

M&Co and the Diamond-M Logos

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The “M&CO” logos, with their connections to both Pennsylvania and New York, have been a mystery for several years. Historical data currently available on the internet have provided a probable solution in John M. Maris & Co. In addition, other evidence indicated almost certainly that the Maris firm used the Diamond-M mark.

History

Ancestral Firms, Philadelphia (1812-1846)

John M. Maris Co., Philadelphia and New York (1846-present)

In 1812, Jeremiah Emlen established a business as a druggist at Philadelphia. Caleb E. Pleasants and a man known to us only as Graeff (Pleasants & Graeff) apparently purchased the firm in 1828, possibly expanding into the wholesale drug field by this time. By 1830, Pleasants operated under his own name, but it was called C.E. Pleasants & Co. by 1840. Although John M. Maris began working for Pleasants in 1839, it was not until 1842 that Pleasants took him as a partner and changed the firm name to Pleasants & Maris (Maris & Maris 1885:69; *N.A.R.D. Notes* 1913:974).

Pleasants died in 1843, but Maris continued to run the firm under the joint name until January 1, 1846, when it became John M. Maris & Co. Maris continued to deal in wholesale drugs until 1872, when the focus shifted to druggists’ bottles, shop furniture, and related ware, with the business located at 711 Market St. in Philadelphia (Lowe 1908:166; Maris & Maris 1885:69; *N.A.R.D. Notes* 1913:972, 974; Whitten 2017). According to Edwards & Critten (1885), the firm opened a branch in New York in 1880. The New York office was large, located

at No. 37 Barclay street, fronting thereon 25 feet and extending entirely through the block to No. 42 Park Place, a distance of one hundred and fifty feet. In this immense show room is displayed an unsurpassed and complete assortment of druggists’ glassware and sundries, coupled with numerous specialties.

We have not discovered whether or not the New York office was engaged in the export business – although the sheer size of the establishment makes overseas sales likely. John Maris passed the company to his son, Henry Maris, in 1885. On December 21, 1886, fire destroyed the Philadelphia factory – although it was subsequently rebuilt. John Maris died on April 21, 1892 (John M. Maris Co. n.d.; O’Dell 2007; U.S. History 2006). By 1908, the Philadelphia office had moved slightly to 312 Market St., with the New York office at 219 Fulton St. (Lowe 1908:165).

The firm incorporated as the John M. Maris Co. in 1913 – dropping the ampersand – with Henry J. Maris as president, Charles Willis as vice president, R.R. Steilen as treasurer, and George E. Magee as secretary. At that time, the main office and one factory were at 528 Arch St. in Philadelphia, with the New York office still at 219 Fulton St. As of this writing, the firm remains in operation (Maris & Maris 1885:69; *N.A.R.D. Notes* 1913:972, 974; Whitten 2017).¹

Containers and Marks

At some point, possibly during the 1870s, John M. Maris & Co. began coloring its shop furniture with uranium to make “canary colored” tinctures and salt-mouth bottles. The firm advertised that the color interfered with the harmful effects of light on many chemicals. The company also sold colorless and cobalt blue shop furniture and added amber to the list by 1883. About 1890, Maris discontinued the “canary” color (Griffenhagen & Bogard 1999:58-59).

In 1891, John M. Maris & Co. introduced a new design for a Citrate of Magnesia bottle that *Pharmaceutical Era* (1891:27, 34) claimed was “by far the handsomest on the market” because it had “a sloping top [that] does away with the square shoulder which was always a weak point in the old shape” (Figure 1).



Figure 1 – Citrate of Magnesia Bottle
(*Pharmaceutical Era* 1891:27)

¹ The John M. Maris Co. website spelled the name Stylin, and suggested that Ed Stylin took over the firm in 1905. That date was obviously too early, but Stylin served as president from some point until 1925.

Two years later, the *American Druggist & Pharmaceutical Record* (1893:266) called attention to the Maris advertisement for a new tooth powder bottle that had “many important advantages over the ordinary container now in use.” The main innovation seems to have been “a screw cap of nickel plated metal. This cap is made with a spring bottom so that with a touch of the finger or thumb the powder is readily ejected from the small opening at the top when required for use” (Figure 2).

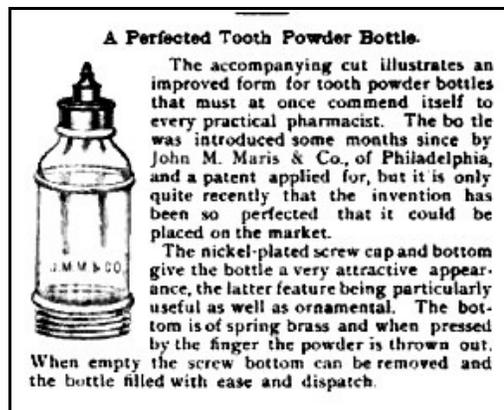


Figure 2 – Tooth Powder Bottle (*American Druggist* 1893:266)

M in a diamond (ca. late 1870s-ca. 1880s)

Whitten (2017) reported a mark of “M in a horizontal diamond” on a colorless prescription bottle from ca. 1885, cobalt blue and colorless eyewash cups, and “a miniature clear glass mouth-blown lamp with a ground lip and metal screw-top wick assembly which was seen on ebay and said to have possibly been used for medical/laboratory purposes” – as well as on Apothecary weights (Figure 3). Whitten assigned the John M. Maris Co. as the user of the mark based on the similarity of the initials and the presence of all of those items in the Maris catalogs. Our best estimate for age would be late 1870s-1880s.



