

Last month I was invited to contribute to "Eating New Jersey," a blog about food and drink in the Garden State and environs by historian and author Greg Caggiano. I decided to use this as an excuse to at long last attempt an experiment in resurrecting a bit of New Jersey's alcoholic history—a genuine 18th century recipe I happened upon in Perth Amboy. The result will be a series of articles recording the process of making Andrew Bell's Ginger Wine as well as the fascinating history behind it. I am sharing my first installment here in Garden State Legacy and invite GSL's readers to follow along: www.eatingnewjersey.net

Resurrecting Andrew Bell's Ginger Wine

Among the traps of doing historic research has been getting lured off the path by some tangential or serendipitous discovery. I may be, for example, looking for an article in an old newspaper about some subject and then become distracted by an adjacent article on a totally unrelated yet fascinating story. Such was my "discovery" of Andrew Bell's Ginger Wine.

I had been sifting through the archives at Perth Amboy's historic St. Peter's Episcopal Church Rectory—a small closet-like room stuffed with all kinds of ephemera of varying vintage. I was looking for anything relating to a former parishioner, Thomas Mundy Peterson, whose mortal remains were interred in the ancient graveyard surrounding the building. Peterson had been the first African-American to vote under the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution on March 30, 1870. As luck would have it, the day after ratification, Perth Amboy happened to be holding a city charter referendum. There is, of course, so much more to the story of how Peterson came to cast his ballot and what became of him after. But here, at least, *he* is the tangential story—you'll have to wait for the book in 2020, the 150th anniversary of his milestone in Civil Rights history.

Among the documents to distract me was the handwritten "A

*by Gordon Bond
with Stephanie M. Hoagland*

*A Receipt to make Ginger wine
by Andrew Bell -1757-1843-*

*To ten Gall^o of water put 12th of loaf Sugar put it
of the water into a pan & whilst Cold put to it the whites of
six or eight eggs well beaten stir them together & sett them over
the fire when near boiling skim it very well then take
1/2 a pound of common white Ginger bruise it & put it into
the liquor whilst boiling let it boil twenty minutes, pare
ten Lemons very thin to be ready against the liquor is cold
pour it boiling hot upon the peels when it is cool put
it into the Cask then putt two Spoonfulls of Beem to it*



Top: Andrew Bell's recipe for ginger wine

Bottom: St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Perth Amboy

Recipe to make Ginger wine." Some later hand wrote beneath the title, in pencil, "by Andrew Bell—1757—1843." This wasn't a completely irrelevant distraction, since Andrew Bell featured importantly in the Peterson story—though the making of an alcoholic beverage would have been antithetical to the sober Peterson, who later joined the Prohibition Party when the Republicans failed to settled "the rum question" to his satisfaction. Nevertheless, the idea of finding an actual authentic recipe from the late-18th, early-19th century was intriguing all on its own. I wondered if perhaps it could be made today, so I took several pictures of the manuscript and filed them away.

That was a decade ago—January 9, 2007, to be exact. Like so many things, it remained in my list of "stuff that would be cool to do someday." When Greg invited me to contribute to his food blog, my wife and fellow history geek, Stephanie Hoagland, and I decided to use it as an excuse to at long last make good on out threats to resurrect Andrew Bell's Ginger Wine.

Andrew Bell

So who was Andrew Bell and why should we care about his ginger wine? He was born June 4, 1757 to Mr. and Mrs. John Bell of Philadelphia, and by the outbreak the American Revolution the family had moved to New Jersey where he was a law student of Cortlandt Skinner.

What makes Bell particularly interesting is he was a loyalist during the war, joining the British Army in New York and being

appointed clerk to the city's British Commander in December 1776—even serving under such notable enemy generals as Sir Henry Clinton and Sir Guy Carleton. His service wasn't all behind a desk either, having participated in a number of skirmishes and the Battle of Monmouth. In 1779 New Jersey patriots seized the estate Bell had inherited from his father, who had died the previous year.

So how did such an active loyalist manage to remain unmolested in Perth Amboy after the war? It didn't hurt that his brother-in-law was none other than William Paterson (1745–1806). Bell's sister, Cornelia (1755–1783) married Paterson. Being related to such a well-regarded New Jersey statesman—signer of the U.S. Constitution, Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court, and second governor of New Jersey, no less—must have helped smooth things over.

On September 23, 1782, he married the widow Susannah Moore in New York City and settled in Perth Amboy to start a new chapter in his life. He evidently earned the trust of his neighbors, going on to being appointed collector of Perth Amboy's port in 1800 (for the final year of John Adams' presidency) and surveyor general of the East Jersey Proprietors for around thirty-six years between 1806 and 1842.

Like many wealthy merchants of the time, Andrew Bell had also invested in slaves. Among them was a woman called Bette. She had two daughters, Janes and Daphne. New Jersey's Gradual Emancipation Act of 1804 did not free the already enslaved Bette, but her children were considered born free (after serving an apprenticeship). The Act required a record be made of all births to enslaved women. On April 18, 1823, Bell recorded, "I do hereby certify that a Negro woman named Bett [sic], a Slave belonging to me was delivered of a female childe named Daphne on the eighth day of October, 1820." Daphne would grow up to marry Thomas Mundy Peterson, and the association with Bell would prove fortuitous.

