

# Louisville Glass Factories of the 19th Century - Part 3

by David Whitten

This article concludes a look at early Louisville glass factories. Part one appeared in the Spring 2005 issue, pages 45-49 and part two continued in the Summer 2005 issue on pages 70 to 72.

**SITE No. 5:** SW Corner of 4th Street and "C" (now Avery) Streets

**KENTUCKY GLASS WORKS COMPANY** (KENTUCKY GLASSWORKS COMPANY) (1879-1889)

On July 23, 1879, this company was incorporated with Edward Bull as President, William Cromey as secretary and John Stanger Sr. as plant manager ("superintendent"). Stanger, who had been intermittently involved in the original Kentucky Glass Works and its successor Louisville Glass Works from its inception in 1850 until about 1870 or 1871, as previously noted, subsequently held positions at the Star Glass Works in New Albany as well as the Southern Glass Works in Louisville before going on to the Kentucky Glass Works Company.

The notice of incorporation first appeared in the July 27, 1879 issue of the *LOUISVILLE COMMERCIAL*.

This factory was located on the southwest corner of 4<sup>th</sup> and "C" Streets, which, at the time, was considered to be the "southern outskirts" of the city of Louisville, just south of the area which is now termed "Old Louisville." C Street was later re-named Avery Street, situated in the University of Louisville campus area. This factory was sometimes casually referred to as simply the "Kentucky Glass Works," although this company dates nearly 30 years after the founding of the original factory of that



Closeup of maker's mark on the base of a Kentucky Glass Works Company "coffin" flask, circa 1880s.

name.

It is uncertain just when the first glass was actually blown here, but it's possible that production didn't start until around the beginning of September, as July and August were traditionally the two months of the year during which most glass factories of that era shut down for a well-deserved rest period and for making needed repairs.

In the *LOUISVILLE COMMERCIAL* issue of January 4, 1880 an announcement appeared advising that John Stanger, Sr. had retired after only a few months and was no longer involved in the factory's operation and that Henry C. Lentz, of St. Louis (proclaimed to be well acquainted with the field of glass manufacturing in that city) had replaced him as superintendent effective December 9, 1879. John Stanger, Sr. didn't exactly retire - at that time, anyway - he merely crossed the Ohio River to work (again) at W.C.DePauw's glass factory in New Albany.

Edward Bull continued as president, remaining in that position until the company closed in about 1889. I have not yet found an exact ending date, but no employees were listed in Caron's 1890 Louisville City Directory.

The Kentucky Glass Works Company plant was in operation for about ten years, producing a wide variety of bottles and jars. At least 200 men and boys were employed at this plant at one time or another, although the number at any one time was probably closer to 75. A few of the employees over the years included glassblowers Martin Burke (later to become a manager of the King City Glass Works in Fairmount, Ind.), Philip Berger, Charles Cannon, Martin Evans, Joseph Flynn, George Connelly, William Hays, Leonard Mertz, August Smeltz, George Ruhl, John Vogt and George Morrison; blacksmiths David Wing and



Yellow olive green quart wax sealer fruit jar, marked "KY.G.W.CO." Photo courtesy of Greg Spurgeon.

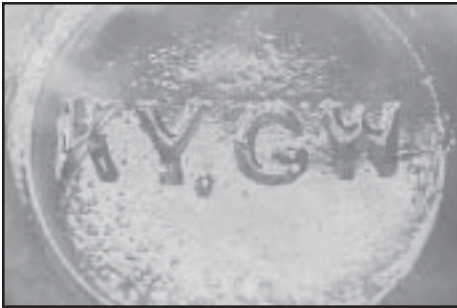
Thomas Hanlon; packers James P. Dillon, Charles Iredale and Benjamin Pence; bookkeepers William T. Barbour and Leslie W. Noel; night watchman John Waldron; mixer John Gartley; fireman Peter Arndt; and yardman Elijah Ford.

The company did not always enjoy smooth sailing, as occasional fires and labor strikes sometimes occurred, which seem to have been rather common in the glass factories of that era.

