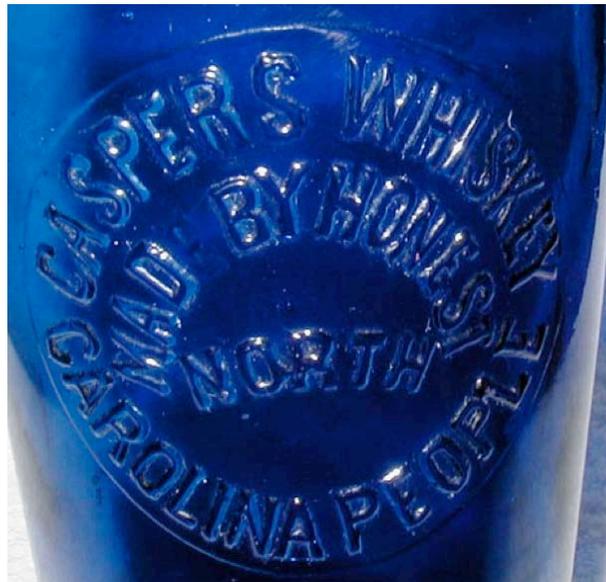


(FINAL DRAFT)

Cecil Munsey, PhD
13541 Willow Run Road
Poway, CA 92064-1733
USA
PHONE: 858-487-7036
E-MAIL: cecilmunsey@cox.net
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CASPER'S WHISKEY
"Made by Honest North Carolina People"



(Fig. 1 Casper's Whiskey bottle "slug plate")

Researched, organized, illuminated and presented

by

Cecil Munsey, PhD
Cultural Historian

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Dedicated to the late Jerry Heard and his wife Mary Ann of Ozark, Missouri who are responsible for preserving the bulk of what is known about Casper's Whiskey. – CM

The Hayners

At about the time of the Civil War (1860s), a man named **John L. Casper** (in Winston-Salem, North Carolina) was working hard to catch up with a man named **Lewis Hayner** of (Troy, Ohio) in a race to become the country's biggest manufacturer, and mail order seller of whiskey. Hayner Distilling Company, at the time, was one of the most successful whiskey companies in the United States, having founded his own distillery in Troy, Ohio in around **1866** with the main office in Springfield, Ohio (See article #1293 on this website about Lewis Hayner and the Hayner Distilling Company).

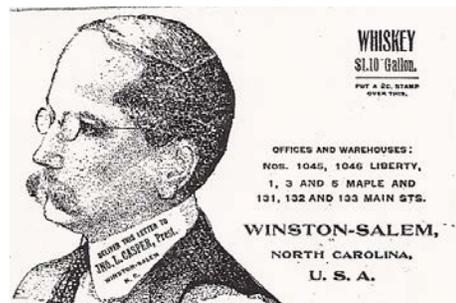
The Caspers

John L. Casper's Grandfather founded his own distillery in Winston-Salem, North Carolina around **1861**. At first, Grandfather Casper produced whiskey largely for family use. In **1865** when his son **John C. Casper** returned from four years in the Confederate Army, he, his father and his grandfather together expanded the distillery and sold their product locally for several decades, during which time **John C. Casper** learned and gradually assumed the management of the distillery.

The third generation of whiskey-making Caspers included **John C's** son **John L. Casper (Figs. 2, 3)** who turned out to be the family's merchandising genius. He finally took over the operation in the late **1890s**.



(Fig 2. John L. Casper)



(Fig 3. John L. Casper)

The Hayner Distillery **and** the Casper Distilling Company both owe their huge successes in the manufacturing and marketing of whiskey to, what was Hayner's original idea of the marketing whiskey by **mail order**.

Hallmarks of success: Besides Hayner's and Casper's almost simultaneous discovery and implementation of mail order marketing, each had another historical hallmark of success:

Hayner's hallmark: He invented the popular combination lock stoppered back-bar bottles (**Fig. 4**) and the Hayner combination lock stopper (**Fig. 5**).



(Fig. 4 Hayner Whiskey Stopper bottle)



(Fig. 5 Hayner Whiskey decanter combination lock stopper)

Casper's hallmark of success was a “beautiful” cobalt blue quart whiskey bottle (**Fig. 6**) that contained his famous whiskey with the equally famous slogan: **“MADE BY HONEST NORTH CAROLINA PEOPLE”**.



