

## Chicago Glass Mfg. Co.

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with contributions by David Whitten

The Chicago Glass Mfg. Co. was only in business for nine years. The firm probably would have escaped our notice had it not been for a single letter written by the firm to Charles Yockel, a noted Philadelphia mold maker. The letter calls for a Diamond-S logo to be engraved in the bases of the molds. The use of a counterintuitive logo led to a study of the logo – another tortuous pathway to little-known manufacturer’s mark.

### History

#### Chicago Glass Mfg. Co., Chicago (1883-1892)

The Chicago Glass Mfg. Co. incorporated in July 1883 (Figure 1). Thomas K. Sheldon (later of Sheldon-Foster Glass Co. fame) became the manager of the flint bottle plant at 4023 Wentworth Ave., Chicago, in 1885 and retained that position until he left for Indiana in 1887 (Lewis Publishing Co. 1896:850; Roller n.d.). In December 1886, the *American Mail and Export Journal* (1886:165) reported an interesting experiment carried out by Chicago Glass. The plant had installed a

Seimans glass-melting furnace, with open pots, for flint glass. This is the first attempt to melt flint glass in open pots for the Siemens furnace, and only the second to use open pots for this type of glass. The first attempt was made by the Berger Brothers, of Philadelphia, but they ultimately returned to closed pots. It is claimed that the new process will melt glass in seven hours and forty-five minutes, while the old-fashioned furnaces take from fifteen to twenty-four hours.

A short article in the *Western Druggist* (1888:114) noted that Chicago Glass “has been supplying the market with lettered and other druggists’ glass ware of superior quality, and at prices that have attracted a large and rapidly growing business.” The plant supplied local drug stores without transportation costs but also shipped to other areas. The factory suffered a serious

fire on the second floor of the building on January 24, 1888. Two men and 75 boys barely escaped by jumping into snow banks or running through flames, although the damage was covered by insurance (*Elkhart Daily Review* 1/24/1888). The plant was repaired.

In 1891, Chicago Glass operated two furnaces (Roller n.d.). In September of the same year, the plant advertised in a Pittsburgh newspaper for “first-class, sober prescription glass blowers; also a few good finishers; union wages; steady work; fare paid” (*Pittsburgh Dispatch* 9/5/1891). Brothers (2002) noted the plant as last being listed in newspapers in 1892 – very likely the last year of operation.



Figure 1 – Factory on letterhead – 11/17/1887 (Courtesy, The Whiterthur Library: Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera)

### Containers and Marks

#### S in a Diamond (1883-1891)

Jones (1966:18) illustrated a Diamond-S mark but only noted that it was “the only ‘brand’ other than letters that I saw in Fort Union” (bottles deposited ca. 1882-1891). Toulouse (1971:455) illustrated the “turned square” mark (see below for variations) but noted that the manufacturer had not been identified. Bethman (1991:76) attributed the Diamond-S mark to the Swindell Brothers, noting that “the ‘diamond S’ marking would appear to date from 1885 to 1889” – although he gave no reason for this identification.

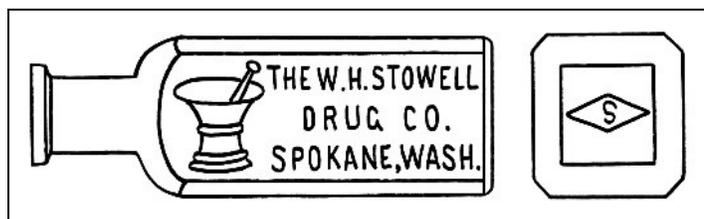


Figure 2 – Diamond-S on prescription bottle (Bethman 762)

Bethman (1991:762, 805, 875) illustrated three Washington drug store bottles embossed on their bases with this mark (Figure 2). Preble (2002:667) showed a single example of the mark on a drug store bottle used between 1888 and 1889. The BRG discovered and



Figure 3 – Diamond-S on medicinal bottle (Tucson Urban Renewal collection)

photographed two examples of the logo from the Tucson Urban Renewal collection (Figure 3). Both were on “square” pharmacy bottles. These were probably the same marks as those illustrated by Bethman and Preble. A few final examples came from the Lynn Loomis collection of New Mexico prescription bottles (Figure 4).

