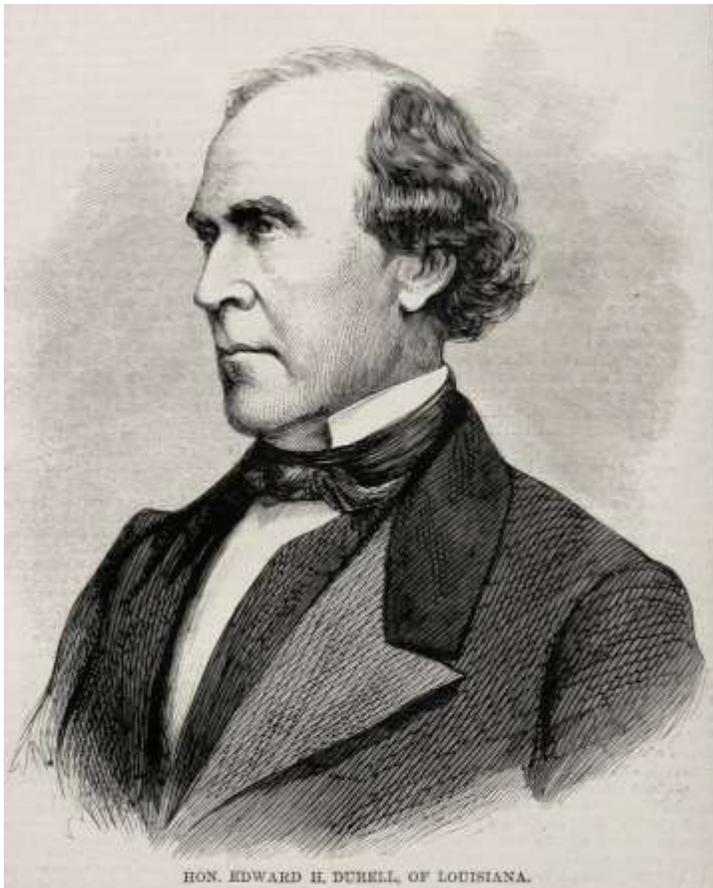


Trails of the Cocktail, Part 2

The various trails and diverging paths one must travel in order to uncover the true history of the cocktail continue to take the interested reader on a number of fascinating journeys. Cocktail bitters became the prime ingredient that distinguished the cocktail from other types of beverages, such as punches, slings, toddies, juleps, sours and fizzes. They were an important ingredient in the "brandy cocktail", as evidenced below.

Mayor Durrell Comes Upon the Brandy-Cocktail

Edward Henry Durrell (July 14, 1810 – March 29, 1887) was A Harvard educated New Englander, born in New Hampshire, who became the 25th mayor of New Orleans in 1863.

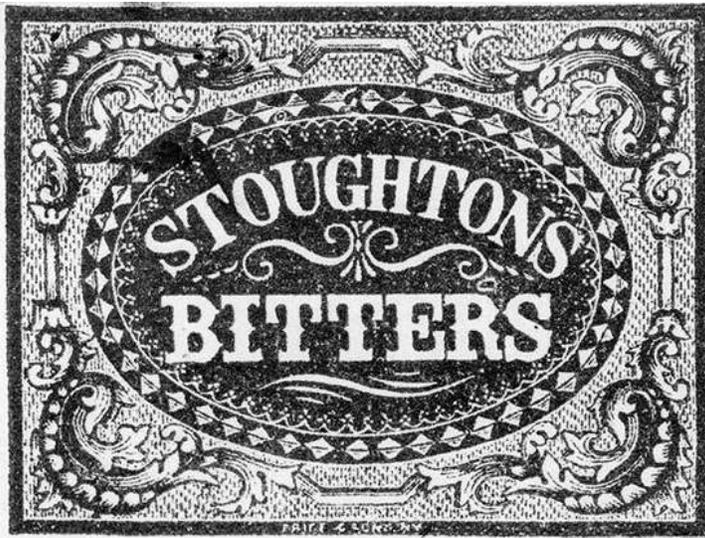


Mayor Edward H. Durrell

Fluent in German, French and Spanish, Durrell read law at Harvard to enter the Bar in 1834. After a brief law practice in Mississippi, he moved to New Orleans at the beginning on 1836 and by 1854 was a

member of the City Council. In 1845, Harper & Brothers published his book, *New Orleans as I found it*, under the pen name H. Didimus. It is comprised of a number of "sketches of some of the incidents" he experienced on his "first visit to New Orleans, in the winter of 1835-36," one of which was learning about one of the city's brandy cocktails:

