

The Atterbury Glass Houses

Bill Lockhart, Bill Lindsey, Beau Schriever, and Carol Serr

The Atterbury family operated a series of glass houses at Pittsburgh that primarily made tableware and lamp-related products. Brothers James S. and Thomas B. Atterbury were the binding agents to all these firms, whose combined longevity extended from ca. 1859 to 1902. Although the firms produced bottles and fruit jars, those were minor lines compared to tableware and lamps.

Histories

Hale, Atterbury & Co., Pittsburgh (ca. 1859-1861)

James Hale, along with his brothers-in-law, James Seaman Atterbury and Thomas Bakewell Atterbury, formed the firm of Hale, Atterbury & Co. in late 1859 or early 1860 and opened the White House Glass Works (with the building painted white). The plant had a single ten-pot furnace at Birmingham (a section of Pittsburgh). Although tableware formed the primary products, the plant also made some jars from a Thomas Atterbury patent (see below). Hale left the firm in 1861 (Hawkins 2009:243).

Atterbury, Reddick & Co., Pittsburgh (1861-1863)

James Reddick replaced James Hale in partnership with the Atterbury brothers at the White House Glass Works in 1861. Although the plant primarily produced flint glass, it also made some green glass products. On March 4, 1862, the firm received a patent for making two-layered glass tableware, and the Atterbury brothers received a second patent for a fruit jar on June 30, 1863. Reddick's last listing as a partner was in 1863 (Hawkins 2009:44). The Reid patent (see below) was assigned to James Reddick as well as the Atterbury brothers on July 21, 1863, but we have no way of knowing when the group applied for the patent. Reddick had apparently left the firm by the time the patent was issued.

J.S. & T.B. Atterbury, Pittsburgh (1863-1864)

Only J.S. & T.B. Atterbury were listed in the 1863 and 1864 directories (Hawkins 2009:39; Roller 1997), almost certainly indicating the release of Reddick from the partnership. We have found no other information about the firm during this period.

Atterbury & Co., Pittsburgh (1865-1893)

By 1865, the name had become Atterbury & Co., and the firm entered into production of tableware, barware, lamps, jelly jars, novelties, and other glassware in large quantities. Despite the apparent success, the factory was idle for most of 1879 and moved in December to a new, larger plant, still on Pittsburgh's Southside (Hawkins 2009:41). George A. MacBeth & Co. leased the old plant in 1880, but, by 1882, Mrs. P. Shannon had purchased the property. The city (or Shannon) built a schoolhouse on the old White House site in 1897 (Roller 1997).

The new plant was also called the White House, but the Monongahela River flooded the factory in February 1881, and the works suffered a second flood in February 1883. Although the flood water had long subsided, a fire caused substantial damage in April 1885. By 1886, the brothers operated two open pots at a single furnace and switched from coal to the use of natural gas by 1889 (Hawkins 2009:41-42).

Atterbury Glass Co., Pittsburgh (1893-1902)

On December 7, 1893, Thomas B., James S., and Joseph M. Atterbury incorporated the Atterbury Glass Co., with a \$200,000 capitalization.¹ James Atterbury died in 1894 at the age of 67, and his brother, Thomas (aged 64), followed him in death the following year. The estate apparently renamed the firm as the Atterbury Glass Co. The factory apparently expanded, using 24 pots at seven tanks by 1897 and closed during 1902 (Hawkins 2009:42; Roller 1997).

¹ As noted by Hawkins (2009:43), the city directories continued to use the Atterbury & Co. listing until 1896.

Patents

Thomas and James Atterbury received a total of 110 patents (according to Hawkins 2009:42) – mostly for lamps, lamp accessories, and tableware. Of interest to us are the very few designated as jar and/or bottle patents. Even some of those – as noted below – were actually for decanters or table bottles.

November 20, 1860 – T.B. & J.S. Atterbury

Thomas B. Atterbury and James A. Atterbury received Patent No. 30,662 for an “Improvement in Covers for Fruit Jars” on November 20, 1860. In describing the jar, the patent document noted, “Its neck is vertical.” However, the Creswick drawings (1987:9) showed the neck/finish as funnel-shaped – i.e., with the neck flaring upward from the joint of the neck/shoulder to the ground rim.