Clint (1976:115, 123, 176, 190) illustrated three flasks and one cylinder whiskey bottle used in Colorado, all embossed on their bases with the elongated mark (Figures 5 & 6). Each flask and the cylinder bottle had a tooled, two-part “brandy” finish. Dates for the bottles ranged from 1884 to 1895.

Clint (1976:169-170) also illustrated two additional flasks

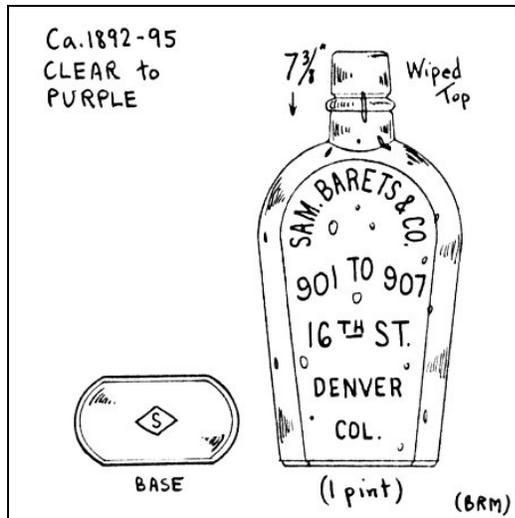


Figure 5 – Diamond-S on flask (Clint 1976:115)

marked on the bases with S in a Diamond, but this diamond was not stretched (i.e., a square turned 45 degrees). Both flasks were mouth blown with

continuous-thread finishes (Figure 7). Clint showed the bottles with the side seams extending to the top of the finish (to the lip or rim) but noted that the lip was ground smooth. This indicates a bottle that was mouth-blown into a mold, then the finish was ground to allow the screw cap to fit onto the embossed threads. Clint dated the flasks ca. 1887 and ca. 1889.



Figure 4 – Diamond-S on prescription bottle (Lynn Loomis coll.)

Toulouse (1971:449-450) added a somewhat bizarre twist by suggesting that the T.A. Snider Preserve Co., Cincinnati, Ohio, used the “turned square” Diamond-S mark ca. 1900. He

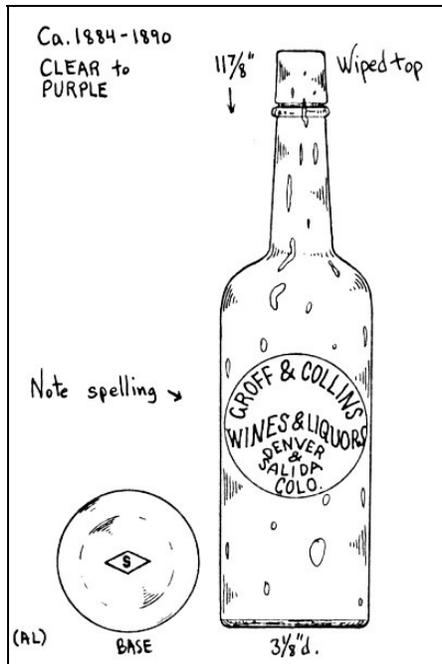


Figure 6 – Diamond-S on cylinder whiskey (Clint 1976:123)

Packing Co. in 1928, and was absorbed into the Birdseye Division of General Foods in 1943.

Zumwalt (1980:388) cited a section of the *Centennial Review of Cincinnati*, by J.W. Leonard, which gave the same basic history described by Toulouse, noting specifically that Snider and others incorporated the T.A. Snider Preserve Co. in June 1884. She illustrated a sauce bottle base embossed with a slight horizontal stretch to the Diamond-S mark.

