

WAS THERE REALLY A SECRET BAR DURING THE CIVIL WAR?

We know about this secret bar thanks to George Alfred Townsend, a reporter from the *New York Herald*. He was assigned to the Army of the Potomac under General George McClellan. To recap his experiences during the war, he wrote and published in 1866 *Excerpts from Campaigns of a Non-Combatant: And His Romaunt Abroad During the War*.

In his book, he wrote of an occupied Alexandria and the City Hotel in spring of 1862:

The proprietor of the place had voluntarily taken the oath of allegiance, and had made more money since the date of the Federal occupation that during his whole life previously...He employed a smart barkeeper, who led guests by a retired way to the drinking rooms. Here, with the gas burning at a taper point, cobblers, cocktails, and juleps were mixed stealthily and swallowed in the darkness. The bar was like a mint to the proprietor; he only feared discovery and prohibition.

We believe the barkeeper led people to the basement of this building. Today, that space is used as the kitchen for the restaurant.



COBBLER MIXER.

(A new pattern.)

Excerpts from Campaigns of a Non-Combatant is available online through Google Books if you'd like to read about his full experience during the war.