

## The Grand Slam of Bottles?

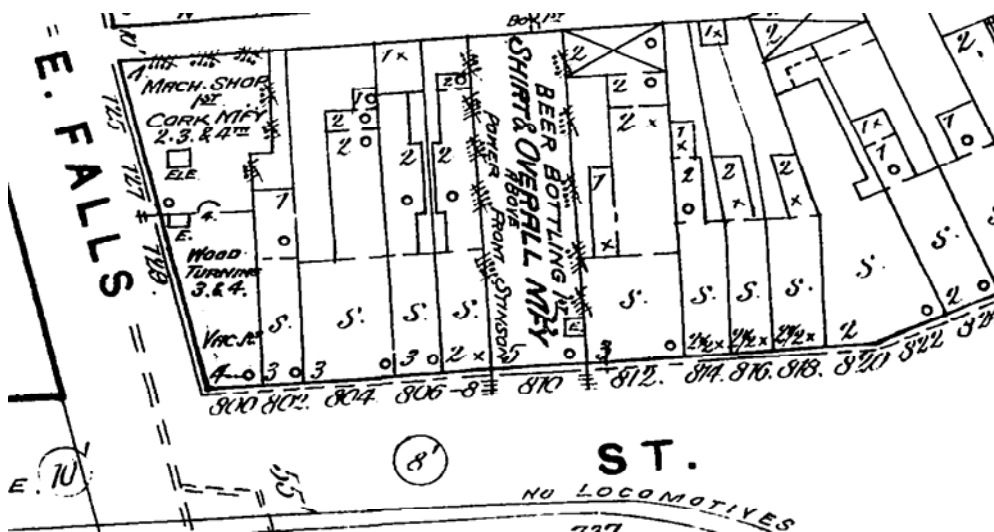
By Greg Franklin

Over the last several years there have been Baltimore Branch, Staten Island Bottling Company bottles selling with narratives connecting the company with Babe Ruth's father. These bottles have sold from \$400- \$5000 and have been represented from auction houses from Ebay to Sotheby's.

This article has been generated in order to clarify the connection of George Herman Ruth Sr. to the Staten Island Brewing Company.

### From the Keg to the Bottle

Staten Island Bottling Company (SIBC) established a presence in on the West side of Baltimore before 1880 and participated in the 1880 Baltimore City anniversary with one wagon advertising the company and their services. The bottling plant was located at 2206 to 2212 Frederick Ave. Between 1888 and 1889 SIBC closed up on the West side of Baltimore and moved to 810 E. Pratt Street in East Baltimore.



*By 1890 the bottling house occupied an area in the 4-floor location sharing space with the Stuart B Keith shirt and overall Manufactory.*

The bottling house continues at this location with Stuart Keith's company through 1900 but SIBC is out of business by 1901-02 and only the Stuart Keith business is at the location. A detailed map of the address indicates that SIBC only functioned for bottling and there are no provisions or apparatus located on the property for a brewery. Since the company is listed as a bottler any beer product would have been produced at another site, shipped in kegs and bottled at the location. This is also confirmed by the company's listing as Bottlers and not Breweries in Baltimore City Directories and newspaper advertisements.

As a side note to help better understand what closures were generally used on beer bottles used in Baltimore and surrounding areas through the years I provide the following information. William Painter was the developer of the Baltimore loop seal in 1885 and the Crown Cork Seal in 1891 as well as many other closure types. Painter and Crown Cork & Seal marketed these designs and they were received quite well in Maryland and the surrounding States.

Hand tooled blobs up until 1905

Bottles embossed "Registered" or "This Bottle Not To Be Sold" 1893 and later

Baltimore Loop Seals 1885-1905

Hand tooled Crown Cork Seal 1892 to 1915 or earlier.

Known SIBC bottles used in Baltimore were mainly of the slug plate version and were embossed BALTIMORE, MD on the bottle. As a new business venture in Baltimore it would have been important for the company to use its bottle as an advertisement. Listing Baltimore would encourage local customers to "buy local", be aware of the company location and increase the potential for the bottles to be returned for future use and refund of deposit. A blob top version without a slug plate from SIBC appears to be the first bottle followed soon thereafter by a couple of versions from the SIBC that have the years 1891 and 1893 in the slug plate on the bottle. The 1891 and 1893 bottles were topped with William Painters Baltimore loop seal and do not have any mention of George Ruths.



