it didn't say pulmonic balsam on THIS bottle. Still, extremely interesting, worthy of a detailed look. (My suppressed 'optimist collector self' surfacing)

The internet worked as it should.

There were links to my bottles on Ferdinand Meyer's site Peach Ridge Glass in the forum. And that links back to me so that was cool.

I posted most of what I know about Dr Bourbon's Aromatic Forest Bitters to Antique Bottles.net. Madison, Wisconsin is perfectly clearly embossed on both the iron pontiled quart and pint bitters bottles. I dug in to see what I could find. First emailing a collector with a cracked example of the bitters asking if the pulmonic might be Madison, Wisconsin. I also emailed a famous Wisconsin bottle researcher and author who lives in Madison. Both gentlemen have done a lot to document city-less and state-less



bottles accurately. I tried googling Dr. Bourbon Pulmonic Balsam AND again with the 'S that wasn't in the forum picture. I got the forum and my mrbottles.com. Searching generically for "Bourbon" I realized Bourbon is more than a name of a Dr who made bitters, (and potentially Pulmonic Balsam) in Madison in the 1850s by the nearly sixty five million results. Adding Dr to Bourbon brought it down to manageable twelve million results, PROVING bottles without cities are from a city is harder than you might guess considering how often it is done. I added the possessive apostrophe S achieving another hundred thousand results bringing it up to twelve million nine hundred thousand.

A bottle found in a city and state is from that city or state.

The protagonist of this story is and will always be from where it was found. Regardless of where it is from. All bottles circumstantially documented rely on reported origin of find. A bottle found within two hundred miles of optimistic point of origin may as well have been pried from the hands of the proprietor as they filled it in the circumstantially documented business location.

from Baton Rouge. My bottom line; In the last couple of years, I've repatriated to Wisconsin; a Wisconsin Territory jug FROM Nevada, an 1870's figural pig bottle FROM Washington State another figural Pig FROM California and two strap sided Milwaukee Flasks FROM Florida among others. Anything FROM anywhere ended up everywhere in the nineteenth century.

Next, I searched the internet for every derivation of "Dr. Bourbon's" and "Pulmonic" and "Balsam" and "antique" and "bottle" I could think of. The results, when they existed, were my mrbottles.com, Ferdinand Meyer's Peach Ridge Glass and the Antique Bottle.net post Ande created.

