

Lamont Glass Co.

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The Lamont brothers started the Lamont Glass Co. at Trenton, Nova Scotia, in 1890 and successfully operated the plant until the Diamond Glass Co. absorbed it in 1898. Although the factory burned the following year, it left a legacy of jars.

History

Lamont Glass Co., Trenton and New Glasgow, Nova Scotia (1890-1898)

Seeking experienced glass blowers, the Nova Scotia Glass Co. imported Donald Lamont along with ten other glass blowers from Birmingham, England, in 1883. Three years later, his commitment fulfilled, Donald moved to Steubenville, Ohio, where he worked for the Acme Glass Co. Two years later, he returned to Nova Scotia, where he began an experimental glass operation on a farm two miles from Trenton with his brothers, David and Henry between 1888 and 1890. The brothers opened the Lamont Glass Co. next to the Nova Scotia Glass Co.¹ in 1890, advertising “a general line of Blown and Cut Glassware, Green and Flint Bottle of all Kinds” – although their main products were “lamp chimneys for railways and lighthouses (King 1987:78; Wereley 2003:5).

By 1893, they were the leading glass producer in Nova Scotia – and the only manufacturer of fruit jars in the province. In 1897, Lamont used nine pots to make its products, but the number had increased to 15 the following year (*National Glass Budget* 1897:7; 1898:7). The *Crockery & Glass Journal* for September 3, 1896, noted that the “Lamont Glass Co., New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, manufacturing chimneys, fruit jars, and bottles, have doubled the capacity of their works during the past two years” (Roller 1983:80). The brothers’ success attracted the attention of the powerful Diamond Glass Co., generating two different stories about the end of

¹ The Nova Scotia Glass Co. specialized in the production of tableware, unlike the Lamont plant that specialized in containers. Diamond Glass closed the Nova Scotia Glass Co. plant in 1892.

the firm. In one story, the family leased the plant to Diamond on April 1, 1898; in the other, Diamond purchased the factory about that time (King 1987:78-79; Wereley 2003:5).

King (1987:79) left us with the cryptic statement:

In 1899, when the fire struck Nova Scotia Glass [Co.], one of its warehouses, which contained the accumulated stock of the Lamont brothers, was also destroyed, bringing to an end the second of the three operations in the Trenton area.

While there is no question that the Lamont tenure ended in 1898, it is unclear why a fire at the Nova Scotia Glass Co. would bring an end to the Lamont Glass Co. plant. Although King did not spell it out, it is likely that the Nova Scotia Glass fire spread to the adjacent location of the Lamont Glass plant and destroyed that structure as well.

Toulouse (1971:326-327) cited a 1967 book from Gerald Stevens that stated that the Diamond Glass Co. signed a lease for the Lamont factory from April 1, 1898, to August 1, 1902, but noted that a 1971 book by Douglas Bird (*A Century of Antique Canadian Fruit Jars*) claimed the Lamont plant was open from 1890-1898. King almost certainly used the same two sources. Toulouse claimed 1899 as the date when Diamond Glass gained control of the Lamont factory. See the Discussion and Conclusion section for more on this and other inconsistencies.

Containers and Marks

ACME LGCo around a Star (ca. 1893-1898)

Roller (1983:241; 2011:362) described and illustrated a jar embossed “ACME (slight arch) / {star with L to the left of the top point, G to the right, and Co. below} / TRADE MARK / 1893” on one face and “MASON’S / PATENT / NOV 30TH / 1858” on the other (Figure 1). He identified the Lamont Glass Co. as the manufacturer ca. 1890-1898. Creswick (1987:2) illustrated the jar and also credited it to the Lamont Glass Co. during the same years, and Wereley (2003:7) also identified Lamont as the user of the star / LGCo mark and noted that every pint example he had seen had “the diagonal missing from the ‘N’ in ‘Nov.’” (Figure 2).

These jars are apparently scarce – suggesting that not too many were made (see the Discussion and Conclusions section for a discussion of rarity and price). Laybourne (2010:3) suggested a price of \$350-500 for the most common colors. McCann (2017:97) set the price slightly lower at \$200-250. Wereley (2003:7) suggested that “Lamont must have purchased these molds along with some type of permission or license to produce them” – undoubtedly referring to the use of “MASON” in the label. However, the original Mason patent was long expired by that time. The jar name is interesting, considering that Donald Lamont worked for the Acme Glass Co. at Steubenville, Ohio, prior to opening the Lamont plant with his brothers.