*The embossing on the Staten Island Bottling Company bottles listing George Ruths as the Proprietor.*

*The RUTHS version was made by a glassmaker that used S.G.CO as a logo on the heel of the bottle.*

The next SIBC bottle design was embossed GEORGE RUTHS PROP'R and were Baltimore loop seal bottles made about 1894-1895. The RUTHS version was made by a glassmaker that used S.G.CO as a logo on the heel of the bottle.

During the 1870-1931 period there are at least four known glasshouses used the S.G.CO mark:

Southern Glass Company/Works, Louisville, Kentucky (1877-c.1885)

Southern Glass Company, Vernon, California (c.1916-1931)

Scranton Glass Company, Scranton, Pennsylvania (1881-c.1895)

Southern Glass Company, Richmond, Virginia (1899-1908)

The Southern Glass Company(s) in KY and CA do not meet the timeframe for the SIBC dates of operation. The Southern Glass Company in Virginia, while overlapping the timeframe at some points, is too late to be the maker of the pre 1899 bottles. This leaves the Scranton Glass Company in PA. This glass company ceased operations in 1895.

The Staten Island Bottling Company used the logo after 1895.

The bottles were made by the Edward H. Everett company and had the glassmakers mark of E.H.E. CO on the heel of the bottle.



With the closing of Southern Glass Company in 1895, SIBC needed to find another glassmaker. SIBC contracted the Edward H. Everett Company (E.H.E.CO.) to produce bottles and all SIBC bottles from the E.H.E.CO. were designed with a new logo that did not mention a relation or have any embossing acknowledging George Ruths. E.H.E.CO was in business from 1880 to 1904. In 1904 the plant merged with the Ohio Bottle Company and in 1905 became part of the American Bottle Company.

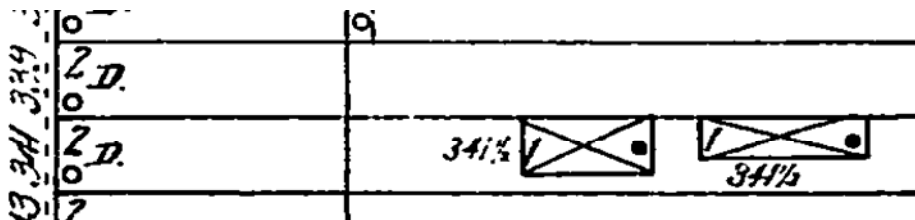
All known remaining bottles from SIBC after the Ruths version were produced by Edward H Everett Company and had the E.H.E.CO, glass company mark on the heel of the bottle. Since all remaining bottles have the E.H.E.CO. mark, it would indicate that the bottles were not made after 1904, the date of E.H.E.CO's merger with the Ohio Bottle Company. E.H.E.CO. had also already caught on to using the crown top closure and this last SIBC logo bottle has only been documented as produced in a crown top version.

So that leaves us with a SIBC Baltimore loop seal bottle with a relation to George Ruths manufactured by S.G.CO created and with production concluded by 1895.

**The Babe**

George Herman "Babe" Ruth Jr. was born in Baltimore in 1895 a son of George Herman Ruth Sr. born 1871 and Kate Schamberger Ruth born in 1874. The Ruth family lived at 339 South Woodyear Street in West Baltimore. George Sr. was in the family business of lighting rods, which was run out of the back lot of the 341 address in two outbuildings with George Sr.'s brother John A Ruth Jr the owner of the 341 South Woodyear St address.

The J A Ruth  
& Bro  
Lightening Rod  
business (1901)



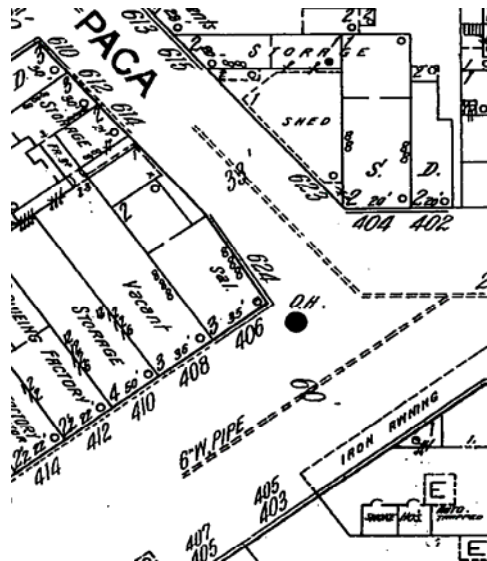
The business was named J A Ruth & Bro. and was originally operated by George's father John A Ruth Sr. born 1844. The business was started before 1880.