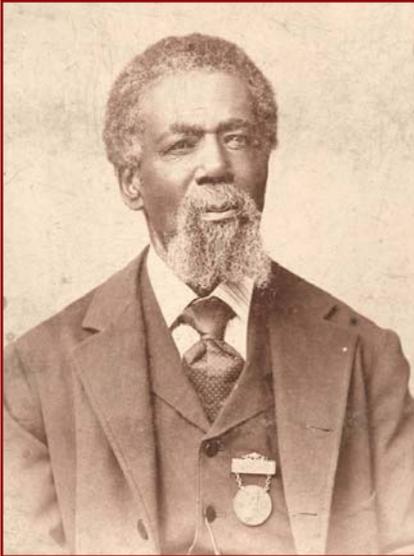
When Andrew Bell died in Perth Amboy on July 19, 1843, his will included:

I give and Bequeath to my said wife my coloured female servant Jane until she arrives at the age of twenty one years [the age at which daughters of enslaved mothers were released from their 'apprenticeships'] at which period I Give and Bequeath to my Executors the sum of Five Hundred Dollars in trust for her benefit, and I also Give and Bequeath to my said Executors the like sum of Five Hundred Dollars in trust for the benefit of my female servant Daphne who has lately arrived at the age of twenty one years and I direct my said Executors to deposit the said two sums of Five



William Paterson

Hundred Dollars each in the Savings Bank of New York or such other Institution as they may think most expedient and to receive and pay the Interest to each of them and when in the opinion of my Executors it will be prudent and advisable to place in the hands of either of them all or any part of the said Respective legacies they are in that case authorized so to do.



Thomas Mundy Peterson

Aside from his wife, Bell left the largest bequeaths to Jane and Daphne—more than to St. Peter's; more than towards helping Perth Amboy's poor—which is perhaps suggestive when taken with other points. He and Susannah had no children, and were likely unable to. In the 1880 U.S. Census, Thomas was identified as "B" for "Black," but Daphne and their children were marked as "M"—"Mulatto." This was the only such record—in all others they were all considered "Black." While highly speculative, it does seem to beg the question of who Daphne's and Jane's father was. Bell would have been 63 at the time of Daphne's birth. While older, it might not have precluded his fathering a child with Bette. Another possibility was his nephew, William Bell Paterson, who lived for a time with his uncle. Born in 1783, he would have been 36 at the time of Daphne's birth and moved away from Perth Amboy not long after.

Whatever the case, it was this legacy that allowed Daphne and her future husband to purchase land and have built the home on Commerce Lane in Perth Amboy where they would live the rest of their lives.

Ginger Wine

It isn't clear when Andrew Bell penned his recipe for ginger wine, though it was most likely between 1782 and his death in 1843. While he did not sign or identify himself as the document's author, it is assumed whomever penciled in his name would have known given he was a longtime parishioner at St. Peter's and is buried in the churchyard (as is his wife as well as both Daphne and Thomas Peterson).

He called it a "ginger wine," but "ginger beer" might be more accurate given it uses barm—brewer's yeast—for fermentation. "Ginger wine" is considered to be wine fortified with a fermented blend of ground ginger root and raisins. Bell's recipe does not mention wine, but is a fermented concoction of ginger, lemon, and egg-white. Variations of "ginger wine" include blending with cognac or even scotch, so I suppose his finished product could also be used as an additive, and may have actually been intended as such. Our recreation will be consumed on its own, at least at first, and we can always experiment blending it with other alcohols later.

While we are trying to be as faithful to the original as possible,



The oak cask in which our resurrection of Bell's ginger wine will ferment, complete with instructions how to prepare it for use.

some modern concessions will be necessary—especially when it comes to scale. The first step in Mr. Bell's recipe is to mix ten gallons of water with twelve-and-a-half pounds of sugar. There is no way we will be dealing with such industrial-sized volume in our condo. We can probably handle a gallon and everything will need to be scaled down accordingly. Actually, we will be making a liter worth, since that was the smallest size wood cask I was able to find to facilitate the two to three week fermentation process. Bell made no mention as to specifications for the cask, but we will be using a traditional charred oak common to modern hobby brewers. The basics of the cooper's art are likely the same.

The other concession is more personal. As a vegetarian, I avoid any alcohol that uses isinglass, which Mr. Bell includes. This is a form of collagen obtained from the dried swim bladders of fish, used mainly for the clarification of some beer and wine. Since it is more for visual appearance than flavor, we can substitute Irish moss, a species of red algae that is also commonly used as a vegetarian substitute for isinglass in beer and wine clarification.

There is some ambiguity in the phrasing, but I believe we should be able to put together a reasonable attempt at making Mr. Bell's recipe. As far as I am aware, this may be the first time anyone has tried making it since at least the early 1800s!