Figure 2 Figure 1 – Acme LGCo (North American Glass)

Virtually everything about John Landis Mason and his invention is confused and confusing. Mason received a patent for his screw-finished jar on November 30, 1858. Mason’s early patents were due to expire in 1871 and 1872, so he sought – and obtained – a seven year extension. The extension – transferred to the Consolidated Fruit Jar Co. – only covered the patent protection until the end of the 1870s. Consolidated registered a trademark for Mason Jars on October 28, 1879, attempting to continue to control the manufacture and distribution of the jars (Roller 2011:642-643, 666,667). However, numerous other glass houses made Mason jars – with the 1858 embossed patent date during the 1880s and 1890s. It is likely that Consolidated had lost control of the market by the early 1890s – when Lamont made the Acme jars.

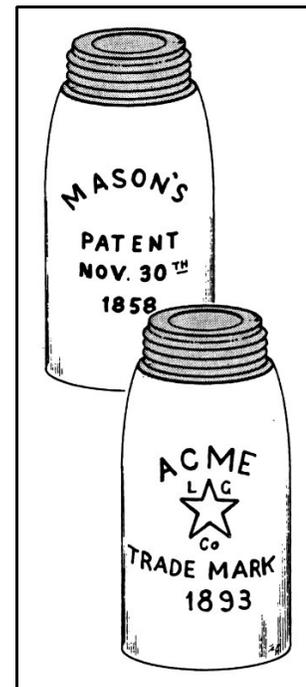


Figure 2 – Acme LGCo (Creswick 1987:2)

CANADA

Toulouse (1969:57) discussed a jar embossed “CANADA / {compass face with cardinal directions} / TRADE MARK” on the front. He said it was machine made in green glass, “very



Figure 3 – Canada compass (North American Glass)

thin for Canadian glass” – ca. 1910-1925 by an unknown maker (Figure 3). Roller (1983:80; 2011:123) attributed the jar to the Lamont Glass Co. “because nearly all of these scarce jars have been found in Nova Scotia” – dating the containers ca. 1890s. He disagreed with Toulouse, noting that the jar had a “ground lip” – indicating mouth-blown manufacture. Creswick (1987:25) illustrated the jar, agreeing with Lamont and dating the jar ca.

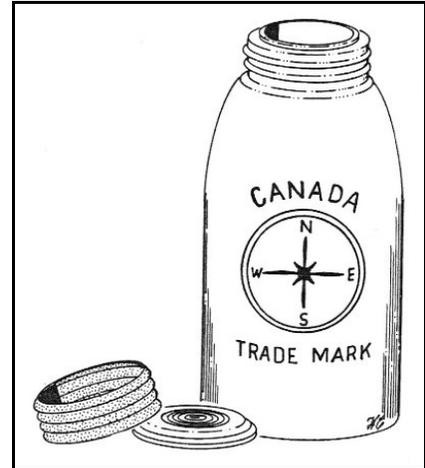


Figure 4 – Canada compass (Creswick 1987:25)

1890-1898 (Figure 4). She, too, agreed that the jar had a “ground lip.” Judging by Leybourne’s (2014:98) suggested prices, the jars are rare.

Leybourne set \$950+ for the cheapest colors, rising to \$12,500+ for the really rare ones. Although McCann’s prices were cheaper, he still suggested \$500-1,000. He noted that an amber quart sold for \$7,920 in 2014 and that these jars were unavailable (McCann 2017:140).

It is unclear why the source literature attributed these jars to Lamont instead of the nearby Humphries Glass Co. After all, both were located in Nova Scotia. Wereley (2003:6) quoted Harry Milligan, an early researcher, who called the Lamonts “‘the Fruit Jar Kings’ of the Maritimes.” Wereley also closely studied the jars, reaching three conclusions that tied them to the Lamonts:

1. The Canada jar is the same style as the Acme jar, a distinct Lamont product.
2. The lids for the Canada jars are the same non-standard size as those on the Improved GEM (or JAM) jars (discussed below).
3. Both Canada and Acme jars include “TRADE MARK.”