"Now the difference between a brandy-cocktail and a brandy-toddy," he wrote, "is this: a brandy-toddy is made by adding together a little water, a little sugar, and a great deal of brandy - mix well and drink. A brandy-cocktail is composed of the same ingredients, with the addition of a shade of Stoughton's bitters; so that the bitters draw the line of demarcation."

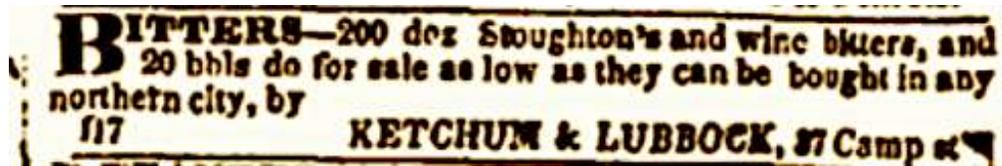


We immediately observe from the above narrative that, if Mayor Durrell recalled his facts correctly, the "brandy-cocktail" was available in the Crescent City in the winter of 1835-36, a good two years before Antoine Amédée Peychaud opened his Royal Street apothecary in 1838. We also learn from Durrell's account that Peychaud's Bitters, made from gentian root soaked with botanicals and other spices, was not the only game in town. It was Stoughton's bitters that were used in the mayor's "brandy-cocktail".

Some Bitter Realities

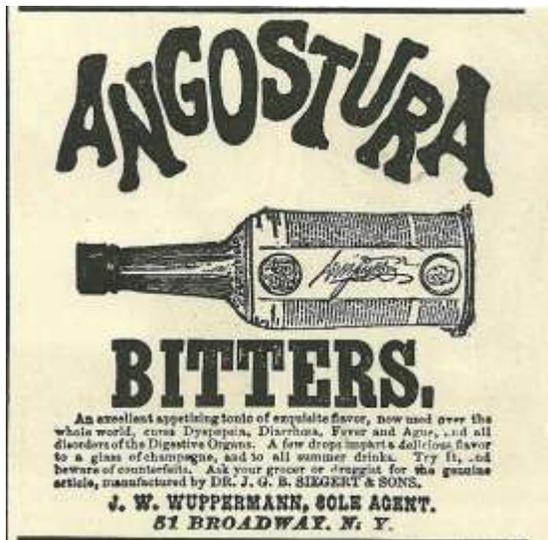
On Borough High Street in London, just south of London Bridge, once stood the apothecary shop of Richard Stoughton, who was quite possibly the inventor of the first cocktail. Produced and sold around 1712 (or possibly as early as the 1690s), Stoughton's bitters were the

oldest brand of cocktail bitters. Imitators produced so many poorly made knockoffs of these popular bitters that the term “as useless as a Stoughton’s bottle” entered the lexicon in the mid-1800s.



Stoughton’s Bitters, advertised in the New Orleans Commercial Bulletin, February 22, 1836

Stoughton’s is much older than Angostura Bitters, which date back to 1824 when the German Surgeon General in Simón Bolívar’s army, Johann Gottlieb Benjamin Siegert (1796 – 1870), perfected the formula for a medicinal tonic designed to alleviate stomach ailments. Often a key ingredient in whiskey cocktails, such as the Manhattan or the Old Fashioned, Angostura Bitters do not include angostura bark, but are named for the town where they were first produced, Angostura, Venezuela (since renamed Ciudad Bolívar). In 1830, Siegert established a distillery for the purpose of producing his bitters (containing gentian, herbs and spices).