### The Charles Yockell Letter

The Chicago Glass Mfg. Co. wrote a letter – dated 11/17/1887 – to Charles Yockell, noted Philadelphia mold maker, asking him to make “two molds wooden handles diamond S on

noted that Mrs. Snider, the wife of Reverend T.A. Snider began a home canning business in the late 1870s, and her husband founded the T.A. Snider Preserve Co. in 1884. The firm became the New York Cannery after a move to Albion, New York, in 1923, renamed itself the Snider

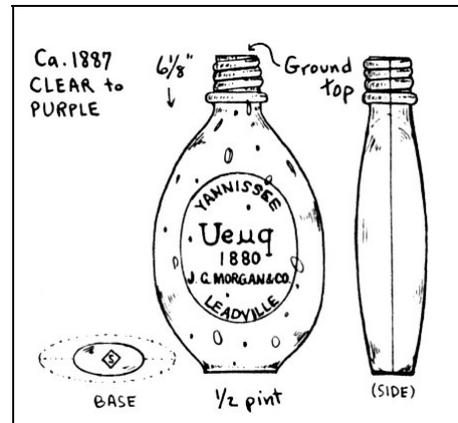


Figure 7 – Diamond-S on continuous-thread flask (Clint 1976:170)

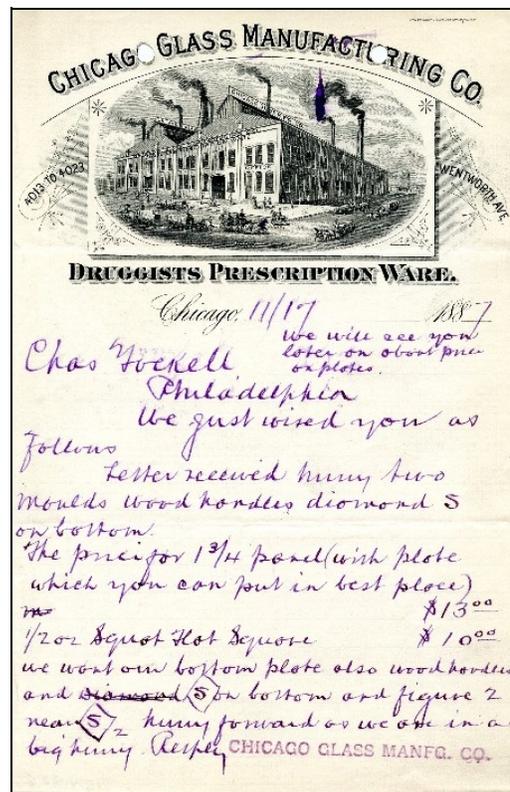


Figure 8 – Chicago Glass Mfg. Co. letter to Charles Yockell (Courtesy, The Whiterthur Library: Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera)

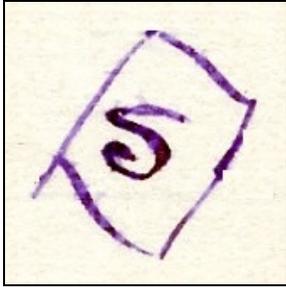


Figure 9 – Revolved square logo (Winterthur Library)

bottom” (Winterthur Library). One mold was “for 1 3/4 panel (with plate which you can put in best place).” The other was for a “½ ounce Squat Flat Square” (Figure 8).

The Diamond-S mark was drawn on the letter as what we have called the “rotated square” variation (Figure 9). On the “Squat Flat Square,” Chicago Glass requested a “figure 2” near the

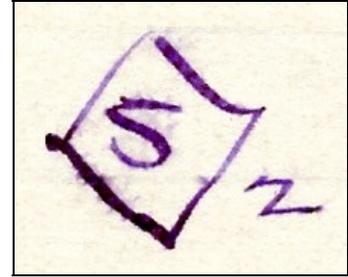


Figure 10 – Logo with “2” (Winterthur Library)

mark and illustrated it on the right side (Figure 10). In our examination of the Tucson Urban Renewal collection, we discovered a small, square, colorless bottle embossed with the Diamond-S logo with a “2” to the right (Figure 11). This is almost certainly the bottle described in the letter to Yockel.