The first part of the closure consisted of a “metallic ring, fitted snugly round the neck of the jar. This ring extends up above the top of the neck of the jar and has a circular shoulder or is recessed . . . on its inner circumference.” A “narrow lug” projected upward on one end of the ring with a horizontal slot below it. A vertical screw projected upward from the opposite side of the ring.

The lid or cover was “countersunk or made with a circular shoulder” with “a narrow curved lip” extending outward at one point along the circumference. When the lid was applied to the ring, the “narrow curved lip” was inserted into the slot on the ring. The lid seated on a “rubber gasket” and was held in place by a “clamping thumb nut” placed on the screw and tightened (Figure 1).

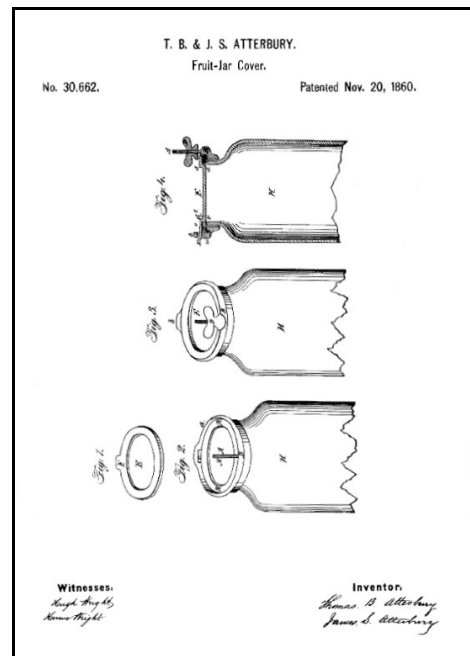


Figure 1 – Atterbury 1860 patent

June 30, 1863 – T.B. & J.S. Atterbury

On June 30, 1863, Thomas B. Atterbury and James S. Atterbury received Patent No. 39,027 for an “Improved Fruit or Preserve Jar.” – although their description revolved around the closure. The closure consisted of “a glass cover having a beveled edge and a raised center in conjunction with a flaring-mouthed jar.”

The cover was held down by an unusual device. An India-rubber gasket was attached to a metallic ring, and the ring was placed on the beveled edge of the glass cover described above. The rubber gasket was then stretched over the edge of the cover and onto the neck of the jar. This unique arrangement held the cover tightly to the jar. Although the drawing showed a finish with a distinctly flared rim, the actual jar depicted by Creswick (see below) had only a slightly flared rim (Figure 2).

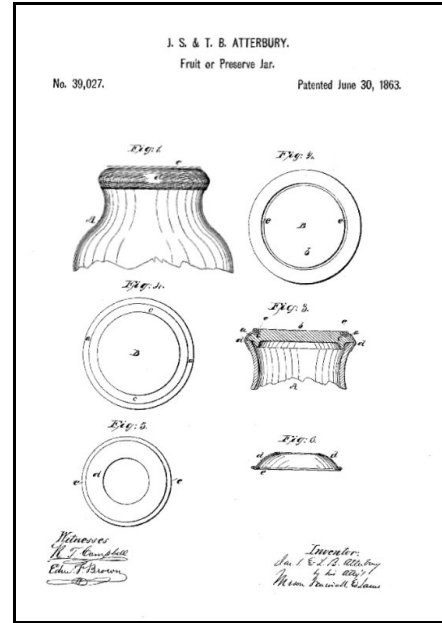


Figure 2 – Atterbury 1863 patent

July 21, 1863 – P.W. Reid

P.W. Reid received Patent No. 39,327 for an “Improved Preserve Jar” on July 21, 1863. He assigned the patent to the Atterbury brothers and J. Reddick. Reid’s description of the finish and lid for his invention is quite convoluted. The glass lid was tapered downward to fit into and upwardly tapered finish. The central section of the lid was recessed to create a handle area and had two lugs extending outward on opposite sides of the lid. These fit into two bulges in the finish, and the lid was turned to rotate the lugs, creating a seal against a rubber gasket (Figure 3).

