

Eureka Jars and Their Makers

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Three distinct fruit jars wore the name “Eureka.” These were manufactured by different glass houses for different jobbers during different periods, and the most recent one was made in several variations. Unlike many fruit jars, each of these is datable to a well-defined period, and two of them were also used as product jars.

Eureka Jars

EUREKA (1865-ca. 1870)

Toulouse (1969:111-112) noted three variations of an aqua or colorless, handmade jar.¹ The first variation was embossed “EUREKA (slight arch) / 1 / PAT^D DEC 27TH / 1864 (all horizontal)” on the side (Figure 1). A second jar was almost identical but had the number “17” below “EUREKA.” The third variation was embossed “PAT FEB 9TH & DEC 27TH 1864” in a circle on the side around “EUREKA,” although no other source has reported this variation, and we have not found an example. Even though he could discover no information about the company, Toulouse dated the jar ca. 1865.

Roller (1983:118) listed two variations of this jar. The first was identical to the initial variation listed by Toulouse, except that Roller noted that there may be a variety of numbers below “EUREKA” (and showed a “22” on his photograph of the jar). He noted that the metal cap was embossed “PAT^D JULY 18 1854 MAY 22^D 1860 REIS^D NOV 24TH 1863.”



Figure 1 – Early Eureka jar (North American Glass)

¹ None of the other sources mentioned this jar in colorless glass. As will be noted below, Toulouse confused two unrelated Eureka jars.



Figure 2 – Ground rim
(North American Glass)

Roller noted the maker as “uncertain” but stated that “Griffin advertised these jars in 1865, and listed himself as ‘Proprietor and Manufacturer.’” Because the address was in lower Manhattan – an improbable manufacturing location – it is unlikely that the jars were made there. Caniff (2013:18) confirmed that there was “no evidence that we’re aware of indicating that Griffen had anything to do with actually making either the glass jar or the metal lids.”



Figure 3 – Eureka jars (Creswick 1987a:55)

Roller’s second variation was the same, except that “N.O.F.” was embossed under “EUREKA” in place of a number. He noted that the initials may have indicated N.O. Fansler. Fansler was a jobber in Cleveland, Ohio, from 1865 to 1869. Fansler had his full name embossed on another type of jar (Roller 1983:118, 206). Also see the section on A.R. Samuel for another reference to the Fansler jar.

Creswick (1987a:55) illustrated the same variations as Roller and noted them as having a “ground lip” – her designation for a handmade jar (Figures 2 & 3). She added that the patents taken out by Spratt and Sellers were eventually reissued to John Griffin. Otherwise, she followed Toulouse on both variations.

The Roller editors (2011:184) included an unembossed jar that was 7" tall and 3 5/8" in diameter, with at an outer diameter of 2 1/2" at the top of the finish. The neck was

tapered. There is an indentation in the neck just below the ground mouth to receive that rubber sealing gasket. The tinned iron cap has a straight portion below the top and then a flared portion at the bottom. Dick Roller didn’t put [this jar] into the 1983 edition; even though, it was known to him at the time. He referred to it as the ‘Seller’s Jar’ after the May 22, 1860 patent registered to Theodore Sellers [although he failed to explain *why* he made that identification]



Figure 4 – “Whittled” jar
(North American Glass)

We have not discovered an example of the Toulouse third variation, and it was not mentioned by any other source. We suggest that Toulouse recorded this variation in error, possibly because of a faulty report. All examples we have found on North American Glass and eBay had a one- or two-digit number embossed below “EUREKA,” and these ranged from 1 to 17 – plus a “22” reported by Roller. Some of these examples had very heavy “whittle” marks – an uneven surface caused by the use of cold molds (Figure 4).



Figure 5 – Eureka lid
(North American Glass)

The examples from North American Glass had two main variations of lids – most with a simple cap (see Figure 1). One, however, was more complex with a convex top and a rim (Figure 5). Creswick 1987a:55) illustrated a third type of lid with a recessed center (see Figure 3), although the Creswick type could be the same as the simple one from North American Glass. Unfortunately, none of the photos showed the top of the lid.

