

Mansfield Glass Works

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The Lockport Glass Works (1872-1903) and the Mansfield Glass Works (1903-1908) both made fruit jars as their primary products. Lockport used hand methods until 1902, when the plant adopted three machines, producing jars exclusively by machine after that point. In 1903, Mansfield adopted the Knowlton patent for a new jar closure that worked on what was essentially a Mason jar. Mansfield closed in 1906.

History

Lockport Glass Works, Lockport, New York (1872-1903)

Alonso J. Mansfield of Lockport purchased the Lockport Glass Works from Salmon B. Rowley in 1872, when Rowley moved on to found the Hero Glass Works (see that section for more on Rowley). An 1872 billhead, signed by Mansfield, himself, still showed figures of Gem and Hero jars, suggesting that the plant continued to make those after Rowley left. Mansfield was listed in an 1876 leaflet as one of the users of the Keystone Grinding Machines patented on December 28, 1869, by Kelley & Samuel (see the section on A.R. Samuel for more information on the Samuel firms). The plant suffered three fires in 1878 – although Mansfield rebuilt the factory on a grander scale afterward. By 1897, the plant still used a single furnace with seven pots (McKearin & Wilson 1978:142; Roller 1997).

Early in 1900, Mansfield completed a continuous tank in the plant with the intention to install machines. However, the machine installation was delayed until March of 1902, then the tank burst shortly after the first machine was placed in operation. Prior to that point, all glassware produced by the plant was mouth blown, and the primary product was almost certainly the Mason jar – although the factory made bottles as well. The tank was soon fixed, and the semiautomatic machines began production (McKearin & Wilson 1978:142; Roller 1997; Spear & Spear 1970:39). Roller (1983:204) suggested that these were “Schram-designed glassmaking machines.” A reorganization in 1903 renamed the firm.

Mansfield Glass Works, Lockport, New York (1903-1906)

Dallas Knowlton applied for a patent on August 1, 1902, and received Patent No. 727,808 for a “Jar-closure” on May 12, 1903 (Figure 1). The patent document described a glass lid under a metal cap. In theory at least, the combination spread the pressure evenly to ensure a tighter seal. Knowlton’s patent was the basis for the Mansfield Jar. It is probably no coincidence that Mansfield incorporated the firm as a New York corporation in May 1903 with a capital of \$500,000 – changing the name to the Mansfield Glass Works. Mansfield was president with William H. Clarke as vice president, and George E. Emerson as treasurer (Dunn 1971:7; *Iron Age* 1903:25; Moody 1906:1828; Roller 1997; *United States Investor* 1904:174).

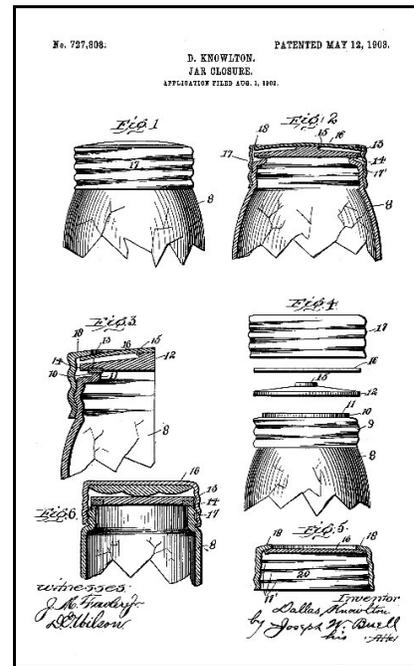


Figure 1 – Knowlton 1903 patent

The courts placed the corporation in involuntary bankruptcy in January 1904, leading to the reorganization of the firm as a New Jersey corporation on April 9, with the same capitalization and almost the same officers. Emerson was now secretary with J.R. Compton as treasurer. The purpose of the corporation was to manufacture Mason fruit jars (Dunn 1971:7; *Iron Age* 1903:25; Moody 1906:1828; Roller 1997; *United States Investor* 1904:174). In 1904, Mansfield made fruit jars at three machines, turning out 30,000 jars per day – 11,000,000 each year. Although the plant continued to make Mason jars, the new, dynamic product was the Mansfield Jar, made to the Knowlton patent (McKearin & Wilson 1978:142; Spear & Spear 1970:39).