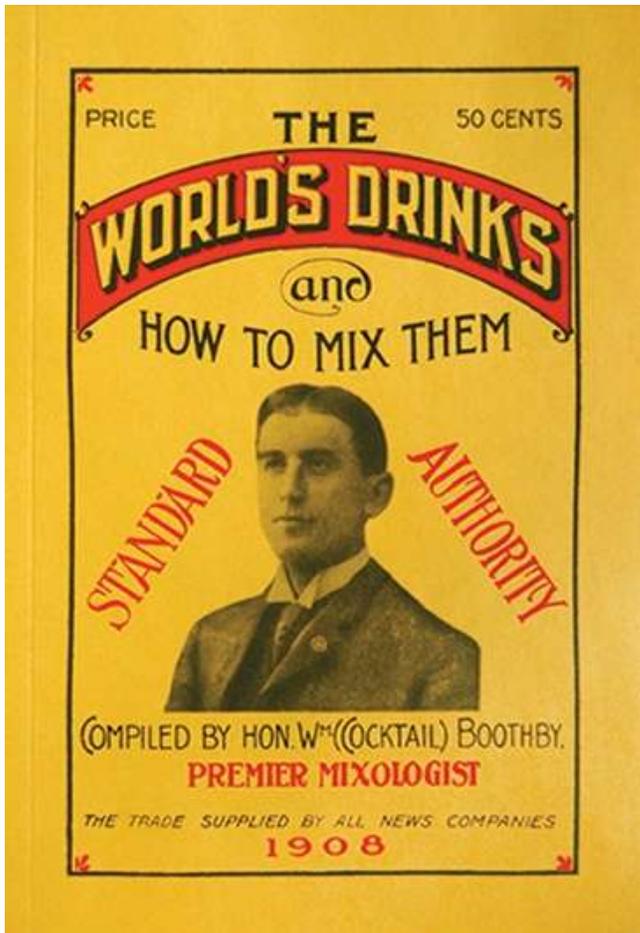
Old ad for Angostura Bitters

Since 2006, a German company known as “The Bitter Truth”, very popular with bartenders, has been hard at work creating bitters that are more like their original recipes, less sweet and more flavorful.

Here’s how they describe their “Creole Bitters”:

"The Bitter Truth Creole Bitters are reminiscent of a style of bitters dating back to an era before cocktails even existed. Back then, bitters were made by doctors and apothecaries, primarily for the use in liquid tonics and then eventually as an ingredient in alcoholic beverages. The Bitter Truth Creole Bitters reflect the Creole way of life with all its beautiful complexity and spiciness. The beautiful metallic red label houses a fiery anise tinged cherry red colored liquid. Try it in your favorite Manhattan."

According to the Bitter Truth's president, Stephan Berg, when the recipe for the Sazerac cocktail first appeared in print in William Boothby's 1908 *The World's Drinks and How to Mix Them*, "Not Peychaud's but Selner Bitters were called for."