In addition, Wereley (2003:9) compared the Acme quart with the Canada quart, noting that he found “the design almost identical, right down to the location of the thread.” He concluded that the Compass jars were made by the Lamonts sometime after 1893.

THE DIAMOND NOVA SCOTIA

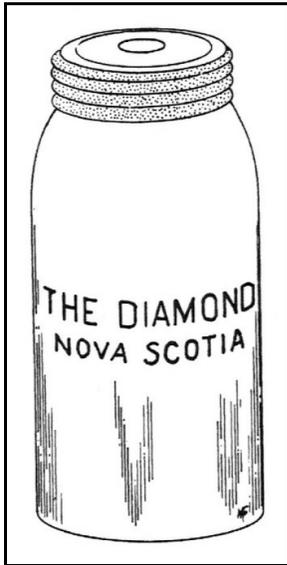


Figure 6 – Diamond jar
(Creswick 1987:44)

Roller (1983:102; 2011:123) discussed a jar embossed “THE DIAMOND / NOVA SCOTIA” on one face (Figure 5). The jar was mouth blown, and Roller suggested the Lamont Glass Co. as the maker, ca. 1898-1902. Creswick (1987:44) illustrated the jar, also suggesting Lamont during the same period (Figure 6). Leybourne (2014:131) noted that the lids for these jars had DGCo monograms. This was confirmed by all four jars listed in North American Glass auctions – each topped with a glass insert embossed with a DGCo monogram, held in place by a metal screw band (Figure 7). See the

Discussion and Conclusions section for more on this jar.

Improved GEM (or JAM) with LGCo monogram (1890-1898)

Toulouse (1971:326-327) illustrated an LGCo monogram and attributed it to the Lamont Glass Co., Trenton and New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, Canada. Aside from noting that the mark was found on fruit jars, he gave no other information except to date the logo either “1890 to 1898 or 1893 to 1899,” based on his understanding of the dates for Lamont. Roller (1983:165-166; 2011:254) noted the monogram on a jar embossed “Improved (upwardly slanted cursive) / GEM (horizontal)” on the other side. He stated that the maker was uncertain but was probably the Lamont Glass Co. ca 1890s. He also noted the “Improved / JAM” with the same monogram (Figure 8).

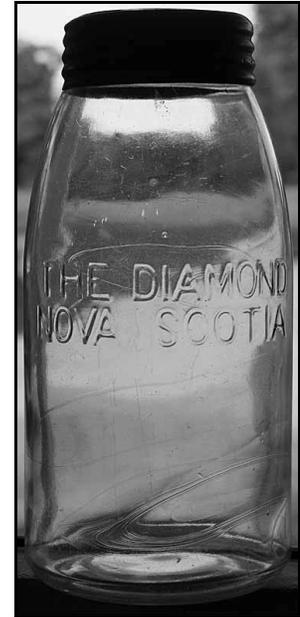


Figure 5 – Diamond jar
(North American Glass)



Figure 7 – DGCo lid (North
American Glass)

Creswick (1987:89) illustrated both jars and also suggested Lamont as the maker (Figure 9). She also noted a variation with the word “GEM” ghosted under “JAM.” Wereley (2003:6) called the mark an “intertwined L.G.Co monogram” and noted that the mouth of the jar was a non-standard size – 2 inches as opposed to 2 ¼ inches. Wereley also noted that all examples of the Improved Jam that he had seen had “JAM” over a ghosted “GEM.”



Figure 8 – Improved Jam (North American Glass)

L.G.CO.N.S. (ca. 1890-1898)

Ring (1980:494) noted a Wild Cherry Bitters bottle from C.C. Richards & Co., Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, marked L.G.CO.N.S. on the base. Fike (1987:43) listed the same bottle and mark, although he added no additional information. Richards was in business from at least 1890 to ca. 1918, so the bottle was almost certainly made by the Lamont Glass Co., in business from 1890-1898, at Trenton, Nova Scotia.