(Fig. 6 Cobalt blue Casper's Whiskey bottle)

An Imitator:

The twin cities of Bristol, Tennessee & Bristol, Virginia have added a bit of mystique to the history of the famous cobalt bottle of the Casper Whiskey Company. While unusual and very hard to find, the Casper Whiskey Company's beautiful blue bottle is matched in collector interest by an imitator from just across the state line in Bristol, Tennessee. In Bristol, Tennessee **King's Liquor** is somehow responsible for an imitation of the classic Casper's Whiskey cobalt bottle (**Fig. 7**).



(Fig. 7 Casper IMITATOR)

The exact history of King's blue liquor bottle is unknown at this time but it is a likely assumption that some interested person associated with King's Liquor had a "slug plate" made and inserted in the original glass factory mould used to create Casper's Whiskey and had at least a small quantity of King's bottles blown. Just when and where and why, we don't know at this time but chances are very good that some day we will, after some bottle-collecting historian discovers the story and publishes it as has happened so often during the past 50 years.

The Brochure:

In a promotional brochure John Casper wrote to attract investors, he described his key concept: "Sell liquor directly to consumers by mail order." He wrote: ***"I started without the aid of capital -- worked night and day -- kept the customers gained, and month after month added new names to my list. After plodding this way from year to year I found myself worth several thousand dollars and calculated I could never expect to amass much unless I resorted to the businesslike mode of advertising."***

Casper's pitch to potential stockholders worked. With the help of friends and his own resources, he capitalized and incorporated the business he called "**The Casper Company**" (Fig. 8) and named himself president and chief operating officer.



(Fig. 8 Casper Whiskey Company building)

From his family and through outside purchases Casper reportedly started with about a dozen stills. More importantly he was able to negotiate successfully with 21 other distillers in Yadkin and Davie County to take their entire production.



Casper's Whiskey bottle

At the same time he began an advertising blitz in newspapers and magazines across America, with a claim to be the lowest-price whiskey distributor and largest mail order concern in the South (Fig. 9). His ads boasted: ***“All the North Carolina whiskey we sell is good -- there's no bad. People here wouldn't adulterate if they knew how - they are too honest! Most whiskey sellers are noted for mixing, blending and watering. We sell more genuine old whiskey and less water than any known competitor.”***

By 1905 the Casper Company had a net worth in excess of \$250,000. With the profits, John L. built a huge structure, one he claimed to be “the largest building in the world devoted to the mail order whiskey trade, shown here as (Fig. 10). It covered a full city block in Winston-Salem and true to Casper’s pitchman nature, proclaimed the firm as “Distillers, Rectifiers, and Wholesalers” and the local outlet for Milwaukee’s Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer. Revenue records indicate Casper also maintained a bonded warehouse near Gold Hill, North Carolina.



(Fig. 10 Casper's Whiskey Plant)

Casper's merchandising skills extended to the containers he used for his whiskey. Of particular note were attractive fluted-top cobalt (**Fig. 11**) and clear glass bottles (**Fig. 12**), both types featured the famous slogan, "CASPER'S WHISKEY MADE IN NORTH CAROLINA BY HONEST NORTH CAROLINA PEOPLE."



(Fig. 11 Cobalt Casper whiskey bottle that The Casper Company used to call attention to the increasingly popular brand)



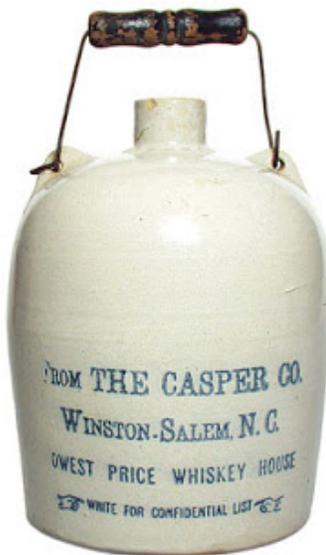
(Fig. 12 Clear Glass Casper's Whiskey bottle)

Other bottles and **jugs (glazed both inside and out)** add, New York, Chicago and St. Louis locations (**Figs. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19,**). (His cobalt bottles originally bore an **elaborate paper label picturing a man tasting whiskey flowing from a giant still (Fig. 20)**. Finding a Casper bottle with label intact is rare indeed. Here is the bottle label replicated on a pack of advertising book matches (**Fig. 21**).