Figure 3 – M in a Diamond (David Whitten)

Aiken et al. (2016:138) illustrated and discussed a weight that was marked with the John M. Maris & Co. name as well as the Diamond-M logo. They noted that the weight “was produced by John Maris of Philadelphia and New York. . . . The “M” in the diamond stood for John M. Maris & Co., the firm name.” An eBay auction confirmed the connection, offering a round, paperboard box of weights printed on the top with “DRACHM &



Figure 4 – Diamond-M weights (eBay)

GRAIN (arch) / WEIGHTS / {Diamond-M logo} / John M. Maris Co.
 (all horizontal) / PHILA. NEW YORK (inverted arch)” (Figure 4).

This evidence removes any doubt that Maris was the user of the Diamond-M logo.

M.&Co. (late 19th to early 20th century)



Figure 6 – M&Co ink bottle (eBay)

Sellers on eBay have auctioned two bottles with the “M.&Co.” logo. One, an apparent chemical or possibly glue bottle, was embossed with “M.&Co.” horizontally across the center of the base (Figures 5). The other was a conical ink bottle embossed on the side with “M.&Co.” in a slight arch (Figure 6).

The 1915 Maris catalog had Balsam Oil and Syrup Dispensing Bottles that were similar in shape to the chemical/glue bottle, but there were no ink bottles in the catalog.

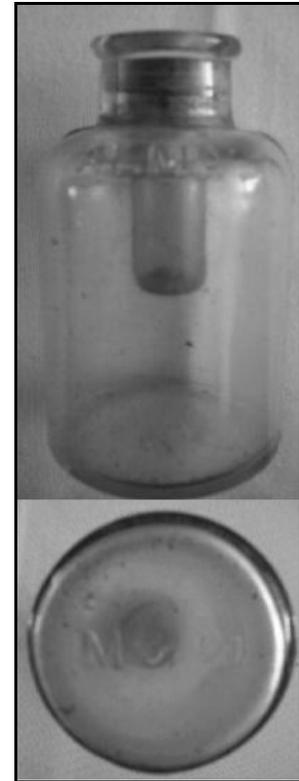


Figure 5 – M&Co glue bottle (eBay)

Gerkin (2004) noted that “custom lettered medicine glasses also appear in catalogs by the John M. Maris & Co. (of Philadelphia, PA) and the Cambridge Glass Co. (of Cambridge, OH).” This “M&Co.” mark could have been an early one used by the firm, although the ink bottle may well have been unrelated. Several Maris ads from the 1890s (e.g., *American Druggist & Pharmaceutical Record* 1893:60; 1897:17) illustrated products with “J.M.M.&CO.” logos (Figure 7). While these used the full initials of the firm, the ads do indicate that Maris used an abbreviation in some instances – although we have never seen or heard of an example of a bottle or other item with the full “J.M.M.&CO.” initials.



Figure 7 – JMMCO logo (*American Druggist* 1897:17)

M&CO / NY in a keystone (ca. 1880-ca. 1902)

In a personal communication, Jill and Alan Griffiths of New Zealand reported at least ten variations of dose glasses marked on their bases with “M&CO / N Y” in a keystone (Figure 8). These were apparently found in conjunction with “WT&Co” dose glasses from the ca. 1880 to 1902 period. All were colorless and embossed with the name of a local New Zealand chemist. At least one similarly marked dose glass was used in Australia, and Gerken (2004) reported a similar dose glass from Canada. The presence of the NY initials strongly suggest the U.S. as the point of manufacture, apparently for export.



Figure 8 – Keystone M&Co (Jill & Alan Griffiths)

M&CO in a keystone above U.S.A. (ca. 1890s-1900)

Preble (2002:507, 548, 708) illustrated pharmacy bottles embossed with “M&CO.” in a keystone above “U.S.A.” in an inverted arch. Preble included date ranges for the pharmacies that used these bottles, including 1898-1900, 1894-1897, and 1897-1904. Since all these drug stores fall into the late 1890s-early 1900s range, the bottles they used were probably manufactured by the same company that made the New Zealand dose glasses. Our example was mouth blown and fits into the same date range (Figure 9).



Figure 9 – Keystone M&Co / U.S.A.

Discussion & Conclusion

As noted above, the evidence provided by weights leaves no question that John M. Maris & Co. used the Diamond-M logo. With locations in both New York and Pennsylvania, the Maris & Co. identification could certainly explain both the “NY” and the keystone in the “M&Co” logos on the dose glasses. Marris was a known distributor of pharmaceutical supplies.

It is highly unlikely that the logos with the keystone were used by different companies, although the “M&CO” with no keystone on the glue and ink bottles may have been unrelated to the keystone marks. The capital “O” in “CO” on the keystone marks and the lower-case “o” on the other bottles may or may not be significant.

Historical information, however, leaves one point unclear. Several of the references suggest that Maris was a manufacturer, even referring to his buildings as factories. However, a location in a multi-story building in the middle of Philadelphia is an unlikely site for a glass factory. Despite the references, it seems much more likely that John M. Maris & Co. was a jobber or distributor rather than a glass house – although the firm may have produced and/or assembled some of the components in its own plant.

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