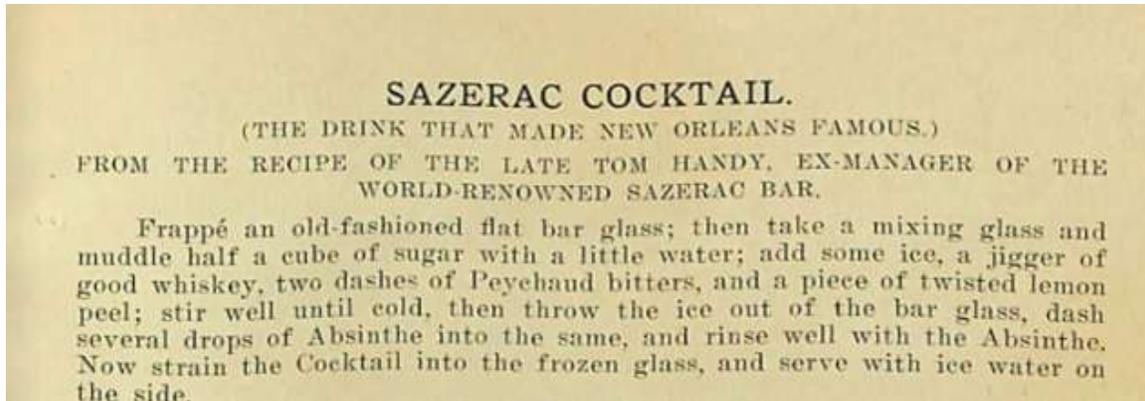
Boothby's 1908 guide



Bitter Truth's Creole Bitters

Stephan Berg was partially correct. The Sazerac Cocktail (à la Armand Regnier of New Orleans) in Boothby's Guide called for brandy and Selner Bitters, but later in the book the Honorable William (Cocktail)

Boothby introduced "Some New-Up-To-Now SEDUCTIVE AMERICAN COCKTAILS," which included a different Sazerac Cocktail recipe, one by "Tom Handy, Ex-Manager of the World-Renowned Sazerac Bar." It called for "good whiskey", sugar, water, absinthe, a twisted piece of lemon and "two dashes of Peychaud's bitters". If the whiskey used is rye, then this is the modern recipe for a Sazerac Cocktail. The question to be asked is this: "Is Handy the author of 'The Drink That Made New Orleans Famous' or merely its creator's manager?"



Handy's Sazerac Cocktail featured in Boothby's 1908 The World's Drinks and How To Mix Them

The Bitter Truth has continued to make outstanding bitters. Its Celery Bitters was named "best new product" at the 2010 New Orleans *Tales of the Cocktail*.

The Great Santini, Creator of the Brandy Crusta

The Crusta, specifically the Brandy Crusta, was the creation of New Orleans bartender Joseph Santini (1817 – 1874), a native of Trieste, Italy. This drink is the forerunner of the modern Sidecar, Margarita and the Cosmopolitan. His Crusta was one of the earliest experiments using liqueur as a sweetener. More important yet was the addition of a touch of lemon juice to the mix.

Joseph Santini's coffee house (which, of course, served alcohol) was located on Gravier Street and called "The Jewel of the South" which he operated from 1833 until 1869.

An article in the *Times-Picayune*, dated October 18, 1987, explained Santini's fame:

"Sometime around 1850, one Joseph Santini took over management of the bar and restaurant at New Orleans' City Exchange, right in the heart of the French Quarter. There he invented the Crusta, a fancy variation that introduced citrus juice into the list of things that could go into a drink. This stayed purely a local drink until Jerry Thomas — who must have met Santini and/or had his drinks when he was in the Crescent City in the 1850s — put the Crusta in his book. This isn't to say the Crusta was a huge hit. It was always a cult drink — one with few but fanatic devotees. But it planted a seed. That seed would remain dormant until the 1890s, when suddenly everyone started putting lemon juice, lime juice, even orange juice into their cocktails. From the Crusta, evolution brings us the Sidecar — and life without Sidecars would be very dreary indeed. If Santini hadn't done it first, they still might have done it anyway, but at least they had someone in the dark backward of time shining a flashlight for them to show the way. Mr. Santini, we salute you."

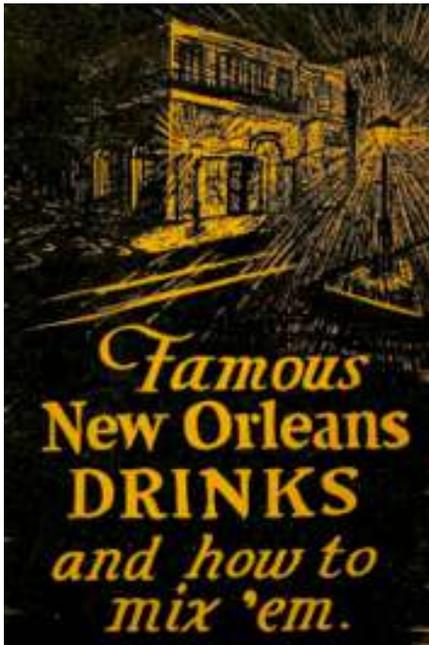
Professor" Jerry Thomas (1830 – 1885), mentioned above, was an American bartender who owned and operated saloons in New York City, but had also spent some time in New Orleans. Considered "the father of American mixology", his *Bar-Tender's Guide*, (alternately titled *How to Mix Drinks or The Bon-Vivant's Companion*), first completed in 1862, is the seminal work on cocktails.