Along with H.J. Wick & Co., the Consolidated Fruit Jar Co. filed an involuntary bankruptcy petition against Mansfield on January 1906. Although we have not discovered the details of the firm’s dissolution, the Pierce Glass Co. leased the plant before the end of the year. Edward Jackson bought the factory at auction in 1908 but never opened it (Roller 1997).

W.A. Bostwick Glass Co., Lockport, N.Y. (1909)

The Bostwick Brothers of Rochester, New York, purchased the plant and began operating as the W.A. Bostwick Glass Co. in June of 1909, although they, too, declared bankruptcy in 1910. Bankruptcy proceedings continued intermittently until 1912, but we have not discovered the Bostwick products (Fisher 1912:297; *Paint, Oil & Drug Review* 1910:11; Roller 1997)

Containers and Marks

The Mansfield Glass Works made at least five styles of fruit jars, the primary products of the factory.

MANSFIELD MASON (ca. 1903-1906)

Roller (1983:205; 2011:310) illustrated and described the “MANSFIELD (slight arch) MASON (horizontal),” a typical machine-made, shoulder-seal Mason jar (Figure 2). He dated these ca. 1903-1908. Creswick (1987b:86) illustrated the jar and dated it ca. 1904; Toulouse (1969:194) placed the dates at ca. 1900-1910. Spear & Spear (1970:38-39) discovered a Mansfield 1904 pamphlet that discussed all four types of fruit jars produced at the factory. It called the Mansfield Mason “a good old standby” and noted that all such jars were hand made prior to 1902, machine made since that time. This suggests that mouth-blown jars were made from 1872 to 1902 and machine-made ones produced from 1902 to 1906. However, a 1904 Mansfield ad illustrated the typical Mason jar embossed with the 1858 patent date – *without* the word “MANSFIELD.” In addition, none of the glass sources reported the Mansfield Mason in mouth-blown format. This makes it probable that the word “MANSFIELD” was not embossed on jars until incorporation of the firm in 1903 – possibly even not until the following year.



Figure 2 – Mansfield Mason (Creswick 1987b:86; North American Glass)

MANSFIELD IMPROVED MASON (ca. 1903-1906)

Toulouse (1969:194) described a machine-made jar embossed “MANSFIELD (slight arch) / IMPROVED / MASON (both horizontal)” and dated it ca. 1900-1910 (Figure 3). He suggested the Reid Bottle Co. at Mansfield, Ohio, or the Mansfield Glass Works at Lockport, New York, as possible manufacturers, noting that “the latter, however, is not known to have used machines.” Toulouse was incorrect about the lack of machines, of course (see above).



Figure 3 – Mansfield Improved Mason
(Creswick 1987b:86; North American Glass)

Roller (1983:205; 2011:310) also illustrated and described the Mansfield Mason Improved jars and dated them ca. 1903-1908. Creswick (1987b:86) illustrated the jar and dated it “circa after 1904.” The 1904 pamphlet stated that the Mansfield Improved Mason was “similar to our standard Mason in every respect except the cap.” In place of the all-zinc cap, the Improved variation used a glass insert and metal screw band (Spear & Spear 1970:39).

MANSFIELD WIRE FASTENER (probably nonexistent)

The 1904 pamphlet included the Mansfield Wire Fastener – “the ‘locking’ device is simplicity itself: the wire fittings or trimmings are the finest obtainable.” This apparently was a “Lightning” type of fastener. None of the other sources mentioned this jar, and we have not discovered an example, so it either had a very short period of manufacture or had no embossing to identify Mansfield. Leybourne (2010:255) noted that “this jar was pictured in company brochures but an example has not been reported to us.” It is highly likely that this jar was never actually produced or never bore the Mansfield name.