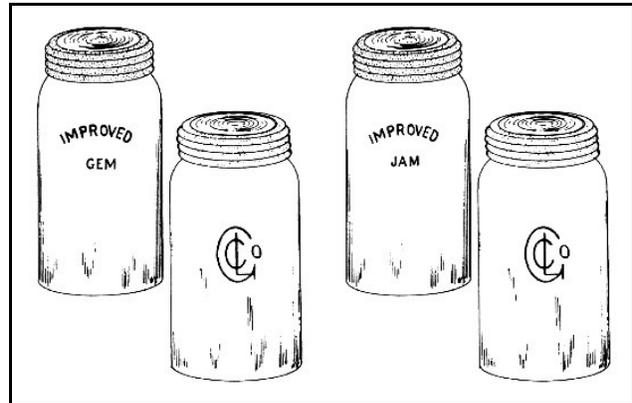


Figure 9 – Improved Gem & Jam (Creswick 1987:89)

Owen (2008) commented that six Minard’s Liniment Co. bottles, made by the Lamont Glass Co., were embossed “L.G.CO. N.S.” – three “green” glass, three colorless. We have not seen actual examples, and we do not know whether other bottles carried the “L.G.CO. N.S.” logo.

L.G.CO.N.G. (ca. 1890-1898)

Owen (2008) also noted a Minard’s Liniment bottle embossed “L.G.CO. N.G.” for New Glasgow. Again, we have not seen an example nor do we know whether other bottles bore the logo. This may be a single misunderstanding in initials by an engraver at an outside mold shop.

Discussion and Conclusions

The Lamont Glass Co. produced at least four different fruit jars – the Acme (with L.G.Co. around a star), the Canada (with a compass face), Diamond Nova Scotia, and Improved Gem/Improved Jam jars – as well as using a mark of “L.G.Co.N.S.” or “L.G.Co.N.G.” on some bottles. The Improved Gem (and Jam) jars included an LGCo monogram on the reverse. We have no evidence for any mark on the majority goods made by Lamont.

Location and Closing

This study opens up several major inconsistencies. Our major source (King 1987:78-79) stated that the Lamont Glass Co. had plants at Trenton and New Glasgow. However, Owen (2008), left the cryptic statement that “Glass St. is within metres of the Trenton/New Glasgow town boundary” referring to a single bottle marked “L.G.CO. N.G.” (New Glasgow) rather than “L.G.CO. N.S.” (Nova Scotia). As noted above, and 1896 issue of the *Crockery & Glass Journal* also listed the location as New Glasgow. When King discussed the 1899 fire that destroyed the Nova Scotia Glass Co. plant, he sounded as if it also wiped out the Lamont factory. If so, why did production not move to the New Glasgow plant? We suspect that there was only a single plant on property that spanned the boundary between Trenton and New Glasgow.

A second mystery centers on the demise of the Lamont Glass Co. Unfortunately, we have found *no* primary sources for information on the final years of the plant. However, we have strong evidence for the existence of primary material. Toulouse (1971:326) cited the Gerald Stevens 1967 book as the source that the Diamond Glass Co. signed a lease for the Lamont factory from April 1, 1898, to August 1, 1902. Two things about this citation are vitally important for understanding this segment of time. First, it is clear that Stevens found the lease – a primary document. While almost all researchers estimate years when the data are unclear, virtually no one makes up months and dates. These typically *only* come from primary sources. Therefore, it is virtually certain that the Diamond Glass Co. leased the Lamont plant in 1898. Second, signed the lease on April 1, 1898 stating that it *would* occupy the plant until 1902. Note that Diamond selected the 1902 date *on* April 1, 1898. This four year span was a *plan* – *not* a reality.

Unfortunately, Roller (1983), Miller & Jorgenson (1986), Creswick (1987), and others misunderstood Stevens and thought that the Lamont plant remained open under Diamond Glass during that entire span. It is important to note that none of these later sources show any signs of having found any primary source documents themselves, and most cited one of the Stevens books as their sources. What this means is that Stevens was the closest to a primary document, and Stevens did *not* state that the Lamont plant was open under Diamond glass during the period in question.

King (1987:79) was the first to mention a fire in 1899 that struck the Nova Scotia Glass Co., destroying a warehouse containing “the accumulated stock of the Lamont brothers . . . bringing to an end the second of the three operations in the Trenton area.” King (1987:77) almost certainly found a primary source (probably a newspaper article) stating that the Nova Scotia Glass Co. factory “was leveled by a tragic fire on August 25, 1899.” As with the Stevens information noted above, the use of the month and date almost certainly indicated a primary source – although King did not cite the information. It is also important to note that the Diamond Glass Co. formed in 1890 with the merger of the Nova Scotia Glass Co. and the North American Glass Co., but the new firm abandoned the Trenton factory (Nova Scotia Glass Co.) ca. 1892 (Wereley 2003:5).