Distributor

Griffen & Titus, New York City (ca. 1852-1865)

Although John F. Griffen was listed as a crockery dealer at 82 Maiden La. in New York City in 1850, he had formed the partnership of Griffen & Titus with Stephen R. Titus by 1852. The firm moved to 48 John St. in 1858. The pair advertised Ludlow’s Self-Sealing Jars in tin, china, and glass by at least July 15, 1859, but by June 22, 1865, Griffen had sold his share to R.F. Haviland, and Haviland & Titus then operated the firm. (Caniff 2013:17).

John F. Griffen, New York City (1865-ca. 1870)

Griffen reentered business alone at 9 Barclay St. and advertised himself as “Proprietor and Manufacturer” – although he was certainly still a jobber in fruit jars and possibly other goods. He had move to 142 Maiden La. by 1867. We have not discovered how long he remained in business, but other firms sold Eureka Jars by at least 1867 – suggesting that Griffen had opened his patent to other users (Caniff 2013:17, 19). Roller (2011:184) noted that Griffen was a crockery and glass dealer from 1850 to 1870. Unfortunately, we have no clues to suggest a manufacturer; virtually any factory in New York, Connecticut, New Jersey, or even more distant locations could have made the jars.

Although this is sheer speculation, Griffen may have separated from Titus because of his 1864 patent. The timing was certainly right. The two may have disagreed on marketing, ownership, or any number of other issues, or Griffen may have just left to try his luck with the new jar on his own. Since Griffen did not receive the patent until December 1864, the jars were likely made between 1865 and ca. 1870.

Griffen-Related Patents

Roller (1983:118) listed a metal cap associated with the Eureka jars that was stamped with four patent dates that he attributed to:

1. James Spratt, Cincinnati (1854)
2. Theodore Sellers, East Birmingham, Pennsylvania (1860)
3. John Griffen, New York, assigned to Theodore Sellers (1863)
4. John F. Griffin, New York (1864)

Griffen also had an earlier 1862 patent as well as two reissues in 1863. Griffen & Titus also sold the Ludlow jar, patented on August 6, 1861 (Caniff 2013:17-18).

James Spratt – July 18, 1854

According to Caniff (2013:18), glass lids on actual cans were embossed with “SPRATT’S PATENT JULY 18 1854 PAT’D APRIL 5 1864” (Patent No. 11,332). The *New York Times* described these as “Infallible Fruit Jars. . . Spratt’s Improved Tin Can

with glass covers” on September 14, 1864 – sold by Griffen & Titus “Proprietors and Manufacturers.”

James Spratt assigned his 1854 patent (No. 11,332) to Griffen. Griffen received Reissue No. 1,593 for Spratt’s patent on December 22, 1863 (Caniff 2013:17). For a *much* more detailed discussion of the Spratt patents, see the section on Arthur, Burnham & Gilroy in the “A” Volume.

W. D. Ludlow – August 6, 1861



Figure 7 – Ludlow jar (North American Glass)

On August 6, 1861, W.D. Ludlow received Patent No. 33,002 for an “Improvement in Stopping Jars” (Figure 6). The closure was complex and was used on jars with lids stamped with Ludlow patent dates of June 28, 1859, and August 6, 1861 (Figure 7). For examples, see Roller (2011:299). Also see the Other L file for more information on Ludlow and the jars.

Caniff (2013:17-18) noted that Griffen’s 1862 patent “made a disparaging reference to the Ludlow’s patent of Aug. 6, 1861, which is very similar.” Griffen’s patent had no need of the “elastic bearer” (rubber cushion) required on the Ludlow jar. Despite the comment, Griffen & Titus offered Ludlow jars for sale in their September 14, 1864, ad in the *New York Times*.

Theodore Sellers – May 22, 1860

Theodore Sellers of East Birmingham, Pennsylvania, received Patent No. 28,413 for an “Improvement in Preserve Cans” on May 22, 1860 (Figure 8). Griffen also received Reissue No. 1,573 for the Sellers patent on November 24, 1863. Caniff (2013:17) noted that “this patent was to be referenced about a year later on the EUREKA jar closure.”