On January 26, 1881, at about 5:00 in the morning, a fire swept through part of the KYGW factory property, and several outbuildings were destroyed including the blacksmith shop, pot-house and several wood frame sheds. The fire was believed to have started between the sand-drying and mixing rooms, with a total loss estimated at \$10,000, which was reported to be fully covered by insurance. All of the clay pots were ruined and a quantity of beer bottles were destroyed as well. However, management assured reporters that the ruined buildings would be quickly rebuilt and there would be virtually no interruption in the filling of



Squat ale bottle in amber, blob lip. Marked "KY.G.W.Co."



“KY.G.W.” mark on the base of a wax sealer fruit jar.

orders.

In another incident, on March 29, 1883 a brief notice appeared in the *Courier-Journal* that twenty employees had walked off the job, apparently to protest the firing of two workers the previous day. KYGW president Edward Bull flatly declared he would not hire them back, and would proceed quickly with hiring replacements for the strikers. Presumably the strike ended on a relatively amicable note, as I could not find anything more in later newspapers.

Workers’ salaries of that time are of interest, and according to statistics from the 1880 U.S. Census pertaining to glass manufacturing, a chart listing the average daily pay rate for workers at an unidentified Kentucky glass factory (no doubt referring to either this company or Southern) include these figures:

Manager, \$4.16 per day; Boss Blowers, \$4.00; Bottle Blowers, \$3.50; Vial Blowers, \$3.00; Gatherers, \$1.00; Laying-up Boys, \$1.00; Mixers, \$1.33; Potmakers, \$2.00; Blacksmiths, \$1.50.

Marks that were used by this company include KY.G.W., KY.G.W.Co., K.Y.G.Co., and K.G.W.Co.

Whim of the mold-maker, and the type and size of bottle involved seems to account for considerable variation in the exact mark used, although there is a slight possibility (certainly much less likely) that the marks were each used for specific periods of time.

The most common mark is “KY.G.W.” which appears on wax sealer fruit jars, medicine and bluing flasks, coffin flasks, various Louisville-area blob-top



A coffin flask from Kentucky Glass Works Company. This variant is marked “KY.G.Co.”

beer bottles of the 1880s (such as Louis Weber; Ludwig & Waldmann; Gross & Ostertag; Drexler, Immohr & Co, etc), square cathedral pickle bottles, a scarce example of which is pictured in Betty Zumwalt’s “Ketchup, Pickles, Sauces” (1980:261), generic Worcestershire sauce bottles, and others.

The marking “KY.G.Co.” appears on two sizes of light green-aqua coffin flasks.

“KY.G.W.Co.” is marked on an amber 9" cream ale-type bottle, wax sealer fruit jars (found in shades of amber, olive green & aqua glass), “JOHN J. SMITH / LOUISVILLE, KY” tonic syrup bottles (probably the most commonly seen bottle made by this company), amber export-shape beer bottles, an aquamarine Newport, Ky. “torpedo” soda bottle embossed in a slug plate “SILVA & CO.,” as well as various other utility bottles and jars.

Some of the more “important” bottles known with the "KY.G.W.CO" marking would include “SCHROEDER'S BITTERS”; “STANDARD VINEGAR WORKS”; “SAINT JACOB'S BITTERS”; “GEO. W. MENZ / LOUISVILLE, KY”; “CONRAD STORZ / JEFFERSONVILLE, IN”; “H. F. KRIEGER / BOTTLER / LOUISVILLE, KY” and others.

The rare "pig bottles" embossed “DUFFY'S CRESCENT SALOON / 214 JEFFERSON STREET / LOUISVILLE, KY” that have been found in amber, clear, aqua and cobalt blue glass are most likely products of either this company OR the Southern Glass Works. They do not carry a glasshouse marking to show where they were produced, but the approximate years they could have been made points to one of these two factories. Only one example of the cobalt pig has so far been found and this showed up recently at an auction in Indiana.