Ruth Geo. baker. 804 S Ann  
 Ruth Geo H (J A Ruth & Bro), 339 s Wood-year  
 Ruth Hamilton D, clk, Loney la nr Sinclair la  
 Ruth Harry M. sailmkr. 2054 Bank  
 Ruth Henry. canmkr. 614 n Montford av  
 Ruth Herbert W, painter, 2514 e Lafayette av  
 Ruth J A & Bro (John A jr and Geo H Ruth), lightning rod mnfrs, 341 s Wood-year  
 Ruth Jacob. foreman 102 Foster av ext

1899 Directory indicating the addresses of the brothers George and John Ruth Jr and their Lightning Rod company

By 1905 George Jr. is sent to the St. Mary's Industrial School. By 1910 George Ruth Sr was moved away from the lightening rod business and is listed as a proprietor of a saloon. He and the family are living at 406 W. Conway Street with Sr. tending the saloon at the same location.

In 1910 406 W. Conway was George Ruth's corner saloon. The current building at this address is Oriole Park at Camden Yards.



Of course today this location is located in the middle of Oriole Park at Camden Yards. This lasted a short time and by 1913 George Sr. ceased operating the saloon, began working for the Columbia Harness Company and his family moved to 552 W Conway St. So it appears that George Sr. did in fact for a short time work/own a bar that was located somewhere around 1<sup>st</sup> base at Camden yards. George Jr of course continues at St. Mary's and goes on to become better known as The Babe.

**Mr. Ruths**

During a similar time period as listed above, there is another man in Baltimore named George Ruths. George Ruths is born 22 Feb 1837 in Hesse Darmstadt. He immigrates to the US in 1858 through New York. By 1863 he takes a wife Margaret from Bavaria, sets up a home in Baltimore and starts a large family. By 1870 George is employed as a cigar maker and has three of soon to be ten children. Emma K, Lewes, George A, Frederick, Harry, William, Robert J, Julia and 2 others, names not known that die before 1900. George is doing well enough that Margaret is able to stay at home with the children. By 1880 George has become a customs

officer and the family is now located at 358 N. Broadway St. Baltimore Maryland. Again George does well, Margaret stays home and the children are employed or attending school.

*1899 Baltimore City  
Directory indicating  
George Ruths occupation  
and address*

RUTHS Fredk C, clk, 1050 n Bdway  
Ruths Geo (Staten Island Bottling Co),  
1050 n Bdway  
Ruths Louis W, saloon, 425 w Balto, h 9  
Penn  
Ruths Robt J. clk. 1050 n Bdway

Around 1890 George Ruths furthers his employment by accepting a job working for the Staten Island Bottling Company and continues to live on the East side of Baltimore on Broadway St. Because of the glassmaker and the type of closure on the SIBC bottle that is embossed George Ruths we know that he was working for SIBC before 1895 and most likely right about 1890. The 1900 census also indicates the same address with his employment is listed as “beer bottler boss”. George Ruths appears to die in Baltimore City in late 1900. No further information regarding his wife can be confirmed.

### **The Wind Up**

- 1) The SIBC Baltimore loop seal bottle bearing the name GEORGE RUTHS PROP’R was produced before and ceased production by 1895.
- 2) By 1895 the Baltimore loop seal bottles were being phased out on the Eastern seaboard in favor of the new and easier to use Crown Cork Seal.
- 3) A man named George H Ruth was in the family lightening rod business from pre 1890 to post 1900. The same George H Ruth also later runs a saloon. That saloon is on the west side of Baltimore and the timeframe is after the Staten Island Bottling Company ceased operations in Baltimore.
- 4) A man named George Ruths was working for the Staten Island Bottling Company from @1890-1902 and a bottle also identifies his employment with the embossing GEORGE RUTHS PROP’R. Notice the S on the end of RUTHS.

### **The Pitch**

So did Babe’s father bottle beer for the Staten Island Bottling Company and have a bottle bear his name? No.

Does it make an interesting story with some similarities and untimely connections that helps to sell bottles for extreme amounts of money? Yes

### **References**

1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920 Federal Census for Baltimore Maryland

Baltimore City Directories 1899, 1912, 1913

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