Although the letter is only signed by a stamp “CHICAGO GLASS MANFG. CO.,” the message was almost certainly sent at the behest of the firm’s manager, Thomas K. Sheldon (Winterthur Library). Although we have not found documentary evidence to support this, Sheldon also may have been the owner of the company or the president of the corporation. This is the same Thomas K. Sheldon who had his name embossed on Sheldon drug store bottles made for Dean, Foster & Co. and the Sheldon-Foster Glass Co. (see those two sections for more information).



Figure 11 – Logo with “2” (Tucson Urban Renewal collection)

The letter may indicate the reason for the variation in diamonds. The letter noted, “We want our bottom plate . . . ~~Diamond~~ S on bottom” with a rotated-box diamond drawn around the “S.” The spacing of the letters is such that the diamond around the “S” was almost certainly drawn as an afterthought. There must have been a reason for crossing out the word “Diamond” and adding the drawing. Other letters to Yockel (cited at various places in the *Encyclopedia*) have described logos in longhand (handwritten) instructions. Many of these were barely legible, and it is no wonder that we find so many botched engravings of manufacturer’s marks. It is probable that Chicago Glass sent only a description in a previous order and received an elongated diamond; they wanted to be more certain this time.

This ties the Chicago Glass Mfg. Co. directly to the Diamond-S logo. Also note that these bottles were *not* made for the T.A. Snider Preserve Co. Although the use of an “S” by Chicago Glass is not intuitively obvious, this is some of the most solid evidence in the bottle literature for a connection between a logo and a glass house. As noted above, the “S” likely indicated Thomas Sheldon.

## Discussion and Conclusions

In assigning a maker to these Diamond-S marks, four variables must be addressed: 1) bottle shape; 2) bottle type; 3) color; and 4) date ranges. Although not included in these four variables, it is also important to note that all references and the sample of bottles we have discovered occur in the western U.S.

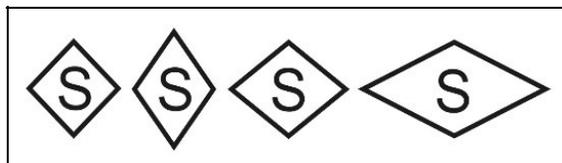


Figure 12 – Four diamond shapes

### Shape

The logos fell into four base shapes, each based on the shape of the diamond (Figure 12):

1. Rotated Box Diamond-S – a square or box rotated 45 degrees, all sides equal
2. Vertical Diamond-S – diamond stretched slightly vertically
3. Horizontal Diamond-S – diamond stretched slightly horizontally
4. Elongated Diamond-S – diamond stretched horizontally

The main research question is: Are these actual variations or just part of a single continuum. Unfortunately, the answer is unclear.

### Type

The bottles may also be arranged by category or type, with five major divisions:

1. T.A. Snider catsup bottles
2. Liquor flasks with continuous-thread finishes
3. Liquor flasks and bottles with one- or two-part finishes

4. Medicinal bottles
5. Soda, milk, and “other” bottles

This does not mean there were no other bottle types made by the company – or with these logos. These, however, are the only types we have found.

### **Color**

With one exception (an amber flask), all bottles in our sample were colorless, sometimes noted as having turned to an amethyst shade due to exposure to the sun.

### **Date Ranges**

The date range for the use of the mark/bottles was consistently within two temporal periods: 1880-1895 and 1920-1925. Our concern in this study is the earlier period: 1880-1895, so we can eliminate the Elongated Diamond-S that was used by the Southern Glass Co. from ca. 1920 to 1925 (see Southern Glass Co. section for more information). If the dates are correct, we have only two glass houses that fit the time period as well as making the correct types of containers and glass color:

Swindell Brothers, Baltimore, Maryland (1879-1959)  
Chicago Glass Mfg. Co. (1883-ca. 1891)

Other glass houses connected with the letter “S” were eliminated because they either did not make colorless glass, had no history of making the right products, or were in business during the wrong period.