An extremely scarce glass target ball in aquamarine (it is believed that only two examples are known) used for trap-shooting, carries the embossed name of a hunting or sporting goods supply store (Joseph Griffith & Sons), with the wording “Kentucky Glassworks Company”



Two Louisville medicine bottles, likely products of a Louisville glasshouse. The J.T. Crecelius & Co. bottle dates from c.1885, and was probably made by KYGWCO; the Seaton bottle dates from sometime between 1865 and 1885, exact glasshouse source is uncertain. Both are private mold bottles, and do not carry a glasshouse mark.

embossed around it. This ball probably dates between 1879 and 1884. Ralph Finch, a target ball collector/historian, and author of an upcoming book on the history and collecting of glass target balls, values it as one of the scarcest, most sought-after target balls known.

Use of glass target balls for trap-shooting was a relatively short-lived affair and primarily lasted from about 1877 to 1885 as the popularity of the clay pigeon (patented in 1880) steadily increased and the glass target balls gradually fell out of favor. However, they were continued to be made in small quantities until about 1920 or so.

Most bottles made by the Kentucky Glass Works Co. are found in various shades of aqua, as well as shades of amber including a very rich dark reddish amber, and occasionally in various greens including light green, olive green, grass green and a beautiful “citron” yellow-green.

It is assumed that a good percentage of production was not marked (examples that come to mind would include the turn-mold wine and beer bottles made by most glass factories of the era, and private-mold bottles including hutchinson sodas, whiskey and medicine bottles made for local companies). It is likely that some of the “generic” 1880s

era bottles that do not carry a glassmaker's mark, are made of common aqua glass, have crudely applied lips, and are found in the immediate vicinity of Louisville were made here or at one of the other Louisville factories.

Sanborn fire insurance maps of 1905 indicate this factory had already disappeared by that year, the land having been previously acquired for use by the expanding Chess & Wymond barrel-making factory. The former site of the Kentucky Glass Works Company is currently an asphalt parking lot used by the University of Louisville.

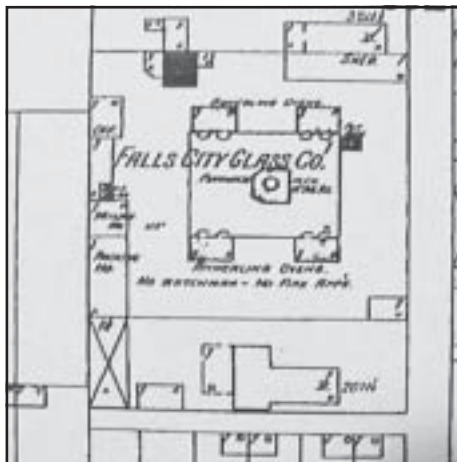
**SITE No. 6:** Lytle Street between 26th and 27th

Falls City Glass Company (1884-1892)

This glass factory seems to have started up around the time that the Southern Glass Works shut down operation. I haven't yet found the exact beginning date for the Falls City Glass factory, although a business listing first appears in the 1884 Louisville city directory. Many of the same workmen who were involved with the Southern Glass Works migrated to this factory, which was situated in the Portland area of west Louisville (a short distance from the location of the Louisville Plate Glass Company). Principals involved include Joseph Husak, president; Conrad Opperman, secretary (who was awarded a patent for a wire clamp jar closure device connected with the "My Choice" embossed fruit jar which was made here); Jacob Scheurer, sales agent; Anton J. Graefenhan, bookkeeper, and Henry Geisel, foreman.

A sampling of the many others involved at the plant would include glassblowers Nicholas Klein, Edward Koegler, Lee McCoy, John P. Doyle, Jacob Ambrosius, Charles Vogel, Martin Evans and John Vogt; mixers Frank Baeurle and Louis Ferry; blacksmith John Farrell; and packers Patrick Mahaney, Andrew Moack and John Pfarr, Jr.