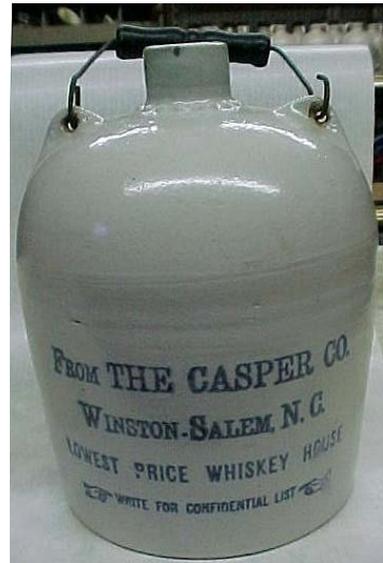
NOTE: Old bottles usually feature paper labels on their obverse (front-side) and product/originator information embossed on their reverse (back-side). Collectors often make the mistake of reversing that information. Reminder: Embossments are usually found on the back of old bottles and paper labels on the front.



(Fig. 13 Winston Salem miniature Casper jug)



(Fig. 14 Casper's Whiskey Jug with wire handle)



(Fig. 15 Winston-Salem Casper's Jug)



(Fig. 16 Casper's Whiskey jug)



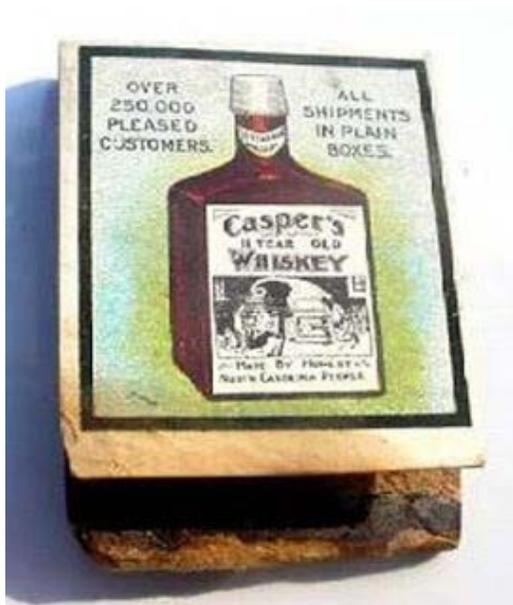
(Fig. 17 Five-gallon Casper's whiskey jug)



(Fig. 18 Casper's jug stenciled with four cities in which it was made; Winston-Salem, N.C.; New York; Chicago, & St. Louis)



(Fig. 19 Half gallon Casper's Whiskey jug)



(Fig. 21 Casper's Whiskey advertising on book matches)



(Fig. 20 Casper's cobalt bottle with paper label) *See NOTE on P. 11 for explanation of reverse and obverse markings on bottles.)

John Casper also had a flair for giveaway items, among them **back-of-the-bar-bottles and decanters (Fig. 22)** made of **clear glass and with an acid etched label (Fig. 23)**, they could be given to saloonkeepers and as premiums for large customer product purchases.

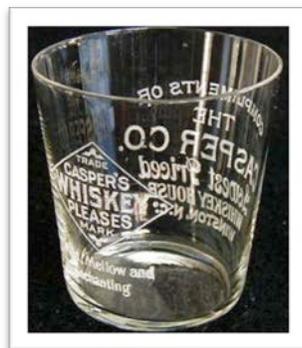


(Fig. 22 Casper's Very Old Corn whiskey)



(Fig. 23 Casper's acid-etched whiskey decanter)

Advertising shot glasses were also a favorite giveaway (Fig. 24, 25), featuring his logo, some with the slogan: ***"Mild, Mellow and Enchanting."***