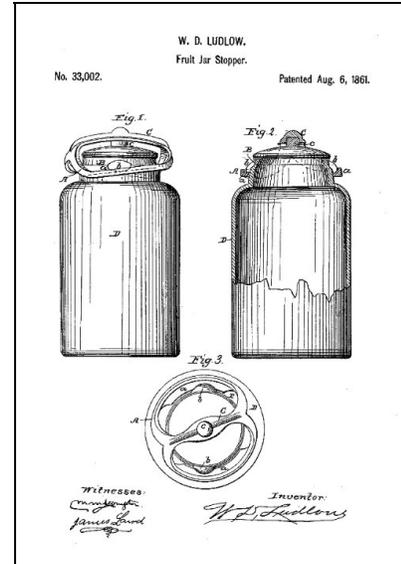


Figure 6 – Ludlow 1861 patent

John F. Griffen – October 7, 1862

John F. Griffen of New York City received Patent No. 36,612 for an “Improvement in Fruit Jars” on October 7, 1862 (Figure 9). As noted above, this was an improvement on Ludlow’s 1861 patent. These jars were used as product jars for at least one condiment – Pearl Tapioca (Caniff 2013:17).

John F. Griffen – December 27, 1864

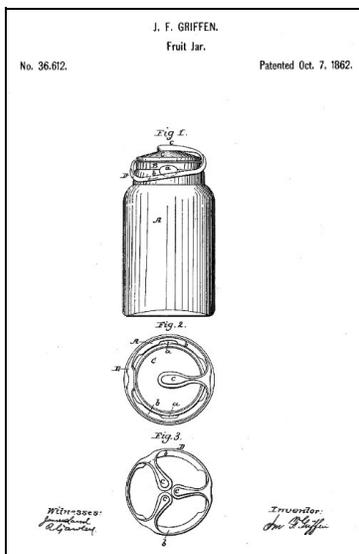


Figure 9 – Griffen 1862 patent

John F. Griffen also received Patent No. 42,186 for an “Improvement in Preserve Cans” on December 27, 1864 (Figure 10). Caniff (2013:18) illustrated a can made to Griffen’s 1864 patent, and the *New York Times* advertised the cans on September 14, 1864. Caniff (2013:18) noted that this was the patent that “spawned the EUREKA

fruit jar, embossed on the front with the PATD DEC. 27TH 1864 date.” Caniff further stated that

the text defined the cap’s ‘dish-like’ depression, as well as the top vent-hole, which was ‘to be covered or sealed over at the proper time . . . by means of a paper and cement, or in any other desirable fashion.’ We are not aware that the vent hole was incorporated into any of the original lids.

The single-lipped packing gasket may have been the first “lipped” gasket (i.e., the rubber gasket with a tab) on a jar.

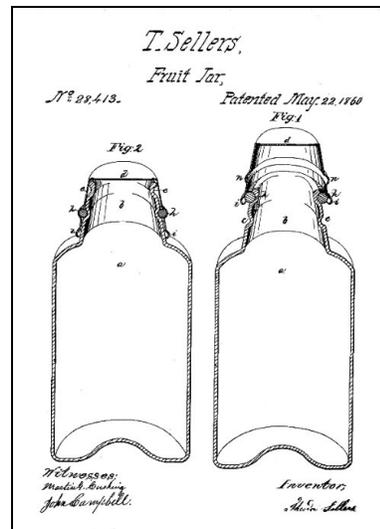


Figure 8 – Sellers 1860 patent

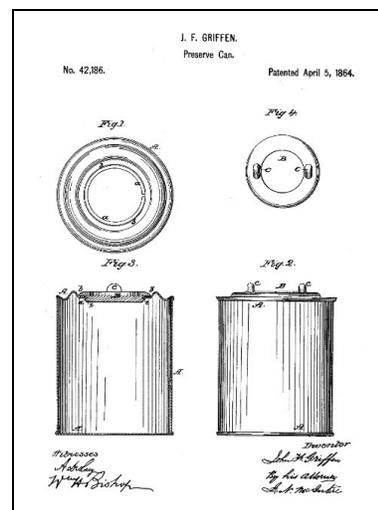


Figure 10 – Griffen 1864 patent

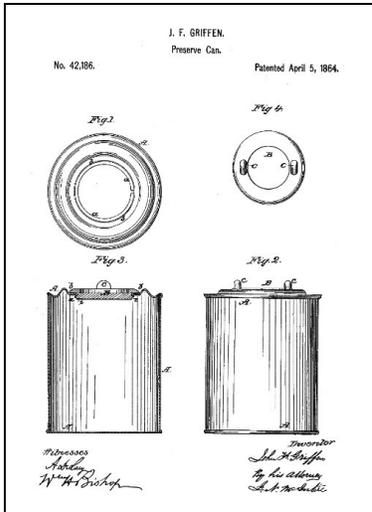


Figure 11 – Harris 1864 Patent

Totally confused, Toulouse (1969:12) identified the February 9, 1864, patent (No. 41,575) of Elbridge Harris of Boston (Figure 11) and Patent No. 45,601, issued to J.F. Griffen of New York City on December 27, 1864 (see Figure 10), as associated with the Eureka (cursive) jar described below.² The patents are more relevant to this earlier jar. It is notable that the Harris patent showed a lid that matches



Figure 12 – Eureka jar (North American Glass)

the one in Figure 5.