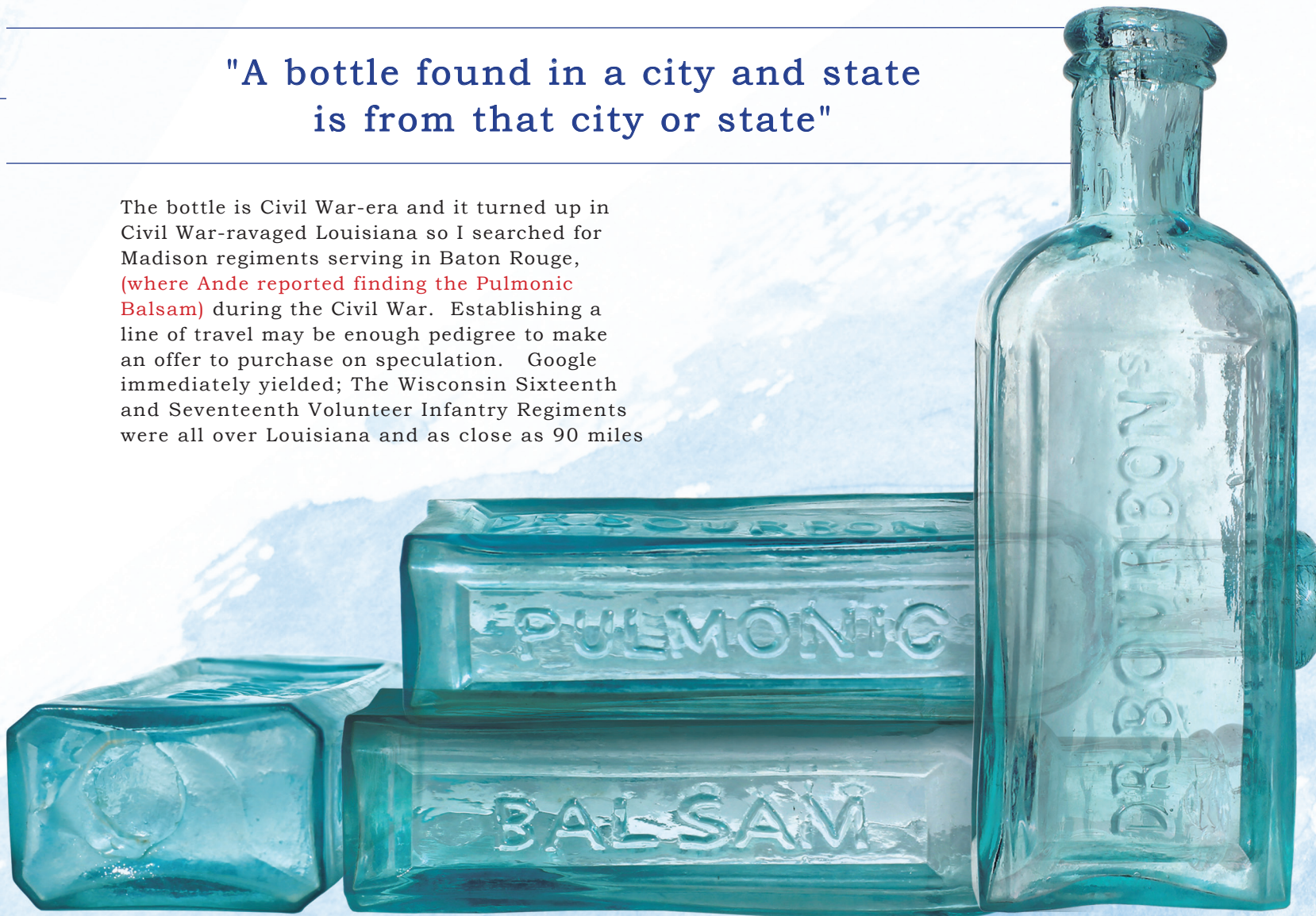
It had been seven months since the second and third Hermann pig came home, I was eager for more repatriating. Not being able to prove or disprove the bottle was Madison my inner optimist decided to see if Ande would sell. I made a generous offer. Ande said it was the best bottle of his short yet now famous bottle hunting career. I told Ande, "If you love it, you are as good an owner as anyone, don't sell." "If you do sell, I would love the opportunity