### **Comparing the Variables**

Comparing the variables leads to a single conclusion: These bottles were made by more than one glass house. There were at least three manufacturers, and only two of those may be positively identified. See Table 1 for a summary.

**Table 1 – Shapes, Colors, Bottle Types, and Manufacturers of the Diamond-C logo**

Shape of Logo	Color	Type of Bottle	Possible Manufacturer
Rotated Box Diamond-S Horizontal Diamond-S	Colorless	Snider’s Catsup	Chicago Glass Mfg. Co.?
Rotated Box Diamond-S	Colorless	Liquor	Swindell Bros.?.; Salt Lake City Glass Works?
Horizontal Diamond-S Elongated Diamond-S	Colorless	Liquor	Swindell Bros.?.; Salt Lake City Glass Works?
Vertical Diamond-S	Amber	Liquor	Swindell Bros.?.; Salt Lake City Glass Works?
Horizontal Diamond-S	Colorless	Medicine	Chicago Glass Mfg. Co.
Elongated Diamond-S	Colorless	Soda, Milk	Southern Glass Co.

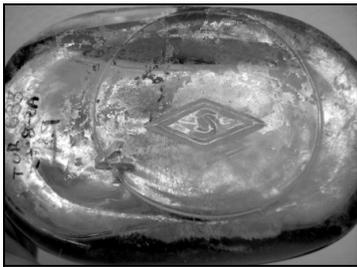


Figure 13 – Elongated diamond logo (Tucson Urban Renewal collection)

The Southern Glass Co., located at Vernon (Los Angeles), California, used the Elongated Diamond-S logo on soda, milk, and other machine-made bottles during the 1920-1925 period (e.g., Figures 13 & 14). The Bottle Research Group (Lockhart et al. 2009) thoroughly explored Southern Glass

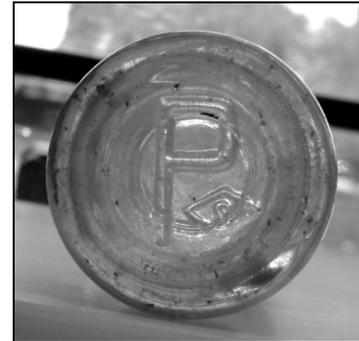


Figure 14 – Elongated diamond on milk bottle

and its marks (also see Southern Glass Co. section).

The 1888 letter from the Chicago Glass Mfg. Co. to Charles Yockel described and illustrated the revolved square diamond variation and described the medicinal bottles upon which it was to be used. The Bottle Research Group found these exact bottles (albeit in horizontal diamond variation) in our examination of the Tucson Urban Renewal Project collection. The Chicago Glass Mfg. Co. plant was in operation *only* during the correct time period, and it was noted for its colorless prescription glass ware. We have hypothesized that the



Figure 15 – Snider catsup base with Diamond-S

“S” in the logo indicated Thomas Sheldon, the manager until 1888, but, even if that is incorrect, the bottles were still made by the Chicago Glass Mfg. Co. during the 1888-1892 period.



Figure 16 – Snider catsup base with Diamond-S (eBay)

The Snider’s catsup and sauce bottles make an interesting study.

The obvious intuitive interpretation for the Diamond-S on the bottle bases is that the “S” indicated Snider – as per the Toulouse guess. However, a study of a small sample of other Snider bottles on eBay and other online sources disclosed only *some* catsup bottles embossed with the Diamond-S logo. And those few exhibited the rotated box or horizontal diamond logos (Figures 15 & 16). These were mouth blown and could certainly have been made during the Chicago Glass period (Figure 17).



