



By Richard Siri

The FOHBC Virtual Museum has been established to display, inform, educate, and enhance the enjoyment of historical bottle and glass collecting by providing an online virtual museum experience for significant historical bottles and other items related to early glass.

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Hopefully, most of you know that our soft opening for the FOHBC Virtual Museum was January 1st. For the most part, it went off without a hitch which was proof positive that we are on the right track. Those who visited were amazed and gave us great feedback.

As we move forward, we will continue to tune up the museum and web site to make it more user-friendly and easier to navigate. I'm not too sharp with new gadgets but I find the Virtual Museum web site easy to master and have learned things about what I collect that I didn't know and I've been at it 50+ years! We have the greatest pieces of glass, the best support images and the top designers, writers and researchers in our hobby, all working hard to pull this together because every bottle has a story.

As of today, the Bitters Gallery is fully open with fifty-six (56) exciting examples on shelves. We have seventy (70) outstanding specimens in our Historical Flask Gallery. We soft-opened our Spirits Gallery and as of this writing, have fourteen (14) great early whiskey and bourbon bottles on shelves. We have twenty-five (25) more examples in preparation labs. Our Jar Gallery is also partially open with seventeen (17) jars and many more being prepped. This last week, we opened the doors of the Target Ball Gallery and already have fourteen (14) great United States and foreign examples on our shelves. So we are growing daily. There is no-place, anywhere, where you can see all this in one location.

Alan is starting out the new year and will be criss-crossing the United States looking at and imaging important collections. We've already seen some super mineral water bottle studies from his first trip.

Alan will also be set up at Reno 2020 so if you have any examples, please reach out to us and/or bring them to Reno. The museum is for all of us and we are just getting started!

We received a few questions from FOHBC members and non-FOHBC members like, "why do I have to pay to go into the Virtual Museum if I am a FOHBC member?" or "why isn't it free?"

and in some cases they are not even a FOHBC member. Another question, "You have donations, where does the money go?"

As stated, we are in a test mode and certainly may end up down the road changing things but we thought we would have a Soft Opening and charge \$5 to go into the museum for FOHBC members and \$10 for non-FOHBC members. After all, many people go to museums (for a day, or morning, or afternoon) once in a while, certainly not every day. Others prefer annual memberships which we also provide, though temporarily called a Construction Pass.

Anyway, here is a quick recap of costs including where money has gone and where money is needed:

- We've purchased two 3-D filming set-ups for imaging (light filter screens, turntable, software). One for Alan DeMaison in Ohio and one set for Gina Pellegrini out west.
- Travel expenses (typically hotel, meals, gas etc). Alan and helper have traveled the country filming collections. Many new trips are planned this year and next.
- We pay a web technician on average, \$800 a month.
- We have advertising costs.
- We have annual costs such as web software, licenses, SSL certificates, web hosting etc.
- We have countless hours and money donated by our imaging team led by Alan Demaison. No payments here, just passion and experience.
- We have many hours donated from our researchers.
- We have thousands of dollars of in-kind company time donated from Steven Libbey for our start up video and early technology.
- We also have many thousands of dollars of in-kind company time that FMG (Ferdinand's company) has donated over the past 10 years.

We've always said, at every juncture, that we want to parallel real museums in our development, which usually charge for admission. We sure would like to make museum access free. After-all, the goal of the FOHBC is to share information, expand our hobby and make better experiences for our members. We also have a responsibility to be financial sound and we are barely breaking even with FOHBC membership fees. We need to understand this and find ways to grow. The museum is a way to do this.

So.... \$50 or \$25 (with discount) to be a member of the greatest thing out there for bottles is not so bad, or \$10 or \$5 (with discount) if you want to set aside a day or period of time to visit our museum. Hey, and join the FOHBC and everything is half price!

In the end, we may just rely on donations but we will see.... You know, have a digital fish-bowl at the door when you leave. Then, ask for a donation.

Thank you. Say hi if you see me in the museum!