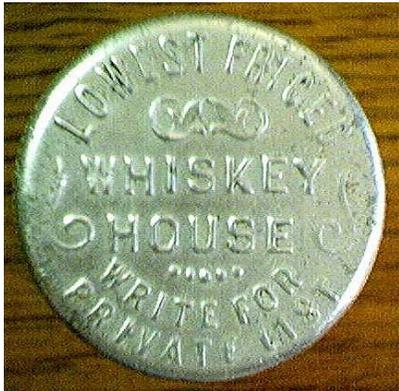


(Fig. 24 Casper's Whiskey Shot glass)



(Fig. 25 Casper's Shot glass)

Metal shot cups were also used (Fig. 26, 27). There were also advertising corkscrews (Fig. 28). Among the many other premiums given away by Casper were such things as mantel clocks, boxes of cigars, desk sets, trunks, and art pictures.



(Fig. 26 Casper's Whiskey metal shot cup lid)



(Fig. 27 Casper's Whiskey metal shot cup)



(Fig. 28 Casper's Advertising corkscrews)

Ironically, part of Casper's success was due to the onset of national Prohibition. All across America, localities and then whole states were going "dry." In the early 1900's no restrictions existed on mail order whiskey sales to customers living areas where alcohol was proscribed (denounced or condemned). On request, the Casper Company would send its price list in a plain envelope. After a mail-in purchase, the postman would bring the booze in an unmarked brown box.

John Casper's desire to be America's largest mail-order liquor dealer was doomed to disappointment. The problem resided with those same honest North Carolinians he boasted about. It turned out that many of those folks were strongly anti-alcohol. Little by little laws were put on the books that ultimately would drive out Casper and other distillers out of the state. **The process began in 1901 when North Carolina legislated that distilleries could operate only in incorporated towns and ended in 1906 when the entire state voted to go completely dry.**

As a result, Casper folded up lock, stock, and whiskey barrel in Winston-Salem and **moved his business to Roanoke, Virginia**, in the shadow of the Blue

Ridge Mountains. Before making his move, however, he re-capitalized his firm. He published a new prospectus; promoting his ability to provide 12 percent return on investment and asking for the public to buy \$250,000 in stock at \$10 a share. According to the prospectus, ***“I am not,” the pitchman avowed, “selling wildcat or fake mining stock.”*** He was selling whiskey! Once again, fortune seemed to smile on Casper. The money rolled in and he was able to move to self-described ***“magnificent buildings”*** in Roanoke, as illustrated in a contemporary newspaper advertisement, shown here (Fig. 29).

Our Plant in Roanoke, Virginia, Covers
Fourteen Acres Making us the Largest
Mail Order Whiskey Concern in the World

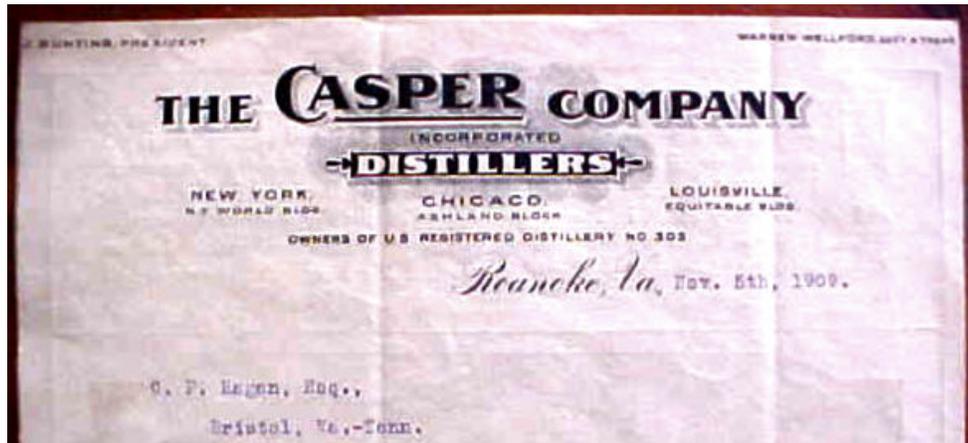
THE above birds-eye view will give our customers only a meager idea of the magnificent buildings owned exclusively by The Casper Co., Inc., Roanoke, Va. In addition to the above we own and control an immense establishment in Winston-Salem, N. C.