KNOWLTON VACUUM FRUIT JAR (ca. 1902-1903)

Toulouse (1969:177) illustrated and discussed a jar embossed “KNOWLTON VACUUM (arch) / ★ / FRUIT JAR (horizontal)” on the front. The jar had a “glass lid under metal disc

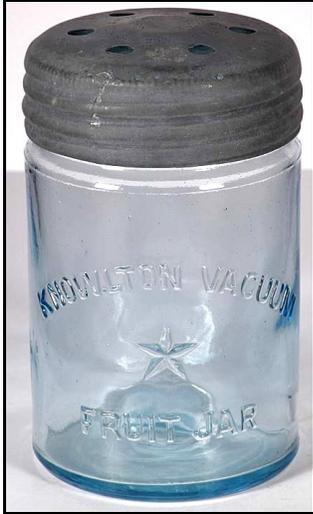


Figure 4 – Knowlton jar (North American Glass)

spring, held by perforated metal cap” (Figures 4 & 5). He noted that the jars were made to the Dallas Knowlton 1903 patent but did not guess the manufacturer (see the history section above for information about the patent). Toulouse claimed that some jars were mouth blown, while others were machine made, although hand manufacture was not supported by any other source.



Figure 5 – Knowlton cap (North American Glass)

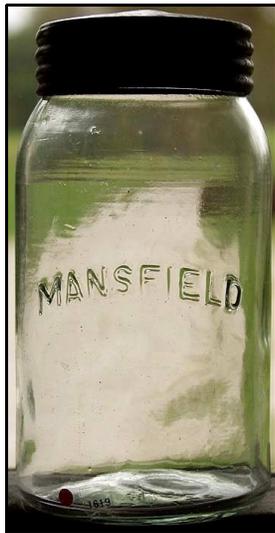


Figure 7 – Mansfield jar (North American Glass)

Roller (1983:185; 2011:284) added that the lids on these jars were embossed “KNOWLTON VACUUM PAT’D MAY 1903,” and the metal caps were stamped the same as the Mansfield jars (see below) but had six holes in the top. He dated the jars ca. 1903-1908, made by the Mansfield Glass Works and ca. 1909 by the Hazel-Atlas Glass Co. Creswick (1987b:79) illustrated the jar, lid, and cap, dating the jar ca. 1903-1910, and suggesting Mansfield and Hazel-Atlas as the makers (Figure 6). She noted that “an advertisement by Hazel-Atlas states that they were making this jar in 1909.”

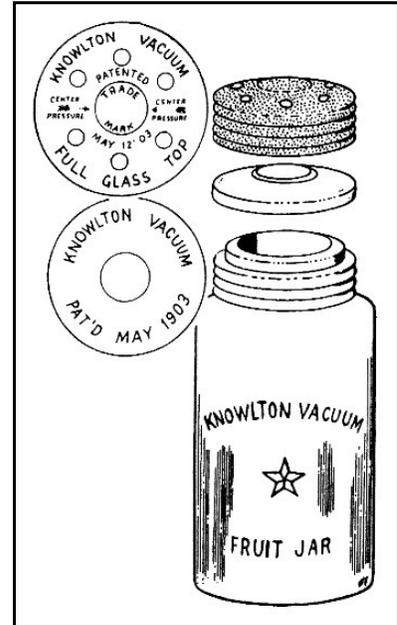


Figure 6 – Knowlton jar (Creswick (1987b:79))

MANSFIELD (ca. 1903-1906)

These jars had “MANSFIELD” embossed on the side and “MANSFIELD / KNOWLTON (both arched) / MAY ‘03 (horizontal) / PAT. / GLASS W’K’S (both inverted arches)” embossed



Figure 8 – Mansfield base (North American Glass)

on the base (Figures 7 & 8). The glass lid was embossed “MANSFIELD GLASS W’KS (arch) / KNOLTON PAT. MAY .03 (inverted arch)” (Figure 9). The screw caps were stamped



Figure 9 – Mansfield lid (North American Glass)

in arched, double-outline letters above a circle in the center with “TRADE (arch) / MARK (inverted arch)” inside – with “CENTRE / {arrow} /

PRESSURE” on both sides – and “FULL GLASS TOP” in double-outlined letters in an inverted arch at the bottom (Figure 10). These were made by the Mansfield Glass Works, Lockport, New York, from ca. 1904 to 1908 (Roller 1983:204; 2011:310).



Figure 10 – Mansfield cap (North American Glass)

Roller (1983:204; 2011:310) further explained that “these jars probably represent the earliest machine-made jars to seal on the lip, and were reportedly made on Schram-designed glassmaking machines.” He noted that the March 19, 1904, issue of *Commoner and Glassmaker* discussed the upcoming “Mansfield ball bearing jar” made by Mansfield – almost certainly the Mansfield jar.