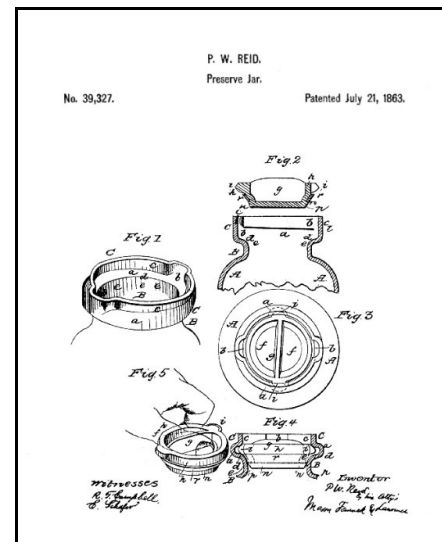


Figure 3 – Reid 1863 Patent

Tableware Patents

J.S. Atterbury, James Reddick, and T.S. Atterbury received Patent No. 34,555 for a mold for tableware on March 4, 1862. The Atterbury brothers received Patent No. 50,437 on October 17, 1865, for an improvement in the manufacture of drinking glasses. On August 30 of the following year, the brothers received Patent No. 59,159 for an “Improved Process of Making Jar Rings” (actually tableware).

Thomas B. Atterbury received five patents during 1888.² He was granted three of these on April 3 of that year, each for a “Design for a Bottle or Jar” (actually these were all decanters for the table) – Design Patents No. 18,218 (Figure 4), 18,219, and 18,220. On October 18, 1888, Atterbury received Patent No. 18,685 for a “Design for a Jar” (again, tableware), and he was granted his final patent – No. 18,714 – for another “jar” design on November 6. As these were all for tableware, they are of little interest here.

April 3, 1888 – Thomas B. Atterbury

One of Thomas Atterbury’s 1888 patents deserves more attention. Design Patent No. 18,219 for a “Design for a Bottle or Jar” was actually put into production as a container rather than tableware. Discussed below under the heading of “Mustard Jars,” the patent called for “designs for glass bottles or jars for mustard and like substances” with an “oval or elliptical body.” The design also describes some ornamentation on the jar that was not apparently actually used in production. Unfortunately, the patent drawing was “unavailable.”

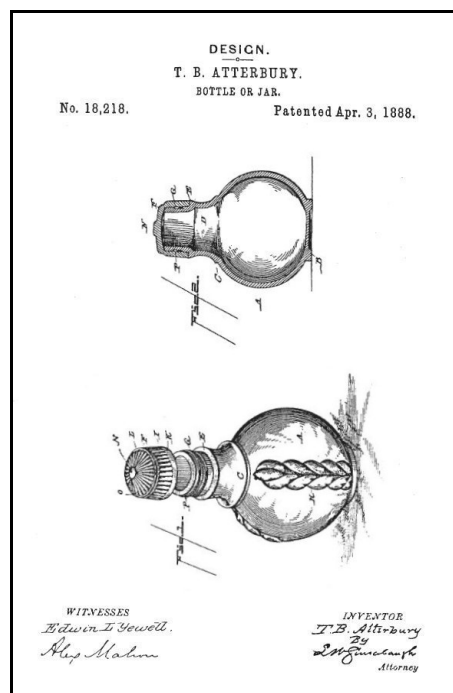


Figure 4 – Atterbury tableware patent 1888

² Unfortunately, the Patent Office did not include the date of application for the patents until 1870. Thus, we have no idea when the Atterbury patents applied for any of the patents.

Containers and Marks

Although Hawkins (2009:42) noted that the later Atterbury firms made bottles, it is likely that these were figural bottles (i.e., bottles in the shape of figures – often animals or humans) or were connected with tableware (Figure 5). They were probably not typical containers. Only the earliest of the Atterbury companies made fruit jars.