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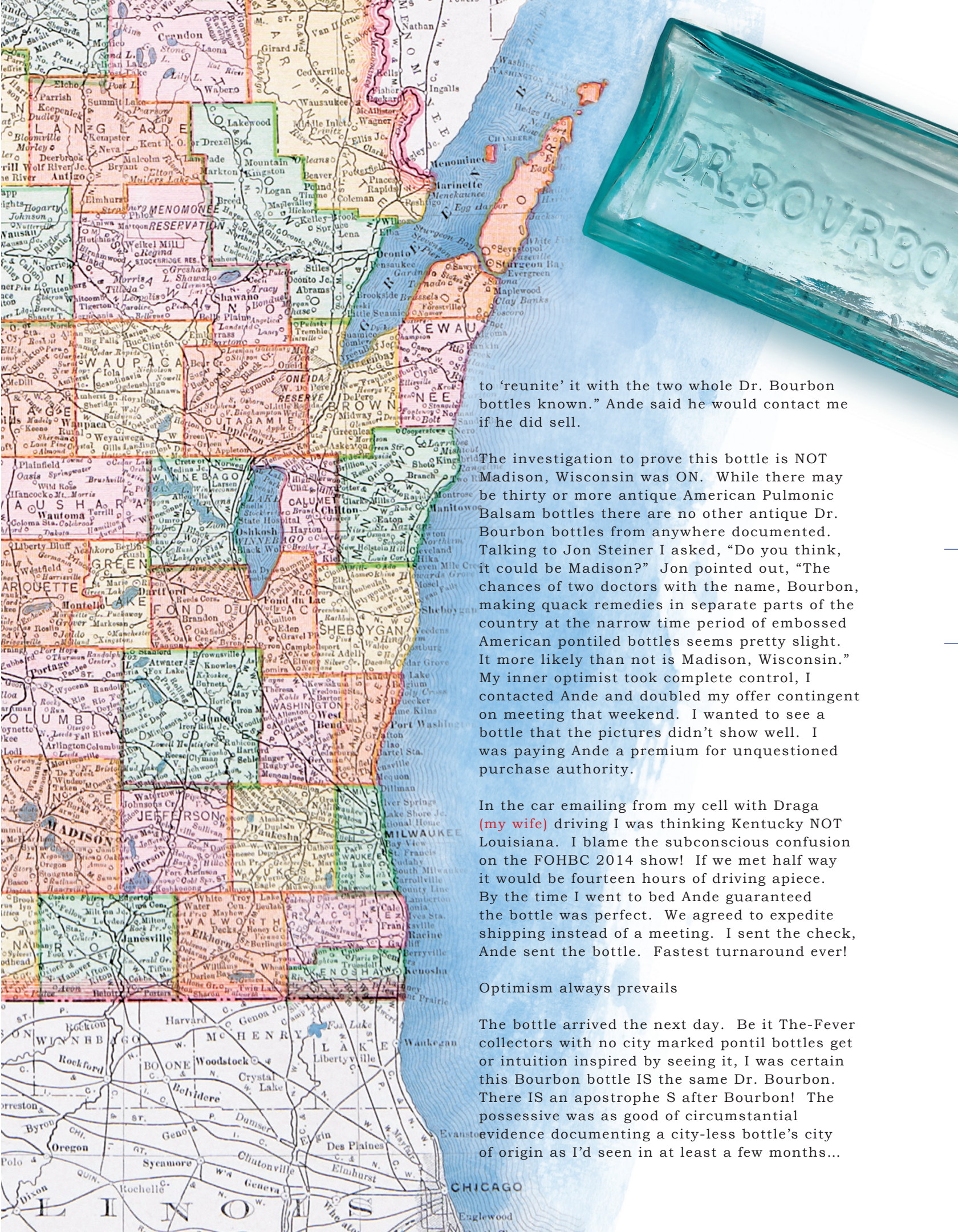
## "A bottle found in a city and state is from that city or state"

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The bottle is Civil War-era and it turned up in Civil War-ravaged Louisiana so I searched for Madison regiments serving in Baton Rouge, (where Ande reported finding the Pulmonic Balsam) during the Civil War. Establishing a line of travel may be enough pedigree to make an offer to purchase on speculation. Google immediately yielded; The Wisconsin Sixteenth and Seventeenth Volunteer Infantry Regiments were all over Louisiana and as close as 90 miles







to 'reunite' it with the two whole Dr. Bourbon bottles known." Ande said he would contact me if he did sell.

The investigation to prove this bottle is NOT Madison, Wisconsin was ON. While there may be thirty or more antique American Pulmonic Balsam bottles there are no other antique Dr. Bourbon bottles from anywhere documented. Talking to Jon Steiner I asked, "Do you think, it could be Madison?" Jon pointed out, "The chances of two doctors with the name, Bourbon, making quack remedies in separate parts of the country at the narrow time period of embossed American pontiled bottles seems pretty slight. It more likely than not is Madison, Wisconsin." My inner optimist took complete control, I contacted Ande and doubled my offer contingent on meeting that weekend. I wanted to see a bottle that the pictures didn't show well. I was paying Ande a premium for unquestioned purchase authority.