Eureka (cursive)



Figure 13 – Dunbar base (eBay)

Toulouse (1969:112) also illustrated and described two variations of another style of Eureka jar. Both of these were embossed “Eureka” in underlined cursive on the side, and both were sealed by a “glass lid and metal spring clip rotating on Mason-type threads”



Figure 14 – Boston base (North American Glass)

(Figure 12). The base of one jar was embossed “EUREKA JAR CO. / PAT. PENDING (both arched) / DUNBAR, W. VA. (inverted arch)” (Figure 13). The other variation had the same side markings but had “EUREKA JAR CO. / PAT. PENDING (both arched) / BOSTON, MASS. (inverted arch)” on the base (Figure 14).

² Toulouse was incorrect. Griffen received Patent No. 42,186 (not 45,601) on December 27, 1864.

Roller (1983:117) noted two different lids, one embossed “EUREKA with hemispherical boss on top center” (Figure 15) and “Eureka with hemispherical depression in top center.” He also noted that some of the jars were embossed with 8, 18, or 28 oz. near the finish. Roller further explained:



Figure 15 – Eureka lids (North American Glass)

Frank H. Smalley, (son of A.G. Smalley and vice president of the Eureka Jar Co.) has told me that no patent was ever granted for these jars, because there was already a patent that interfered with their patent application. A royalty was paid to C.H. Nicholson, of New York, N.Y., for the use of his January 5, 1904 patent The jars were made in at least three finish styles: 1) Full-helix threads; 2) 3 ¼” long helix, and 3) two wide cam surfaces on jar neck. The first style was made at Dunbar, the second at Salem, and it is not known where the third style was made. The Boston-marked jars tend to be green and the Salem-made jars clear, while the Dunbar-marked jars are smoky grey. . . . The Boston office had been the sales office of the Smalley Fruit Jar Co. from 1915 to 1919. The Dunbar office was located in a small frame building adjacent to the Pennsylvania Glass Co., where Frank Smalley worked.

Charles Habolde Nicholson applied for a patent for “Jar Closure” on April 6, 1903 and received Patent No. 748,642 on January 5, 1904 (Figure 16).

Creswick (1987b:51-52) also noted the “Pat. Pending” on the base and otherwise followed Roller (Figure 17). In addition, she reported that a six-ounce size jar was only embossed on the base with “EUREKA JAR CO. PATENT PEND.” and confirmed that the jars were machine made.

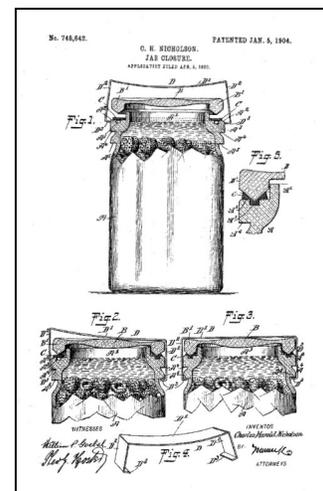


Figure 16 – Nicholson 1904 patent



Figure 17 – Eureka jar
(Creswick 1987b:51-52)

Roller (2011:183) noted three glass lid variations: 1) unembossed; 2) embossed Eureka (cursive); and 3) EUREKA – as well as three variations in the flat metal clamp, although none of those were stamped with any letters or numbers. The editors noted that the jars were made by the Pennsylvania Glass

Co., Dunbar, West Virginia, ca. 1918-1924 and by the Salem Glass Works, Salem, New Jersey, ca. 1926. Roller provided no evidence for sequential usage of these lids, and we have found none (see explanation below).