Figure 5 – Atterbury figural jar (eBay)

ATTERBURY (1860- ca. 1964)

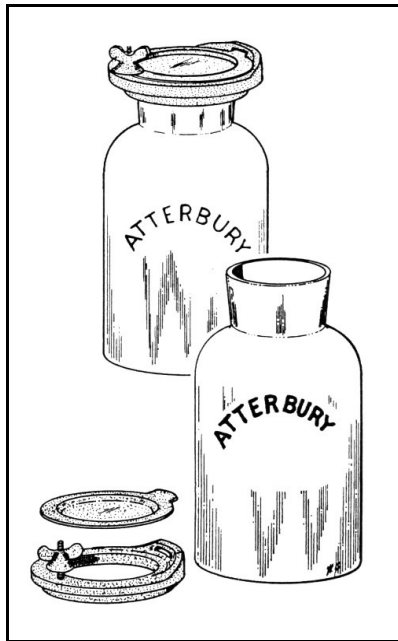


Figure 6 – ATTERBURY jar
(Creswick 1987:9)

Roller (1983:22; 2011:43) discussed a fruit jar embossed “ATTERBURY” in an arch on the side. He noted that the maker could have been J.S. & T.B. Atterbury, ca. 1864-1865 and connected the jar with the November 20, 1860, patent by Thomas B. and James S. Atterbury. Creswick (1987:9) added the patent number (No. 30,662) and only noted the maker as the White House Glass Co. – with no suggested date (Figure 6). According to Hawkins (2009:43, 243), Hale, Atterbury & Co., Atterbury & Co., and the Atterbury Glass Co. made jars embossed “ATTERBURY.” That creates a date range for the jars that stretched from 1860 to 1902. See the patent description (above) for a discussion of the finish and closure.

Leybourne (2008:24) described a variation with a “body shape identical to REID jar . . . with radiating lines up to lettering. Lines believed to be mold makers guide lines.” These lines were also described in one variation of the REID jar (see below). This variation, therefore, had to have been made after the Reid patent was issued in July 1863. These are apparently extremely rare. Leybourne placed a price tag of “\$3000 & up” on the jars in 2008! McCann (2012:82) set the price at \$2,500+. This rarity suggests that Atterbury only a few of these and for a short period of time. It is thus unlikely that any of these jars were made after ca. 1864.

ATTERBURY'S PATENT JUNE 30 1863 (1863-ca. 1865)

Roller (1983:23) noted this jar but did not give a full description or an illustration (Figure 7). He stated that the jar was probably made at the White House Glass Works, ca. 1864-1865. Creswick (1987:9) showed an identical jar to the one described above but with a different closure and markings. The side of the jar was embossed "ATTERBURY'S (arch) / PATENT / JUNE 30 1863 (all horizontal)." The underlined "S" was smaller than the other letters but not superscript. The closure illustrated was from the patent drawing (Figure 8). Creswick described the container as a "rare jar." See the patent section for a description of the finish.



Figure 8 – ATTERBURY PATENT JUNE 30 1863 (Creswick 1987:9)

REID (1863-ca. 1865)

Roller (1983:305) illustrated a jar with "REID" embossed on the side in a slight arch. The jar used an internal stopper with two lugs that fit into two internal grooves within the jar

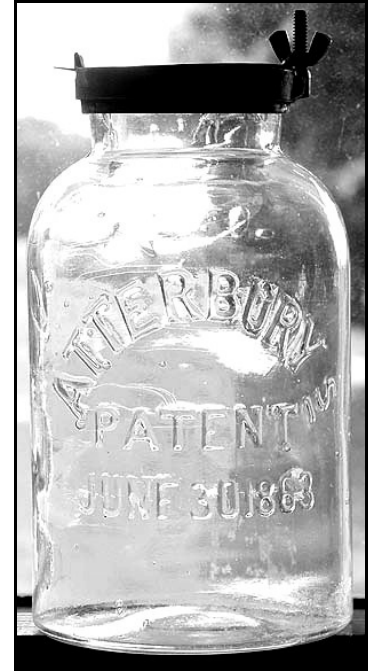


Figure 7 – ATTERBURY PATENT JUNE 30 1863 – note that this jar has the 1860 "repro" lid, although Atterbury's 1863 patent is for a different type of closure (North American Glass)

According to Hawkins (2009:43-44), Atterbury, Reddick & Co., Atterbury & Co., and the Atterbury Glass Co. all made jars embossed

"ATTERBURY'S PATENT JUNE 30 1863" and "ATTURBURY PATENT JUNE 30, 1863." The three encompass a date range from 1863 to 1902.