Santini also operated "The Parlor," which along with "The Jewel," were for its patrons "*par excellence* the preference of our up-town citizens, where the very best wines and liquors are served in the most accommodating manner," reported the New Orleans *Times* on October 20, 1867.

An article in the New Orleans *Sunday Item-Tribune*, dated January 9, 1938, decribed the saloon scene at "Gravier and Carondelet streets" home of the "Imperial Cabinet" which Henry Ramos had purchased from Emile Sunier. "Henry Ramos served his white and frosty gin mixture (other fine drinks, too) at the 'Cabinet' until 1907, when he purchased and moved to Tom Anderson's 'The Stag' saloon opposite the Gravier street entrance of the St. Charles hotel, the same location Joe Santini had chosen years before for his 'The Jewel of the South.' The Ramos establishment became a mecca for the thirsty, customers crowded the place just to drink one of those fizzes, and during the annual Matdi Gras celebration period one of the sights of the town was the corps of busy shaker boys exercising their arms so that the delightful frothy mixture could be served the waiting patrons."

The Vieux Carré

The Vieux Carré, aka the French Quarter cocktail, was invented by head bartender Walter Bergeron in the 1930s at the Hotel Monteleone cocktail lounge in New Orleans. It honors the historic neighborhood “where the antique shops and the iron lace balconies give sightseers a glimpse into the romance of another day” and its ingredients represent the ethnic elements of the Quarter: rye whiskey for the United States, cognac and Bénédictine for France, vermouth for Italy (and the neighborhood’s Sicilian population) and bitters for the city’s Creoles. The Spanish and Germans were left out, but a German doctor did create Angostura Bitters in a Spanish-speaking country. Author Stanley Clisby Arthur immortalized the drink in his *Famous New Orleans Drinks and how to mix 'em*. Here’s his recipe from the 3rd edition, 1938:



Stanley Clisby Arthur’s book



The Vieux Carré

INGREDIENTS

½ teaspoon benedictine
1 dash Peychaud bitters
1 dash Angostura bitters
1/3 jigger rye whiskey
1/3 jigger cognac brandy
1/3 jigger Italian vermouth

DIRECTIONS

The Benedictine is used as a base and also for sweetening the cocktail. Dash on the bitters, then add the rye, brandy, and vermouth. Put several lumps of ice in the barglass. Stir. Twist a slice of lemon peel over the mixture. Drop in a slice of pineapple and a cherry if you wish and serve in mixing glass.

Thoughts on "Wine-and-Bitters"

Thoughts on "Wine-and-Bitters" was the title of an article in the *Daily Picayune*, dated March 16, 1844. Back when there were so many "distinctive appellations" for an "entire range of mixtures of which wine, sugar, ardent spirits, or water – or any two, or all four of them form a part", to enumerate them "would require a wider experience and more retentive powers of memory than we possess." The "slings", the "cobblers", the "toddlies, the "sangarees", the "cocktails" and countless other alcoholic concoctions suggest the need for a "generic" term for them all. The *Picayune* suggested "the phrase of 'wine-and-bitters!' What a splendid word it is!" If you "meet your friend on the street," you simply "propose a glass of 'wine-and-bitters!'" to describe whatever it is you might have. The paper observed that this habit was "becoming very prevalent" in the Crescent City in 1844, but obviously "wine-and-bitters" has been replaced today by the ubiquitous "cocktail". In fact we exhalt in it, as demonstrated by the city's annual *Tales of the Cocktail*.