These jars were also used as product containers. North American Glass auctions featured two examples. One had a paper label for Old Virginia Apple Cider Vinegar, made by the Old Virginia Packing Co., Inc., Front Royal, Virginia (Figure 18). The second paper label was for Ontario Brand, made by the Great Lakes Pickle Co. of Pittsburgh (Figure 19).

By comparing and contrasting the various sources above, we arrived at the following probabilities:

1. Jars embossed with Dunbar, W. Va., on the bases were made by the Pennsylvania Glass Co. at Dunbar, tended to be smokey grey in color (although both Creswick



Figure 18 – Old Virginia Packing Co.
(North American Glass)



Figure 19 – Great Lakes Pickle Co.
(North American Glass)

[1987b:52] and Leybourne [2008:145] included aqua, colorless, and light green variations), and full helix finishes.

Jars embossed Boston, Mass. had two major variations:

2a. Primarily colorless (although Creswick [1987b:52] listed aqua and colorless, and Leybourne [2008:145] included aqua, colorless, and light green variations), with 3¼" long helix finishes. These were made by the Salem Glass Works, Salem, New Jersey.

2b. Primarily green (although Creswick [1987b:52] noted aqua color, and Leybourne [2008:145] included aqua, colorless, and green variations), with two wide cam surfaces on the finish – maker unknown.

As noted above, the Roller editors (2011:183) placed the manufacture of the Dunbar jars from ca. 1918 to 1924, with the Salem jars (Boston) made ca. 1926. They made no attempt to date the jars with the cam finishes (also with Boston embossing), but we can speculate that those were made during the ca. 1920-1924 period, possibly slightly earlier.

Distributor and Manufacturers

Eureka, Jar Co., Dunbar, West Virginia (ca. 1917-1924)

Roller (1983:118; 1996) only found evidence of the Eureka Jar Co. being in operation during the period when Harold A. Lightner, Frank H. Smalley, and their associates acquired the Pennsylvania Glass Co. Smalley was the president of the Eureka Jar Co. – apparently a sales company – but the Pennsylvania Glass Co., the Salem Glass Works, and another, currently unknown factory made the jars, themselves. Roller provided no evidence or reasons for the choice of these plants. Because the Pennsylvania Glass Co. was also located at Duncan, West Virginia, that selection is obvious. The idea that there were two other manufacturers seems to be predicated on glass color (see above).

Roller (1996) noted that the “office of [the] company was in small house next door to Pennsylvania Glass Co. plant, where the jars were made.” He further cited a

February 25, 1918, “letterhead of [the] Eureka Jar Co., Boston, MA, factory at Dunbar, WV. . . mfrs. of the Eureka Jar.” Roller noted that the letter was from Frank Smalley to his mother in Boston. Smalley mentioned that the plant had two machines making jars and that they had jars piling up waiting for clamps from Philadelphia. Thus, the company had two sales offices, probably during the entire tenure of the company. See the section on the Pennsylvania Glass Co. and Salem Glass Works for more information on these glass houses.

HESTON & TRESSEL’S EUREKA FRUIT JAR (ca. 1888)

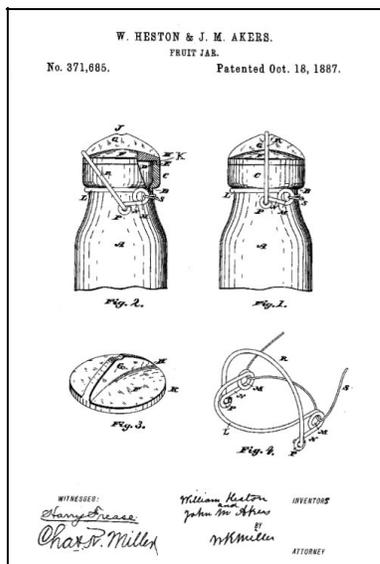


Figure 20 – Heston & Akers 1887 patent

William Heston was involved in two patents, the first of which is well researched. William Heston and J.F. Akers, both of Alliance, Ohio, applied for a patent for a “Fruit-Jar” on April 16, 1887, and received Patent No. 371,685 on October 18 of that year (Figure 20). The side was embossed “THE FAMILY (slight arch) / FRUIT JAR (slight inverted arch)” with “Patd Oct. 18 1887” on the base (Figure 21).