Leybourne (2008:24) also noted the variation with no "S" and one that had the "S" but no "30" in the date.

All these jars were apparently very rare, with price

tags of "4000 & up" in 2008! It is likely that these jars were no longer produced after ca. 1865. McCann (2012:82) set the price lower – \$3,000+ – but added that the jars were "not available." He noted that "an original closure for this jar has not yet been discovered."

mouth. P.W. Reid patented the jar on July 21, 1963, and assigned the patent to James S. and Thomas B. Atterbury. Roller suggested that Atterbury, Reddick & Co. made the jars between 1863 and 1864.

Creswick (1987:183) illustrated the jar and finish (Figure 9). She, too, noted the patent and dated the jars ca. 1863. Creswick claimed the jars were “made for Atterbury & Company by the White House Glass Company of Pittsburgh.” She noted that only two or three of these jars were known at that time. According to Hawkins (2009:44), Atterbury, Reddick & Co. made the “REID” jar (1861-1863).

Leybourne (2008:371) added two minor variations. One had “ghosted lines radiating up to lettering from a point well below the word REID.” The second had “mold repair below REID to erase radiating lines” and “C.” on the reverse side. All of these were rare, bringing a suggested price of “\$100 & up” in 2008. McCann (2012:268) noted that the jars were “not available” and that one had sold on eBay for \$1,530.

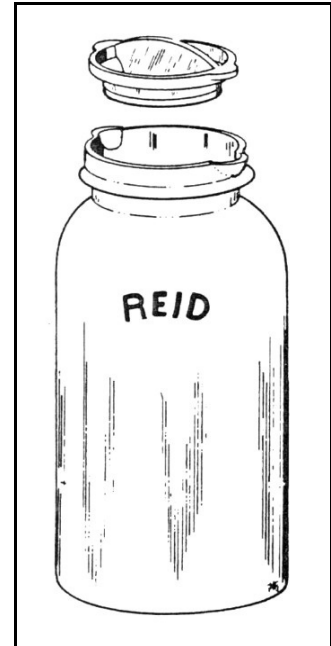


Figure 9 – Reid jar
(Creswick 1987:183)

Mustard Jars

Roller (1997) cited the October 23, 1887, issue of *Commoner & Glassworker* as stating that “Atterbury & Co. have struck a bonanza in their patent mustard jar, they cannot turn them out fast enough.” As noted by Caniff (2010:47), Atterbury received several design patents in 1888 including the one described in the patent section above, patented on April 3. Caniff also illustrated two milk-glass jars with paper labels that identified the them as containing mustard (Figure 10). Despite the lack of a patent drawing, the jars in the Caniff photos are almost certainly the ones discussed in late the 1887 advertisement.

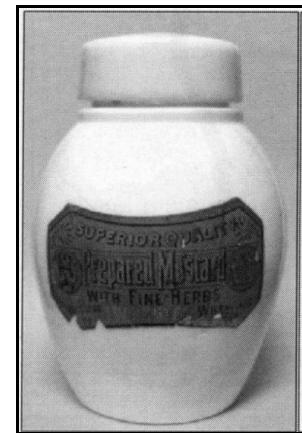


Figure 10 – Mustard jar
Caniff (2010:47)

Other Bottles



Figure 11 – Atterbury duck 1871 patent

Wearin (1965:72) discussed a “duck” bottle, used for plum whiskey, that was patented and made by the Atterbury glass house. These are commonly known as “Atterbury ducks.” Thomas B. Atterbury received Design Patent No. 4,773 for his “Design for a Bottle” on April 11, 1871 (Figure 11). The bottle was cylindrical in the shape of an embossed duck with the finish extending above the duck’s open mouth (Figure 12). The



Figure 12 – Atterbury duck bottle (Glass Works Auction)

The container was made of opal (milk) glass and had “PATD. APRIL 11TH 1871” embossed on the base. Atterbury also made other bottles, generally of opal glass, that were probably used for a variety of substances.