Our new plant covers 14 acres, is by far the **Largest Mail Order Whiskey Concern in the World**. We are the sole owners of U. S. Registered Distillery No. 305 located in Roanoke, Va., and surrounded entirely by the Blue Ridge Mountains. We use water from our own spring which discharges 15,000 gallons per hour and the temperature is 51° summer and winter. The distillery is the largest ever erected in the Southern States. Increased shipping facilities, will permit us to handle quickly, all orders a million customers can send.

THE CASPER COMPANY, Inc., Roanoke, Va.
LARGEST AND LOWEST PRICED WHISKEY HOUSE

(Fig. 29 Roanoke, Virginia Casper's Whiskey plant)

The facility, which boasted being on 14 acres, appears rather odd, with a mountain rising out of the center of a campus-like setting as shown here. From the new Roanoke campus came a new letterhead for the company (**Fig. 30**).



(Fig. 30 Casper Company letterhead)

Figure 31 pictures a Casper's Whiskey jug emphasizing the New Roanoke plant. The Casper Whiskey Company sold a variety of products in those days as evidenced by an invoice listing **(Fig. 32) Casper's Whiskey; Zulieka; 12-year Old White Corn Whiskey; Gold Band Whiskey; Golden Rose Whiskey; and Old Peach Brandy.**



(Fig. 31 Casper's Whiskey jug-Roanoke)

JNO. L. CASPER, Pres't.
ALBERT W. JONES, Gen'l. Supt.
J. WILEY SMOOK, Act'g.
FELICITY DEPARTMENT.
AMBEROSE ADV. AGENCY.
WINSTON-SALEM, N. C.
FOR 2000 FLASKS BOTTLES
DISPATCHED.

C. A. HARTMAN, Vice-Pres't.
J. C. TUTTLE, Cashier.
JESSE J. JONES, Manager Bulk Dept.
J. R. HAUBER, City Salesman.

CHAS. C. VAUGHAN, Sec'y & Treas.
LEW RUDY,
MANAGER PRINTING PLANT.
R. B. KINNEY,
SUPT. BOTTLING DEPT.

INCORPORATED UNDER THE LAWS OF NORTH CAROLINA.

THE

Casper

Company.

INCORPORATED

AUTHORIZED CAPITAL
HALF MILLION DOLLARS.

• LARGEST AND LOWEST PRICED •
MAIL ORDER WHISKEY HOUSE.

NEW YORK - COLUMBUS, - ROANOKE, VA.
OHIO.

NO. 248 FRONT ST. NO. 110 SALEM AVE.

OUR BROTHERS DISTILLERS:
CASPER DIS. CO., ROANOKE, VA.
BROTHERS DIS. CO., RAYMOND, N. C.
WATERBURY DIS. CO., SALEM, N. C.

MAIN OFFICES & WAREHOUSES

Winston Salem, N. C.

FOR ADDRESS ALL LETTERS AND EVERY ORDER PLAINLY TO
THE CASPER CO., INC., ROANOKE, VA.

Sold to H. P. Coffield,

Garnsey, Ala.

10 gals. Good - as - Gold	\$30.00
1 " Holland Gin	2.00
	\$32.00

THIS BILL PAID IN
FULL - THANKS!
The Casper Co.

NOV 29 1907

IMPORTANT!
SEE NOTICE ON OTHER SIDE
OF THIS INVOICE. READ
SAME CAREFULLY BEFORE
ACCEPTING YOUR PACKAGE

Over 250,000 Permanent Satisfied
Customers in Every State in the
Union, including Alaska, Hawaii,
Puerto Rico, Mexico, and South
America.

Shipped _____ To _____

By Freight. No. 20317. When writing in
regard to this shipment always refer to above number - If you
neglect to do so we can't locate your order on our books. Best
plan will be to return this bill.

"GOLDEN FISH"
WISKEY
BOTTLED BY THE CASPER CO.
BOTTLED BY THE CASPER CO.
BOTTLED BY THE CASPER CO.

BOTTLED BY THE CASPER CO.
BOTTLED BY THE CASPER CO.
BOTTLED BY THE CASPER CO.