Employment of young



1892 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing the Falls City Glass Company factory site. This was located in the Portland neighborhood of west Louisville.

boys, often orphans as young as 10 to 15 years of age, was common practice in most American factories during this period, and on May 14, 1887, a strike occurred among the boys employed at the factory, with 15 gatherers and "laying-up boys" walking off the job. They demanded an increase of \$1.00 per week, which would raise their salaries from \$5.00 to \$6.00 per week. The factory manager was up in arms because the smooth operation of the plant depended quite heavily on this source of cheap labor. After several days of negotiation, a notice appeared on May 18<sup>th</sup> that the dispute had been settled and the boys would be returning to work that same day. This notice was supplied to the newspaper: "The strike at the Falls City Glass works will come to an abrupt end today, as the boys who struck last Friday are going to work again. There are concessions on the part of both, but the affair is claimed by the parties interested to be a matter of business, and no statement is made public."

Falls City seems to have made glassware that has been found in a wider variety of shades of color when compared to the production of the other factories in Louisville during that time period. Glass production (most notably the wax sealer fruit jars) is known in several



Orange-Amber 'Brown, Thompson & Company' lady's leg whiskey, circa 1885, marked "F.C.G.CO"

shades of green, amber, near yellow, citron, cornflower, sky and cobalt blues, as well as the typical shades of aqua. The cobalt wax sealer jar is probably the most well-known and highly sought-after of any of the items known to have been made by Falls City. It is likely that the cobalt medicine bottles embossed "R.A. Robinson & Co.- Druggists - Louisville" were also made by this company, and possibly the wax sealer jars were made from the same cobalt glass batches used for those bottles.

Probably at least eight or ten different molds were used for making the FCGCO wax sealers, and they are relatively common in aqua, appearing for sale quite frequently on eBay.

Marks found on the bases of bottles include "F.C.G.C." and "F.C.G.Co.," although the second mark is much more frequently encountered.

"F.C.G.C." appears on the base of a square "shoe dressing" bottle (identical in shape and size to the common Frank Miller's Crown Dressing bottle), which is embossed "JOSEPH GOLDBACH / PORPOISE OIL DRESSING / LOUISVILLE, KY" along with a crudely drawn representation of a porpoise. An interesting characteristic of this bottle is that all of the 'S's in the embossed lettering are backwards because of a moldmaker's engraving error. These bottles are known in aqua and, rarely, light green glass.

Another scarce bottle with the F.C.G.C. marking is embossed "GOCOH'S MEXICAN QUICK RELIEF" (note misspelling of "relief"), found in dark amber. This is a rectangular medicine rather similar in appearance to the typical Buckingham Whisker Dye bottle.

At least two hutch soda bottles are reported with F.C.G.CO marking on the base, including one embossed "HENRY HASENJAEGER / CAIRO, ILL." and another one marked "H. BREIHAN, CAIRO, ILL." Both of these hutches were reported to me by collector/digger Dave Beeler.

Several "quart" (26 oz.) blob-top beer bottles are embossed "Pat/F.C.G.Co. / 85" on the base, apparently in reference to the 1885 patent for the Baltimore Loop closure patented by William Painter. Nadorff & Bro; Schaefer-Meyer; H. F. Krieger; Fred J. Drexler; and A. & D. Schmitt were Louisville bottlers or brewers who had bottles supplied to them by Falls City.

I have personally seen pickle bottles, hock wines, olive oils, coffin flasks,



A group of three Falls City bottles: Coffin whiskey flask, Gothic Cathedral Peppersauce (6-sided), and typical olive oil bottle of the 1880s period. All are marked "F.C.G.CO."

chemical bottles, mini whiskey samplers, Worcestershire sauce bottles and other kinds of generic utility bottles with the F.C.G.Co. mark on the bottom. A yellow-amber bottle marked "Normandy Herb & Root Stomach Bitters" carries this glassmark. These bottles are known in two sizes, and come in both marked and unmarked versions.



Yellow Olive Quart wax sealer marked "F.C.G.CO." Photo courtesy of Greg Spurgeon.



Orange amber Normandy Herb & Root Stomach Bitters bottle, marked "F.C.G.CO.", circa 1890.

There are probably many other types of bottles which carry this marking that exist and may eventually be discovered during privy digs, especially within Louisville and in the surrounding area.