Figure 13 – Atterbury duck covered dish (Cowan’s Auction)

Although not a bottle, Atterbury also made a very popular covered dish – also known as the Atterbury duck. The ducks were formed in white, black, light blue, two tone (often a black head on a white duck), and several combinations of swirled patterns (e.g., blue & white or black & white) – all in opal (milk) glass (Figure 13). The prolific Thomas Atterbury applied for a “Design for a Dish” on February 3, 1887. He received Design Patent No. 17,192 on March 15, 1897 (Figure 14).

Discussion and Conclusions

Although Roller and Creswick were very guarded in their assessments of date ranges for the Atterbury and Reid jars, Hawkins was too generous with his inclusion of the later two Atterbury companies. The original Atterbury jar, patented in 1860 was almost certainly still being made in 1863, when the mold for one of the Reid jars (patented that year) was used to make an Atterbury container. However, the very rarity of all these containers suggests that the jars were discontinued shortly thereafter. Thus, the original Atterbury jar was probably made by Hale, Atterbury & Co. in 1860 and 1861 and by Atterbury, Reddick & Co. until 1863 or 1864.



Figure 14 – Atterbury duck 1887 patent

The second Atterbury fruit jar, with the June 30, 1863, patent, was almost certainly made by J.S. & T.B. Atterbury between 1863 and 1864, and possibly by Atterbury & Co. for a year or two after that. Patented on July 21, 1863, and assigned to both the Atterbury brothers and James Reddick, the Reid jar was almost certainly originally manufactured by Atterbury, Reddick & Co. The jar was probably also made by the following firm, J.S. & T.B. Atterbury, in 1863 and 1864. It may even have been made for a year or two by Atterbury & Co.

The rarity of the jars makes it reasonably certain that only the first three companies made fruit jars – between 1860 and 1864. It is possibly that Atterbury & Co. made a few during its earliest years, but it certainly did not make them for long. All three of these finishes were somewhat awkward; it is not surprising that they did not fare well with the heavy competition available during the mid-1870s.

It would be worthwhile to discover which of the Atterbury patents – probably assigned in 1886 or 1887 – was actually the one for the popular mustard jar. It may be that one of Atterbury's employees designed the jar or that it was patented by someone unconnected with the firm, who sold it to the Atterbury brothers. Equally interesting would be the date range for the jar's production. A jar so popular that "they cannot turn them out fast enough" would almost certainly appear in the archaeological record and should be sufficiently distinctive to be

identifiable. The jars in the Caniff photo, however, are almost certainly the ones referred to in late 1887 – although the jars have no embossed logos or initials.

Acknowledgments and Note

Our gratitude to Doug Leybourne for allowing us to use the Alice Creswick drawings in this work and to Greg Spurgeon for granting us permission to use the North American Glass photos. We would also like to express our gratitude to Evan Sikes of Cowan's Auctions for granting us permission to use the auction photo of the Atturbury ducks in this publication. Please note that we cleaned all patent drawings and have changed the aspect (revolving the images) on some of them for better viewing. We have not altered the *content* of any patent drawings or any other graphic.

Sources

Caniff, Tom

2010 "The Label Space: Perfume Jar." *Antique Bottle & Glass Collector* 26(9):46-47.

Creswick, Alice

1987 *The Fruit Jar Works, Vol. I, Listing Jars Made Circa 1820 to 1920's*. Privately printed, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Hawkins, Jay W.

2009 *Glasshouses & Glass Manufacturers of the Pittsburgh Region, 1795-1910*. iUniverse, Inc., New York.

Leybourne, Douglas M.

2001 *The Collector's Guide to Old Fruit Jars: Red Book 9*. Privately published, North Muskegon, Michigan.

McCann, Jerry

2010 *The Guide to Collecting Fruit Jars: Fruit Jar Annual, Volume 15 – 2010*. Privately printed, Chicago.

Roller, Dick

1983 *Standard Fruit Jar Reference*. Privately published.

1997 "Atterbury History Notes." Dick Roller files.

Wearin, Otha D.

1965 *Statues That Pour - The Story of Character Bottles*. Wallace-Homestead.

Last updated 4/23/2013