In the car emailing from my cell with Draga (my wife) driving I was thinking Kentucky NOT Louisiana. I blame the subconscious confusion on the FOHBC 2014 show! If we met half way it would be fourteen hours of driving apiece. By the time I went to bed Ande guaranteed the bottle was perfect. We agreed to expedite shipping instead of a meeting. I sent the check, Ande sent the bottle. Fastest turnaround ever!

Optimism always prevails

The bottle arrived the next day. Be it The-Fever collectors with no city marked pontil bottles get or intuition inspired by seeing it, I was certain this Bourbon bottle IS the same Dr. Bourbon. There IS an apostrophe S after Bourbon! The possessive was as good of circumstantial evidence documenting a city-less bottle's city of origin as I'd seen in at least a few months...





**DR. BOURBON'S  
Aromatic Forest Bitters!**  
**WHAT THEY WILL DO:**

**THEY WILL CURE** Dyspepsia, Indigestion, Liver Complaint, Jaundice, Headache, Biliousness, &c.— They will prevent Ague and Fever.  
*A few Reasons why people should Buy the FOREST BITTERS in preference to all other Remedies:*

- 1—They not only cure, but give strength and vigor to the system.
  - 2—They are very pleasant to take, and produce a fine appetite.
  - 3—It is the cheapest medicine in the world.
  - 4—One bottle will always prove their efficacy and those who have once used them will use no other.
- Persons traveling should always have a bottle with them, and add a little to their water or spirits whenever they drink, as it will prevent the ill effects of change of water and climate.
- The Aromatic Forest Bitters are also superior to all others for Bar purposes, giving an agreeable flavor, and at the same time keeping the digestive organs in a healthy condition.

**Price—Qt. Bottles 75 cts.; Pints 50 cts**

**DR. BOURBON'S  
PULMONIC BALSAM!**

For the immediate and certain cure of Coughs, Colds, Whooping Cough, Croup, Hoarseness, Bronchitis, and also an invaluable remedy for Consumption. In order to place this valuable remedy within reach of all, it is put at the low price of **25 Cents per Bottle**, and is warranted to effect more cures than any Dollar medicine before the public.

Address all orders for the above medicines to  
**COLWELL & CO., PROPRIETORS,**  
Madison, Wis.

Also for sale by **BROWER & VAN DUZER,**  
Wholesale Agents,  
L. TILMONT, Prairie du Chien.

From Prairie du Chien Leader December 19th 1857



**ATTENTION! CITIZENS AND  
SUFFERERS!** Call at COLWELL'S  
Drug Store and purchase a bottle of Dr. Bourbon's  
**Pulmonic Balsam**, which immediately cures the most  
violent Coughs, Colds, Croup and all complaints of the  
Lungs and Throat, as if by magic. Thousands are now  
suffering who know not how to get cured. Let all come  
and bear witness that a safe, speedy and ridiculously  
cheap remedy exists, the price being only **25 cents per  
bottle.** sept4

From Daily State Journal Official Paper Of The City - Madison Wis. - Saturday Evening September 26th 1857

**All I Ask is to Try Me!**  
**THE GREATEST**

**AND  
CHEAPEST MEDICINE OF THE AGE**  
**Dr. Bourbon's Aromatic Forest Bitters.**

COMPOSED entirely of Barks and Roots, and  
ed with various Aromatics, which render  
pleasant to the taste, and are highly beneficial  
system. They are so Combined as to set  
ly upon the cause of disease, and forming  
of the best remedies in the world for Jaundice  
iver Complaints, in all their forms; Dys-  
Costiveness, Humors of the Blood and  
Indigestion, Piles, Headache, Dizziness  
um or Acidity of the stomach, Langnor,  
mess, Loss of appetite, Debility. Bilious  
ases, and all Impurities of the Blood, no  
matter what the cause may be; Fever and Ague  
Broken up and cured at once.