The site where this factory once stood is now a parking lot in a somewhat run-down Louisville neighborhood. It is likely that few, if any, of the nearby residents know that a glass factory once operated in the vicinity.

**SITE No. 7:** West Side of 37th Street, S. of Bank Street

Kentucky Co-operative Glass Company/  
Louisville Glass Company/Louisville Bottle  
Manufacturing Company (1897-1901)\*

On November 22, 1897 the first glass was blown at the newly-formed Kentucky Co-operative Glass Company, located on 37<sup>th</sup> Street, on the west side of Louisville. The company was composed of a group of glassblowers who had returned to Louisville after having held positions for several years in Fairmount, Muncie, and Marion glass plants in Indiana. All, or nearly all, had previously worked in Louisville at either the Southern Glass Works and/or the Falls City Glass Company.



Shoe dressing bottle embossed "Joseph Goldbach / Porpoise Oil Dressing / Louisville, KY. Marked "F.C.G.C."

The president (who was a glassblower) was listed as J.E. Fagan, and secretary was Armin Stein.

Eighteen workers were employed at the start, including experienced glassblowers John Doyle, John Vogel, Barney Burns, Andy Allrich, George Connelly, John Vogt, Conrad Opperman, Joseph Husak, W.O.Hays and several others.

Stein seems to have known nothing about the glassmaking trade, and he was blamed for having made poor management decisions, such as selling glass at higher than cost, which helped lead to the downfall of the firm. It went into receivership effective March 1, 1898 and the fires were extinguished on May 14, 1898 after less than six months of bottle production.

After a period of general uncertainty concerning the fate of the factory, the plant was sold at a sheriff's sale on July 11, 1898 to businessman (and apparently one of the creditors) Joseph O'Donnell for the sum of \$1,300.

In October of that year a new company was formed and was incorporated as "Louisville Glass Company," with \$15,000 capital.

This firm evidently lasted only about a year and a half, as the next piece of



Closeup of the F.C.G.CO. mark on an olive green Falls City wax sealer.

information available shows that the firm was incorporated (again!) as the Louisville Bottle Manufacturing Company in March of 1900.

The last listing for the LBMCo appears in the 1901 Louisville city directory. The factory is not listed in the 1902 directory.

I have very little information on the specific products made at this plant, but likely the typical containers of the period were being produced. One article from early in 1898 states "oils, panels, packers, and snuffs" and other "various wares" were then being made.

A bottle almost certainly made by this firm (a Hutchinson-style blob-top soda, embossed "American Bottling Works, Louisville KY") is embossed on the heel with "K G CO." It is made of clear glass and dates from the late 1890s, which would fall in the correct period of time during which the Kentucky Cooperative Glass Company operated. Therefore I would attribute the "K.G.CO." mark to this particular factory.

The site where this factory once stood is now buried somewhere in the vicinity of the I-264 / I-64 expressway interchange and is completely inaccessible.

\*I want to thank Hemingray Glass Co. researcher/historian Bob Stahr for generously sharing articles he found in early issues of the glass trade periodicals "*Commoner & Glassworker*," "*National Glass Budget*" and "*China, Glass & Lamps*." His assistance is very kindly appreciated.

I want to also thank Greg Spurgeon for giving me permission to use some of the fruit jar photos that were posted on his website.

Other references I found to be useful that are not already mentioned within the text would include "Indiana Glass Factory Notes" by Dick Roller (1992); "The Glass Industry of New Albany" by Gerald O. Haffner (1983); and "Louisville Breweries:



A duo of Falls City bottles: Amber whiskey flask and small whiskey sampler in aqua. Both are marked "F.C.G.CO."



Mark on the base of Falls City amber whiskey flask (shown in photo above).

A History of the Brewing Industry in Louisville, Kentucky, New Albany and Jeffersonville, Indiana" by Peter R. Guetig and Conrad D.Selle (1995). Some information has been gleaned from various issues of Louisville newspapers, as well as Caron's Louisville City Directories, U.S. Census data and other sources.

This article concludes the series. David Whitten may be contacted by E-mail: drw90459@iglou.com.