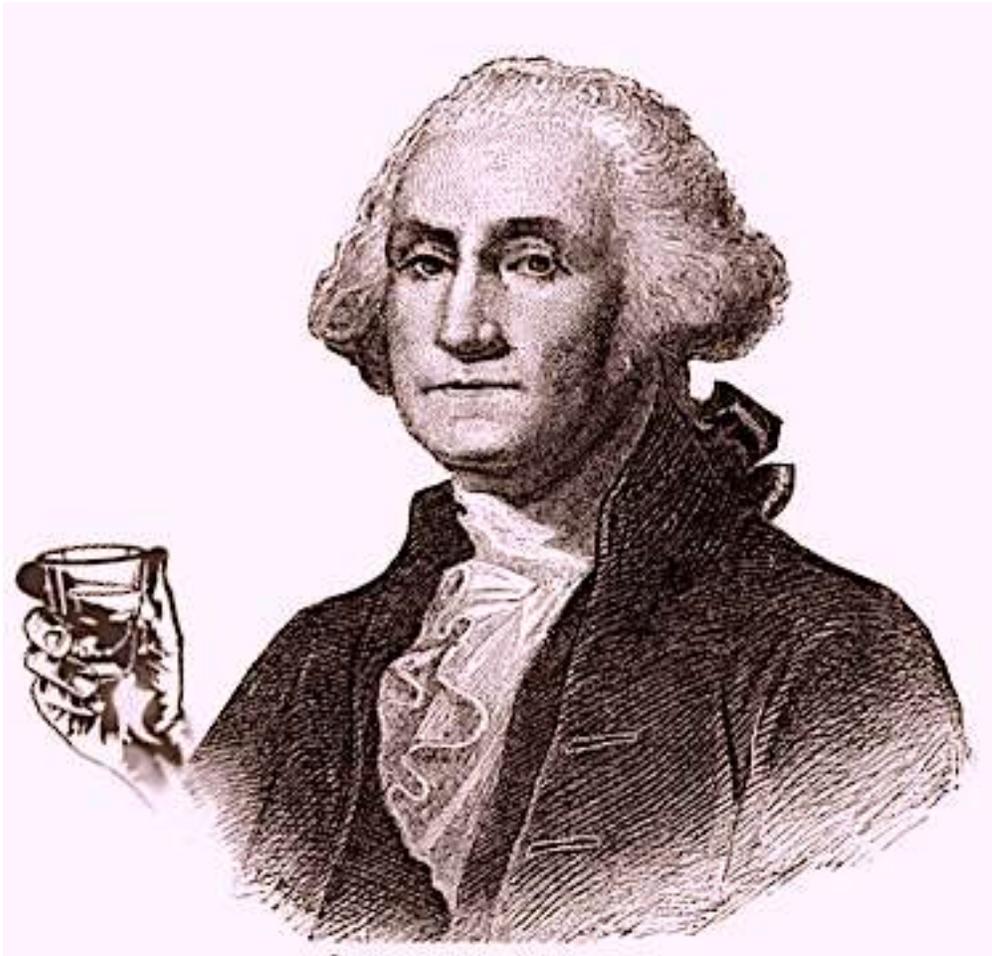
Thoughts on "Wine-and-Bitters."
We take some pride to ourselves for the instrumentality of the *Picayune* in originating, or supporting with controlling influence, great reforms in the science of tavern economy.—

1844 article in the Daily Picayune

But did you know that way back in May 1783, "wine-and-bitters" played a part in the British surrender of New York at the end of the Revolutionary War. The Loyalist William Smith recorded in his diary, that General George "Washington pulled out his watch and observing that it was near Dinner Time, offered Wine and Bitters." So if the *Picayune* was correct in assuming that "wine and bitters" could possibly be understood to mean a "cocktail" itself, does this mean that

our first president was also the host of history's first recorded cocktail party? It's entirely possible.

Here's a toast to George, but the credit goes to Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee who famously eulogized his fellow Virginian: "First in war, first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen!"



George Washington, Father of Our Cocktail?

NED HÉMARD

New Orleans Nostalgia
"Trails of the Cocktail, Part 2"
Ned Hémard
Copyright 2018

