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THE MORLEY JUG COMES HOME

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Home Again, Home Again: The History of the F.A. Morley Jug-Part I

Story By
Larry Peterson,
owner of the
Morley jug



It's been fun tracing the steps and solving the mystery of the adventures of the Morley jug. In all my years of collecting, I've never had the opportunity to trace the journey of one of my pieces. I am in awe that this jug has survived in perfect condition for 110 years. One of the most fascinating aspects of its journey was where it went and how it came to become a highly prized and honored piece in the Red Wing Pottery Museum.

This impressive 30 gallon hand-turned advertising beehive jug is hand-decorated in three colors: black, blue and brown. It is 29 inches tall, 20 inches in diameter, and 64 inches in circumference. I am amazed how close in size this jug is to a 40 gallon crock, which typically measures 30 inches tall and 21 3/8 inches in diameter.

The uniqueness of this jug is its size and the three colors of hand-decorated advertising. It was made at the Red Wing Stoneware Co. for a saloon approximately four blocks from the factory where family members worked. The 20 gallon Pierron crock pictured on the cover is the only other three-color hand-decorated advertising stoneware piece known to exist.

Red Wing was making a limited number of white ware items in 1895. By 1897, which is probably when the Morley jug was manufactured, the company had advanced to producing large amounts of quality white ware. Jugs similar in size to the Morley jug are pictured in an 1898 photograph of the "Union Stoneware Company" booth taken at the Trans Mississippi & International Exposition in Omaha, Nebraska. This photograph has hundreds of pieces of white ware that the

Union Stoneware Company made for this Exposition. Two of the most important pieces in the display are two 30 gallon hand-turned advertising beehive jugs; one is sitting on an ornately decorated 40 gallon crock in the far right side of the picture. If these two jugs and a few other pieces in the photo still exist, they have yet to be discovered. This photo is the only documentation that these large jugs were ever produced by the Red Wing Stoneware Company.

Morley's Story

The Morley jug was made for Frank A. Morley, who owned a saloon at 1503 Main Street in Red Wing. As the photo at the upper right shows, it sat in the storefront window alongside two stoneware barrels that also advertised for the establishment.

Frank was born in Minnesota sometime in 1869. His parents had come from East Liverpool, England. He was the youngest of nine children to his mother, Martha, who was 44 years old at the time. He lived in Red Wing with the large family headed by his father, Charles.

Beginning at age 15, Frank worked at the Red Wing Stoneware Company with one of his older brothers, William. Another of Frank's brothers, S.L. (Samuel Lincoln) Morley (born in August of 1860 in Alton, Ill.), ran the Morley & Stromberg Grocery Store, which was located at 1529 Main Street next to the saloon. Eventually S.L. bought out Stromberg and the store was called Morley's Grocery Store.

We believe the 30 gallon jug hand-decorated



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“F.A. Morley, Dealer in Cigars Wines and Liquors” was made in 1897, around the time when Frank lived above the saloon with his wife, Elizabeth (Eisenbrand), and his mother, who was then widowed. Frank and Elizabeth were married less than a year before he went off to the Army to serve in the Spanish American War. The couple would never have the chance to have children, because he died in Manila on Aug. 30, 1898.

More recently in September of 1998, the Red Wing Republican Eagle ran colorful stories of the Spanish American War written by Elwood Karwand, who specialized in writing about the role of the press 100 years earlier during that war. F.A. Morley was mentioned several times as a “kind, caring leader” and “a gallant lieutenant.”

Frank reached the rank of First Lieutenant and was commander of company G at the time of his death. He was reported to have died abruptly of endocarditis, which is an inflammation of the heart muscle. Company G was already struggling since their commander, Capt. Oscar Seebach, was recovering from wounds at the time. Now they had suddenly lost their young First Lieutenant. There was a long description of the military funeral in Manila in the paper. The Republican Eagle reprint states that his death was “like a thunderbolt from the sky.” A year after the burial in Manila, he was moved to Oakwood Cemetery, Section F, in Red Wing.

S.L. Morley went on to take over the saloon and he became a very successful business man owning numerous real estate properties.

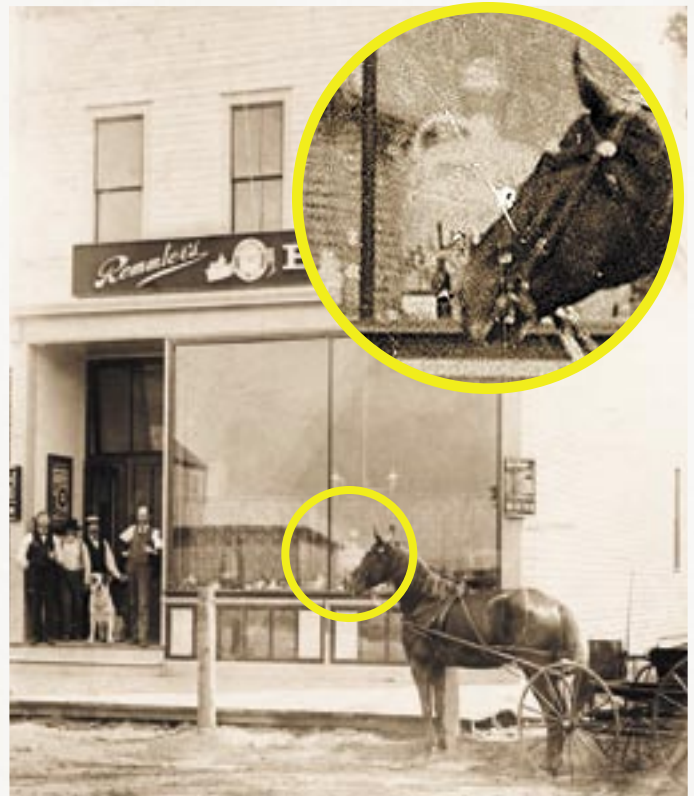
In the Family Until 1964

I was told by two of S.L. Morley’s grandchildren, Sam Struss and Mary Lou Morley, that the jug was moved from the saloon to S.L.’s cabin in approximately 1932. The Morley cabin was located on the island in Wisconsin overlooking the Mississippi River just a short distance from Red Wing. This photograph shows the cabin where the Morley jug sat in a corner of the porch, which is behind S.L. and the other family members. It sat outside for more than 30 years, making its way through all weather conditions without sustaining any damage. What a miracle!

The Morley cabin was sold in 1964 and S.L. Morley’s children decided to give the jug to Mr. Gilmer, owner of the Red Wing Potteries at the time. It is believed that at this, time the jug ended up at the Nelson’s Cigar Store on the corner of Main and Bush streets in Red Wing. Several people remember seeing the jug inside the store and putting gum and candy wrappers in the jug as they left the store. By the time the Red Wing Potteries closed in 1967, the jug was back at the Red Wing Potteries in Mr. Gilmer’s office.

It is believed that the jug was at home in Red Wing for only a short time longer before it took another road trip to Wisconsin, where it has been for the past 40 years. ■

Larry will share the remaining journey of the jug before it returned home to Red Wing in a coming issue of the Red Wing Collectors Society Newsletter.



(Upper left) F.A. Morley poses in his military uniform. The medal he earned is also shown. (Upper right) This 100-year-old photo shows the Morley jug in the window of Morley’s saloon. (Middle) An 1898 photograph of the Union Stoneware Company booth at the Trans Mississippi & International Exposition in Omaha. (Lower right) Standing at the far right, S.L. Morley poses with family at his Wisconsin cabin.