Creswick (1987b:85) illustrated the jar and noted:

in 1904, Mansfield advertised this jar as “the fruit jar which will revolutionize this branch of the glass business. It possesses all of the advantages of other fruit jars, with few or none of the disadvantages. The center pressure makes an absolute closure possible. Fruits or vegetables may be put up without salt or sugar, and will keep perfectly. Sufficient heat and thoroughly sterilize is all that is required. Standard cap fits all sizes. Mason rubber used.”¹

¹ This quote was from the 1904 pamphlet later published by Spear & Spear (1970).

MANSFIELD with embossed drawing of a jar (ca. 1903 or 1904)

Mansfield also made a jar embossed “MANSFIELD (arch) / SOLE {jar drawing} MF’R’S (horizontal) / GLASS WORKS (inverted arch). The jar drawn in the center of the body was a screw-top jar embossed “KNOWLTON (slight arch) / PATENT / MAY 1903 (all horizontal) / TRADE / MARK (upwardly slanted)” (Figure 11). This, too, Roller (1983:205; 2011:310) dated ca. 1904 to 1908. Creswick (1987b:85), however, dated the jar ca. 1903 and noted that “only 1 jar is presently known.” This was probably made as a salesman’s sample or an initial run.

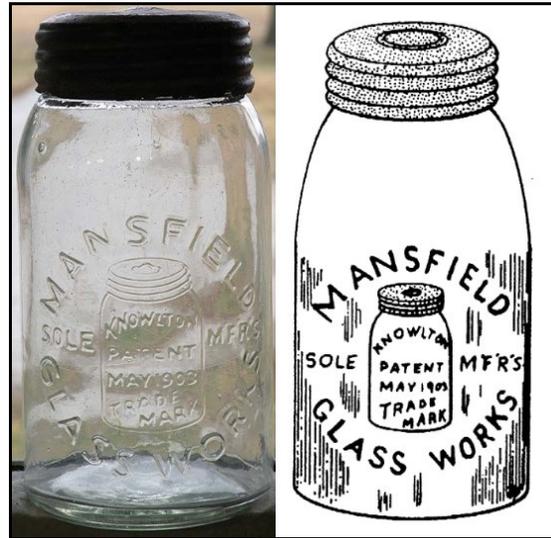


Figure 11 – Mansfield Knowlton jar (Creswick 1987b:85; North American Glass)

MASON IMPROVED – Ghosted KNOWLTON VACUUM on reverse (ca. 1909)

Roller (1983:214; 2011:324) also listed a jar embossed “MASON IMPROVED” on one face with a ghosted “KNOWLTON VACUUM (arch) / ☆ / FRUIT JAR (horizontal)” on the opposite side. He added, “Since Hazel-Atlas Glass Co. made Knowlton Jars . . . it is possible that they made these altered-mold jars.”

Discussion and Conclusions

Two things are virtually certain: 1) the Lockport Glass Co. (1872-1903), under the ownership of Alonso J. Mansfield, made Mason jars during its entire tenure; and 2) the Mansfield Glass Works (1903-1906) produced a variety of fruit jars – including Mason jars embossed with the Mansfield name – during its business life. It is also clear that Lockport used hand methods until 1902, so all of the pre-1902 jars would have mouth-blown characteristics. Since there were no jars with the Mansfield embossing that were mouth blown, it is likely that all of the jars made by the Lockport Glass Works were embossed “MASON / PATENT / NOV. 30TH / 1858.”

The jar embossed “MANSFIELD / GLASS WORKS” around a drawing of a Knowlton jar was almost certainly a salesman’s sample or a single run of advertising jars, produced in either 1903 or 1904. They were almost certainly *not* made after those years, replaced by the Mansfield jar. The firm almost certainly produced the Mansfield jars until the plant closed – as well as Mansfield Masons and Mansfield Masons Improved.

It is also probable that Mansfield produced the Knowlton jars during its entire tenure, although the only apparent difference between the Mansfield jar and Knowlton jar was the holes in the lid of the Knowlton. Apparently, the Hazel-Atlas Glass Co. picked up the Knowlton jar when Mansfield ceased operations in 1906 (or possibly later), although the firm may have only offered the Knowlton for a short time before using the molds to make Mason’s Improved jars.

Acknowledgments

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