Figure 21 – Family Fruit Jar (North American Glass)



Figure 22 – Family finish (North American Glass)

Roller (1983:122) described the closure as a “straddle-lip top seal, high-finned glass lid and wire-bail clamp fitting into loops in tie wire around jar neck” (Figure 22). Roller noted that the manufacturer was “uncertain, but probably Canton Glass Co.” He explained that “Alliance is about 15 miles from Canton.” Creswick (1987b:58) noted the base as “Patd. Oct. 18-1887” and illustrated the jar (Figure 23). She noted that the same patent covered the

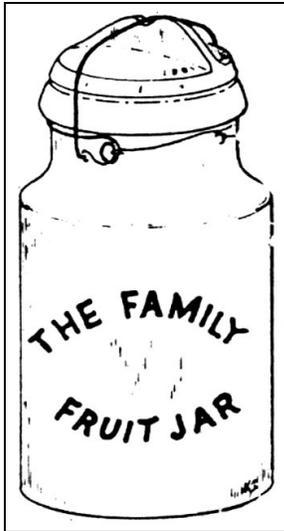


Figure 23 – Family Fruit Jar (Creswick 1987:58)

Canton Fruit Jar and Canton Electric Fruit Jar and ascribed the Family Fruit Jar more positively to the Canton Glass Co. See the section on the Canton Glass Co. for more information.

Heston’s second patent is more relevant for this study. Heston, by this time of Mount Union, Ohio, applied for a patent for a “Jar Fastener” on October 27, 1887, and received Patent No. 377,676 on

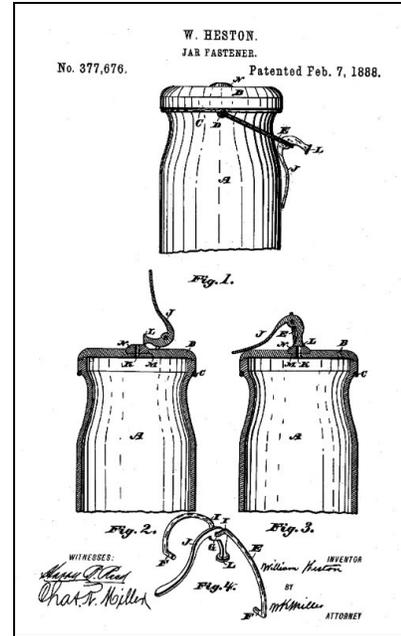


Figure 24 – Heston 1888 patent

February 7, 1888 (Figure 24). This second patent became the basis for Heston & Tressel’s Eureka Jar. Roller (1983:155; 2011:240) described the closure as a “straddle-lip top seal, glass lid held down by wire bail, cast-iron cam-lever clamp” and noted that William Heston

was listed in the 1889-1890 Stark County, Ohio directory as a machinist, while John H. Tressel was listed as a physician. The only known example of this jar has no lid. According to the patent, a venting hole through the lid center was closed by a rubber valve compressed by the cam lever.

The mouth-blown jar was embossed “HESTON & TRESSEL’S (slight arch) / < ● > / EUREKA JAR / PAT’D FEB. 7TH 1888 (all horizontal)” (Figures 25 & 26). Roller did not know the maker. Creswick (1987:84) noted that “only two or three of these jars are presently known” and illustrated an example (Figure 27). She also suggested the Canton Glass Co. as the manufacturer – probably based on Canton’s production of jars made from the Heston and Akers 1887 patent. With only a very few surviving, the jar was obviously not very popular.



Figure 25 – Heston & Tressel’s Eureka Jar (North American Glass)

Probable Manufacturer

Canton Glass Co., Canton, Ohio (1883-1899)



Figure 26 – Finish of Eureka Jar (North American Glass)

The Canton Glass Co. made fruit jars from the Heston & Ayers 1887 patent from ca. 1887 to ca. 1890, when the firm adopted an improvement on the Heston & Ayers patent by David Barker (Patent No. 418,266, December 31, 1889). While we have found no direct evidence that Canton Glass made the Heston & Tressel's Eureka Jar, the timing and location are close, and Canton was certainly associated with Heston. For more information on the company and its products, see the section on the Canton Glass Co.



Figure 27 – Heston & Tressel jar (Creswick 1987a:84)

The French Connection



Figure 28 – Paris Eureka jar (North American Glass)

Although not fully relevant to this study, North American Glass included a mouth-blown jar with an unusual tinned-steel lid. The base was embossed “EUREKA B^{TE} S.D.G. (arch) / K-B PARIS (inverted arch).” The auction noted that the jar was made to the Schiller patent. While this jar was probably not used in the U.S., it is interesting and used the name “EUREKA” – so we have presented it here (Figures 28 & 29).