They are pleasant to take, highly useful at all  
times, and sure to do good. They cleanse the  
bowels, purify the blood, heal, strengthen, regu-  
late and keep in order the whole system!  
Everybody should use them. Over 15,000  
bottles were used last year, thus proving it the  
most popular Medicine ever known.

Price only 50cts, for Pint Bottles and 75cts for  
bottles containing one quart.

Also Dr. Bourbon's Pulmonic Balsam, for the  
certain cure of Coughs, Colds, and all Lung com-  
plaints,

**PRICE ONLY 25 CENTS.**

Direct all lettersto Colwell & Co., Madi-  
son.

**Also for Sale By  
SPRAGUE & PETT;**

**E. JOHNSON. — AND — Watertown.**

Watertown Democrat March 25th 1856

**Dr. Bourbon's Forest Bitters**  
will cure Biliousness.

**Dr. Bourbon's Pulmonic Balsam,**  
will cure Coughs.

**Dr. Bourbon's Forest Bitters,**  
will cure Dyspepsia.

**Dr. Bourbon's Pulmonic Balsam,**  
will cure Colds.

**Dr. Bourbon's Forest Bitters,**  
will cure Indigestion.

**Dr. Bourbon's Pulmonic Balsam,**  
will cure Asthma.

**Dr. Bourbon's Forest Bitters,**  
will cure Liver Complaints.

**Dr. Bourbon's Pulmonic Balsam,**  
will cure Hooping Coughs.

**Dr. Bourbon's Forest Bitters,**  
will cure Jaundice.

**Dr. Bourbon's Pulmonic Balsam,**  
will cure Croup.

**Dr. Bourbon's Forest Bitters,**  
will cure Headache.

**Dr. Bourbon's Pulmonic Balsam,**  
will cure Bronchial affections.

**Dr. Bourbon's Forest Bitters,**  
will cure Fever and Ague.

**Dr. Bourbon's Pulmonic Balsam,**  
will cure Consumption.

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**Dr. Bourbon's Forest Bitters,**  
will cure Headache.

**Dr. Bourbon's Pulmonic Balsam,**  
will cure Bronchial affections.

## "the quack cure IS the Doctor Bourbon I KNOW"

The possessive and the quack cure IS the  
Doctor Bourbon I KNOW.

Now to prove it. Tick----- tock, days and  
no response from the two people who might  
have an opinion. Ande was going to send his  
story of finding the bottle for me to eventually  
incorporate into a story that would 'prove' the  
bottle was Madison. ;) While waiting I did more  
"research." Where to look? Grasping at straws I  
found the Madison Historical Society and sent a  
question. My question;

Message: Hello, I have two Dr. Bourbon's  
Aromatic Forest Bitters bottles from Madison  
Wisconsin. Dating to the late 1850s early 1860s.  
There is almost no information available on the  
company. Is there any resource I can access that  
is likely to have any information on the company?  
There are the two bottles and one ad with limited  
information. Being pointed in the right direction  
or any help would be very much appreciated.  
Thanks, Steven (I expected to have to create  
and overwhelming body of conjecture and  
circumstance to "prove" inconclusively the bottle  
had a relationship to Dr. Bourbon's Aromatic  
Forest Bitters or Madison or Wisconsin.)

The response; Hi Steve: Thank you for getting in  
touch with the Wisconsin Historical Society.

I checked Newspaper Archive, a subscription  
digital database, using the phrase "Aromatic Forest  
Bitters" and found 130 entries. I checked through  
them and they appear to have all been placed in  
a local Madison paper between 1856 and 1857.  
I'm attaching one of the advertisements for your  
information. They may change, but do appear to  
have been placed frequently in the newspaper.

As a Wisconsin resident, you also have access to  
Newspaper Archive. It is available through the  
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's  
Badger link website. You might want to speak  
with a local librarian to get you started with it,  
although it is available to you at home through  
your computer. A bit of initial instruction may  
help though.