To summarize, Wereley (2003:10) noted that “sometime in 1899, a fire broke out at the abandoned Nova Scotia Glass Co. plant, and leveled the site. The fire trickled over to Lamont and damaged a great stock of items.” He speculated that “the Lamont operation [may have] ceased production in 1899 and the property was not sold until 1902, when Diamond Glass Co. was dissolved.” We agree with Wereley. It is virtually certain that Diamond Glass Co. leased the Lamont plant on April 1, 1898, and the plant burned in the Nova Scotia Glass Co. fire just 16 months later, in August 25, 1899.

Relevance of the Final Years to Marked Jars

Our understanding of at least two of the jars discussed above may be strongly affected by the date of the lease and the date of the fire.

The Diamond Nova Scotia Jar

The reason Roller and Creswick suggested the later dates of 1898-1902 for the Diamond jar was probably because the name “Diamond” implied a manufacture by the Diamond Glass Co., but the name “Nova Scotia” suggested the plant at Trenton/New Glasgow. It seems likely that neither Roller nor Creswick knew of the fire, although both had access to the Stevens Book to obtain the 1898-1902 dates. Neither would have had access to King, published the same year as Creswick and four years after Roller. A final factor in virtually assuring that the jars were made during the Diamond Glass Co. tenure was the lids of the jars – each bearing a DGCo monogram, a logo used by the Diamond Glass Co. (see the Diamond Glass Co. section).

Possibly, the Lamonts reached an agreement with Diamond to use the name on that specific jar. It is also possible that Roller confused Lamont with the Humphries Glass Co., also in Trenton. According to King (1987:79-83), Humphries opened in 1890 but was destroyed by fire in 1902 (but rebuilt, continuing until the plant moved to Moncton, New Brunswick in 1917). One final possibility is that the Diamond Nova Scotia jar was made between April 1898, when Diamond Glass bought the Lamont factory, and August 1899, when the plants burned.

Wereley (2003:10) considered this final explanation to be the most likely (as do we), because the Diamond Nova Scotia jars were “not found in the typical crude aqua glass [of the Acme jars] but in flint.” A bit of circumstantial evidence also supports this final hypothesis. Essentially, two factors drive the price of jars to collectors – scarcity and desirability. If a jar is desirable but common, it will probably not command a high price – nor will it if it is undesirable. If the jar is both desirable and rare, it demands an appropriate cost. The cheapest price suggested for the Diamond jar by Leybourne (2014:131) was \$450-500, rocketing to \$1,200+ for the rare pint size. Prices in this range are commensurate with jars that were produced for a short period of time – like the 16 months that the Diamond Glass Co. controlled the Lamont plant. McCann (2011:161) suggested a much lower \$200-250 price tag – with the pint at \$1,000+ still suggesting a short production run.

Improved GEM (or JAM) with LGCo monogram

Two issues are salient for these jars. First, the Improved Gem was made first. The jars with “GEM” ghosted *under* “JAM” clearly indicate that the superimposed “JAM” was the later

embossing. Second, it is probable that very few Improved Gem jars were made. Leybourne (2014:207) priced the Improved Gem jars at:\$1,300-1,500 – suggesting that they are very rare (see a discussion about scarcity and prices above). The Improved Jam, on the other hand, he estimated in the \$150-250 range. McCann (2017:211), however, set the price for both variations at \$750-1,000.

The relevance of this observation unfortunately falls under aegis of speculation. Both of the price ranges suggest that the jars were made for a limited time. The question – for which we have no historical answer – is: Why did the Lamonts change the name? Jars embossed “THE GEM” were patented and controlled by the Hero Glass Works (later Hero Fruit Jar Co.) in the U.S., and the Hamilton Glass Works produced jars embossed “GEM / RUTHERFORD & Co.” The Lamonts may have made the “Improved GEM” jar at some point about midway in the plant’s tenure. They soon may have realized that they were treading in dangerous water and decided to cancel the brand – what Wereley (2003:7) called “patent infringement pressure.” Not wanting to discard valuable molds, however, the plant peened out “GEM” and replaced it with “JAM” – continuing to manufacture the jars until the 1898 takeover by Diamond Glass.

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