"OLD PEACH BRANDY"
BOTTLED BY THE CASPER CO.
BOTTLED BY THE CASPER CO.
BOTTLED BY THE CASPER CO.

BOTTLED BY THE CASPER CO.
BOTTLED BY THE CASPER CO.
BOTTLED BY THE CASPER CO.

"GOLDEN FISH"
BOTTLED BY THE CASPER CO.
BOTTLED BY THE CASPER CO.
BOTTLED BY THE CASPER CO.

BOTTLED BY THE CASPER CO.
BOTTLED BY THE CASPER CO.
BOTTLED BY THE CASPER CO.

\$10.00 PER GALLON EXTRA TO THE ABOVE
PRICES AND EXPRESS CHARGES WILL BE PREPAID
UNDER OUR SPECIAL RATE, EXCEPT TO ARIZ., CALIF.,
CALIF., IOWA, MISS., N. CAROL., OREGON, UTAH,
UTAH, AND WYD., AND TO THESE FOR 75 C.

ALL OF OUR WHISKEYS, BRANDIES, ETC., ABSOLUTELY SPECIALLY BREWED DISTILLED AND MADE IN THE MOUNTAIN SECTION OF NORTH CAROLINA BY
HONEST NORTH CAROLINA PEOPLE.

(Fig. 32 Invoice from Casper Whiskey company)

Casper's Pure North Carolina
White Corn Whiskey. 12 Years Old.



THIS WHISKEY has been stored a great many years and the natural tinge of gold color has been taken away by filtration, leaving it perfectly white.

Many customers have demanded, regardless of price, a straight pure white corn and to produce a high class whiskey—the same must be made wholly of liquor that by reason of age has fully matured—and in this white corn the buyer gets an exceptionally nice article, devoid of new whiskey.

This whiskey, which bears our name, will satisfy any man who is prejudiced against colored whiskey, provided he can be satisfied. It stands entirely alone for quality and will win its way with the man, who wants honest whiskey and does not have to pay any more for it than he is now paying for the other kind.

4 Qts. \$3.50, 12 Qts. \$10.50.

Express Paid Anywhere.

It is absolutely guaranteed as represented—A Straight, Honest 12 Year Old Pure North Carolina White Corn Whiskey—100 Per Cent. in Proof—100 Per Cent. Straight—100 Per Cent. Honest—100 Per Cent. Pure.

CAUTION. Our bottles measure 32 ounces, and are full quarts—the buyer will get one to two drinks more out of them than the average quart bottle advertised. We give overflowing measure! Buy nothing from swindlers who advertise full bottles and ship pints or short measure quarts. **Beware of them.** We are an old and established concern and refer by permission to Peoples National Bank of Winston-Salem, N. C., and Piedmont Savings Bank, the Largest Capitalized Savings Bank in our city.

THE CASPER CO., Inc.
WINSTON-SALEM, N. C.

Fig. 33 Casper Whiskey advertisement)

were to be paid in cash, post office money order, express money order, certified check or U. S. postage stamps. Absolutely nothing was sold on time. A big percentage of Casper's advertising was directed toward encouraging customers to purchase large orders of, 3, 5, and 10 gallons or even larger quantities of the company's products. Whiskey by the barrel was the cheapest way to buy, followed by the gallon jugs with quart bottles being more expensive. If desired, one could have his order filled with either pint or half pint bottles (**Fig. 34**); the most expensive, by volume (therefore smaller bottles), are today harder to find than the larger sizes. All goods sold in bottles or jugs were shipped in either sealed iron-strapped wood boxes or in sugar barrels.

After only several years, however, fortunes turned against John Casper in Virginia. Whether overextended financially or for other reasons, years before the state went dry, he left Roanoke for other locations. The company continued to heavily advertise its products – especially its 12-year old (white or clear) corn whiskey (**Fig 33.**)

Casper's products were sold exclusively by mail order as already indicated. Agents, traveling salesmen or drummers were not employed. All sales



(Fig. 34 Embossed pint Casper's Whiskey)

The company sold many different brands of whiskey, both rye and corn ranging in age from 1 to 15 years. For those who were prejudiced against colored whiskey, Casper offered his 12-year old brand ("water white") corn whiskey. The gold color was taken away by filtration leaving it perfectly (white-lightning) clear. Casper advertised it as being "**100 Per Cent in Proof—100 Per Cent Pure.**"

Casper advertised his "**Standard Brand 8 Year-Old 'Whiskey'**" as causing no bad effects on arising in the morning (no hangover), even if used to excess. [Honest North Carolina people? Indeed!]