I hope this is helpful.



Yes, helpful!

Teach a man to fish and feed him for life.

I have already tried to verify other bottles sans state or city are Wisconsin with no luck. I highly recommend newspaper archive to every researching collector!

I just started popping through the pages Newspaper Archive served up. In less than minutes there was no need for a smoking gun, I was beholding a metaphorical 'photograph of a manufacturer's full confession written in his own hand at the scene of the crime in a mixture of Pulmonic Balsam and Aromatic Forest bitters.' Dozens, literally dozens of ads from all over Wisconsin PROVE beyond optimistic desire or cynical doubt Dr. Bourbon's Pulmonic Balsam is only the second whole, embossed Wisconsin pontiled medicine bottle and IS absolutely FROM the same Doctor Bourbon Madison, Wisconsin.

Retrospect from Ande Johnson,

"I wish I could say that my finding the Dr. Bourbon's medicine bottle had something to do with my brilliance or my incredible bottle digging skills. However, like most treasures this bottle was right where everyone was, yet where nobody was looking. (Author's note – Ande is mistaken. He found it because of his prodigious instinct. He will undoubtedly find more historic glass. People with the shine do) I just happened to look. I moved to Louisiana over a year and a half ago from Orlando. About 5 years ago I got a metal detector which was a catalyst for

many good things including a love for finding treasures, history, and especially "old" bottles. If you know anything about Orlando there is not a lot of opportunity to find things older than the 1890's. I worked hard to find every bottle that was made before 1900 and I enjoyed a lot of the TOC bottles I found. When I moved to Baton Rouge I was extremely excited to be living in a place that had European history dating back to the 17th century and tons of Civil War history. Since I have been here I have gotten the opportunity to find a bunch of civil war relics and some pretty cool soda and milk bottles. I have found some heart breakers (broken civil war era flasks, whiskey's etc) some pontiled.

After weeks of corresponding with mrbottles there were many things going on that helped me make a decision to sell to him. First, we are in the process of adopting and we need money to help bring our treasure home. Two, mrbottles clearly appreciated this bottle as much as I did (if not more) and his passion and research were phenomenal. Third and last, either I put it in my safe where no one could see it or risk one of my kids breaking this bottle (which almost happened within 24 hours of having it).

I no longer own the bottle. I do have a few replacements that mrbottles sent me to display and to be physical reminders of my "Best Bottle Ever". I also have some money to help us move forward in the adoption process and mrbottles has all three known to exist whole Dr Bourbon's."

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## **ANDE'S DR. BOURBON'S PULMONIC BALSAM IS THE THIRD KNOWN EXAMPLE OF ANY EMBOSSSED PONTILED WISCONSIN MEDICINE BOTTLE AND ONLY THE SECOND WHOLE.**

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The other *whole* being Fess Milwaukie and the damaged being Uncle Sam's Cough Cure Oconomowoc. There are not even shards of any other example! This Dr. Bourbon's has a quack remedy proudly embossed on it and it may be the earliest pontiled bottle from the state of Wisconsin. I don't really believe it's the oldest pontiled bottle from Wisconsin BUT if I write it maybe other people will?



## EVERY BOTTLE HAS A STORY

THE Dr. Bourbon's Pulmonic Balsam's story circumstantially proves optimistic cynicism is undeniably deniably a way to prove or disprove where any artifact is or isn't FROM. This bottle's story, this individual bottle, will always be FROM Baton Rouge, FROM the Legendary and Prodigious Louisiana Ande Johnson History Hunting Family, FROM Madison, FROM Wisconsin and is proudly served up to you FROM [mrbottles.com](http://mrbottles.com) and FROM the Wisconsin Antique & Advertising Club.

See it in 3D at [Wisantique.com](http://Wisantique.com)

– Steven R. Libbey  
([mrbottles](http://mrbottles.com))