Figure 29 – Paris base (North American Glass)

Discussion and Conclusions

We do not have enough information to date the French jar, but each of the others requires its own discussion and temporal range.

EUREKA (1865-ca. 1870)

As the embossed patent information shows, these jars were made to John F. Griffen's December 27, 1864, patent. Embossed mold numbers from 1 to 22 suggest that the jars were made in several molds, probably after Griffen left Griffen & Titus in 1865 and until he ceased operations ca. 1870. We have found no reason to believe that the jars were made after the end of Griffen's business, and we have no evidence that points to the manufacturer.

The second variation was embossed "N.O.F." below "EUREKA." As noted above, that probably indicated N.O. Fansler, a jobber in Cleveland, Ohio, in business from 1865 to 1869 – roughly the same period when the other Eureka jars were made. Thus, both fit into the same period.

HESTON & TRESSEL'S EUREKA JAR (ca. 1888)

Since the manufacturer – probably the Canton Jar Co. – could not have embossed the patent date on the jar prior to the receipt of the patent, the jars could not have been made prior to February 7, 1888. Because these jars are quite rare, they were likely only made for a very short period, probably for a test market. Thus, the jars were probably only produced during 1888.

EureKa (cursive)

It is obvious that Toulouse confused the older EUREKA jars with the more recent ones, but the earlier jars were not connected in any way with the Eureka Jar Co. that only produced the machine-made jars with the cursive "EureKa." Although Roller made an excellent case for the Pennsylvania Glass Co. of Dunbar, West Virginia, as the manufacturer of most of the jars, he did not directly address dating the variations.

Leybourne (2008:144-145) listed and described six variations:

1. EUREKA JAR CO. / PAT PENDING / BOSTON MASS (threaded finish)
2. EUREKA JAR CO. / PAT PENDING / BOSTON MASS (cam surface finish)
3. EUREKA JAR CO. / BOSTON MASS
4. EUREKA JAR CO. / PAT PENDING / DUNBAR W. VA.
5. EUREKA JAR CO. / PATENT PEND
6. Unmarked base

DUNBAR, W. VA. (ca. 1917-1924)

The dating of these jars is quite simple. The Eureka Jar Co. was in business at Dunbar, West Virginia, from ca. 1917 to 1924, and it is reasonable to assume that the jars were made during that period. If prices in Leybourne (2008:144-145) are any indicator, these jars (as well as the ones from Boston) were probably very common. Roller (2011:183) claimed that the Dunbar-embossed jars were smokey grey in color.

BOSTON MASS (ca. 1917-ca. 1919)

Roller (2011:183) noted that “both the Boston and Dunbar offices were sales offices only. The Boston office had been the sales office of the Smalley Fruit Jar Company from 1915 to 1919.” He added that the “Boston marked jars tend to be green and the Salem made jars clear,” although he failed to mention the basal markings on the “Salem made jars.” Because Salem, New Jersey, is much closer to Boston than to Dunbar, the Salem jars were probably made for that city. Unfortunately, the Roller editors (and Roller in the 1983 edition) gave no explanation for the choice of Salem Glass Works as a manufacturer of the Boston jars.

Unfortunately, Roller provided implications without venturing explanations. The Roller information would seem to imply that the Boston-marked jars were sold at the Boston office from ca. 1917 (when the Eureka Jar Co. opened) until ca. 1919, when the Boston office apparently closed. Although it would be nice to speculate that the Boston jars were made at a later period, there is no evidence to support that contention.

One final set of sub-variations is probably datable, but we have no direct evidence to allow us to do so. Leybourne (2008:144-145) noted two major finish differences that were only found on the Boston-marked jars.³ On the first, neck was “threaded to engage clamp.”; on the other, the “neck has two wide cam surfaces to engage clam, rather than threads.” See Figure 17 for an example of the first type and Figure 30 for the second.



Figure 30 – Eureka cam finish (eBay)

Sources

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Last updated 5/31/2015

³ As noted above, Roller suggested three variations, dividing the continuous-threaded jars into two types. Our small sample only has a single photo of a continuous-thread jar, so we not attempted any finer distinctions.