Casper's 15-year old '**Gold Band**' brand was advertised as being "... purer whiskey, a riper whiskey, a pleasanter whiskey to drink—richer, smoother and more delicate in flavor than any other whiskey that can be bought from any other concern, under any circumstances, at any time for any price!"

Now after that statement one would think there would be no room for improvement, however, Casper had an even better brand. Casper's best brand was his "**Zulieka Old Private Stock.**" Zulieka was advertised with the distinct understanding that it must please the most fastidious drinker or the company would buy it back in U.S. Gold Coin. Even though John C. Casper liked to brag about his

pure high quality brands, he undoubtedly knew that a large segment of the whiskey buying public could care less about all the ballyhoo (fuss) and was interested only in cheap low cost, low proof corn whiskey. For those customers he had two brands. One was called "**Wild Cat**" at \$1.10 per gallon, and the other one was "**Tarheel** (slang for North Carolina resident) **Tanglefoot**" (Western American slang for strong whiskey), at \$1.25 per gallon.

John Casper obviously was well aware that a great many people wanted to take a nip now and then, but didn't want their neighbors to catch them buying a bottle at the local saloon. In order to capture a large portion of that market, he devised a method of privacy whereby a person desiring to avoid that kind of publicity the customer could have their orders shipped from the "**Winston Manufacturing Co.**", "**Piedmont Tobacco Co.**", or the "**Southern Publishing Co.**", all of Winston-Salem, N.C.

By **1904** he company counted over 250,000 as regular customers and were the sole owners of 12 of the largest distilleries in Western North Carolina and he controlled the output of 21 others. John Casper boasted that all these distilleries were operated by hand with homemade copper stills and wood-fired furnaces. The company purchased glass bottles in 25-carload lots and paper labels were purchased in lots of a million each.

One of the company's advertising pitches was for whiskey by the suitcase. The whiskey was paid for and the case was thrown in free. In figure #9 in the upper right hand corner there is a drawing of the free suitcase and 12 quarts of whiskey. The idea behind the advertisement was that one had a chance to receive whiskey secretly and at the same time secure a valuable suitcase free.

Move to Florida:

In **1911** Casper was listed as an officer of the **Atlantic Coast Distillery Company** of **Jacksonville, Florida**. Casper, as might be expected, apparently was in charge of sales. The firm boasted that it did annual business in excess of half a

million dollars and broke all prior sales records under his leadership.

The same year, however, finds Casper also was recorded more than a thousand miles away as the “proprietor” of the **Uncle Sam Distilling Company** in **Fort Smith, Arkansas**. An ad for this firm indicates he took Casper brands like **Gold Band** and **Golden Rose Whiskey** with him. (Interestingly, Casper apparently never bothered to register any of his brands with the Federal Government for trademark protection.)

By **1913** the entire mail order whiskey business was finished. Over a Presidential veto Congress passed the **Webb-Kenyon Act** that forbid the transportation of alcoholic beverages into “Dry Areas.” The postman no longer could bring the booze. Although National Prohibition did not follow until seven years later, in **1920**, John Casper’s high-flying career went into a tailspin.

Seemingly rootless and without purpose, Casper traveled from place to place over ensuing years. There is no evidence of his having a family or even marrying. He apparently lived out of **hotel rooms** for much of his working life. After leaving Jacksonville, he was reported to have resided in **Kansas** for a time. In the end, as published in the Winston-Salem Journal, his hometown newspaper, John Casper died in obscurity in Mexico where Prohibition could not touch him.



(Casper's Whiskey relics)

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**Cecil Munsey, PhD
13541 Willow Run Road
Poway, CA 92064-1733
Phone: 858-487-7036**

E-mail: cecilmunsey@cox.net

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