Figure 17 – Finish of Snider bottle

Other Snider bottles had no Diamond-S basemarks (Figure 18), except for the one illustrated by Zumwalt – a horizontal diamond. Once Snider entered the machine age, the firm purchased bottles from the Owens Bottle Machine Co. At least one example had the distinctive Owens machine scar and



Figure 18 – Snider catsup base – no Diamond-S (eBay)

an “F” in the center of the base. The “F” was used by the factory at Fairmont, West Virginia, from at least 1910 to 1917.

Another study of Snider’s Catsup advertisements from online sources (through a Google search) failed to discover a single example of a Diamond-S logo used in the company’s advertising. It is therefore likely that the logo is a manufacturer’s mark, and the maker *could* be Chicago Glass – conveniently located in the same city.

The flasks embossed with three variations of the logo are another loose end. The Rotated Box logo was only illustrated by Clint on flasks with continuous-thread finishes, dating – respectively – 1887 and 1889. Clint’s other flasks and the single cylinder whiskey were marked with horizontal and elongated diamonds. These could have been made by Chicago Glass, but there is no evidence that the firm produced liquor containers. The location of the flasks in Colorado is equally perplexing, as we have not found examples of them in other venues. The Vertical Diamond logo was the only one that was amber in color, completely eliminating the Chicago Glass Mfg. Co. as a possibility. The Swindell Brothers made flasks at least as early as 1887 and made amber glass by at least 1904 (probably earlier), but the Swindells were located at Baltimore, a long distance from Colorado.

Another long-shot possibility was the Salt Lake City Glass Works, Salt Lake City, Utah (1885-ca. 1889) On Christmas Eve, 1884, *Crockery & Glass Journal* announced the incorporation of the Salt Lake City Glass Works with a capital of \$10,000. Thomas E. Taylor was the president, with Jacob Moritz as vice president, and John A. Evans as secretary and treasurer. Among others, the Salt Lake Brewing Co., George F. Culmer, the A. Fisher Brewing Co., and Francis Armstrong held stock in the new firm. The company had erected “a substantial building” and was putting in furnaces at the time of the announcement. The plant was expected to be ready for business by the end of January. *Commoner & Glassworker* listed the plant with one furnace under the “Green Bottle, Hollow-Ware & Green Fruit Jars” category in April 1889, the last listing we have found (Roller 1996). The two breweries provided a connection with alcohol and possibly amber glass – and the plant was adjacent to Colorado.

We cannot entirely rule out another possibility. The Diamond-S on Snider catsup bottles could certainly equal Snider, despite its short and/or sporadic use. The bottles ordered by the Chicago Glass Mfg. Co. could be for a drug store or wholesaler that had a name beginning with “S” – and the liquor flasks and bottles could also be connected with an “S” user. However, none the names on the liquor flasks illustrated in Clint (1976) began with “S” – so the user would have had to have been a wholesaler instead of a bar or liquor dealer. The Chicago Glass Mfg. Co. ordered a prescription bottle “with plate.” The purpose of a plate was so that the same mold could be used for multiple customers. A Diamond-S on base would severely limit that ability – unless the mark was the logo of the glass house.

Our summary is a bit disappointing. The maker of the liquor flasks and bottles with the rotated square and vertical logos could be either the Swindell Brothers of Baltimore or the Salt Lake City Glass Works – as well as a glass house we have failed to locate. Neither of the two known glass plants fits perfectly. The rotated square and horizontal marks on Snider catsup bottles could belong to either Snider or the Chicago Glass Mfg. Co.

Things look a bit more clear for the rotated square and horizontal logos on medicinal bottles, where the Chicago Glass Mfg. Co. was almost certainly the manufacturer. And we already knew that the Southern Glass Co. of Vernon (Los Angeles), California, was the manufacturer of soda, milk, and other machine-made bottles with the Elongated Diamond-S logo. Our final score is only 50%.

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