

North Baltimore Bottle Glass Co.

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

In its 28 years of operation, beginning in 1888, the North Baltimore Bottle Glass Co. occupied three locations, changing venues as the natural gas reservoirs depleted. Although the firm made other types of bottles, its major output was beer bottles, followed by soda and liquor containers. The plants used a single manufacturer's mark during the company's entire tenure, although these were almost entirely embossed on mouth-blown beer, soda, and liquor ware. Almost all of the final plant's machine-made bottles seem to have been unmarked as were all of the firm's fruit jars, druggists' ware and other products. The firm finally closed due to the pressure from Prohibition in 1926 – just seven years before Repeal.

Histories

North Baltimore Bottle Glass Co., North Baltimore, Ohio (1888-1895)

John Geghan and Albert L. Pfau held a public meeting on October 20, 1887, at North Baltimore, Ohio, seeking local citizens as guarantors for a new addition to the town for the purpose of building a new glass factory. The pair incorporated the North Baltimore Bottle Glass Co. on October 31, with a capital of \$50,000. Pfau was president, with Geghan as vice president, M.B. Waldo as treasurer, and Isiah W. Richardson, formerly with the Hemingray Glass Co., as superintendent (Paquette 2002:261-262; Roller 1998a).

John Geghan bought the property for the North Baltimore Bottle Glass Co. factory on December 2, 1887, and immediately turned it over to the company, but the area became known as the Pfau Addition. Pfau even offered free land adjacent to the proposed glass house to anyone who would build a hotel for housing factory employees, any kind of church, or a school of any sort (Paquette 2002:261-262; ; Terry 2003:48-50).

Production of green glass began on April 29, 1888, at a ten-pot furnace, followed by amber a few weeks later. The factory specialized in soda and beer bottles along with Mason jars and “standard” fruit jars – grooved-ring wax-sealers (Paquette 2002:263; Roller 1994:2; 1998a;

Terry 2003:48-50). Initially, the plant had bottle molds made by Charles Yockel of Philadelphia. A letter dated September 14, 1888, warned Yockel that an order for \$1,000 worth of molds would be on its way – if he promised speedy service (Tyson 1971:25). The *Plain Dealer* reported on June 10, 1891, that North Baltimore was guilty of employing children under the age of 12. The firm moved to Albany, Indiana, in 1895, when the natural gas supply dried up in North Baltimore and closed the Ohio plant (Roller 1994:2; 1997; Toulouse 1971:379).

Wilson and Caperton (1994:70) recorded all beer bottle advertising in *The Western Brewer* between 1883 and 1890 as well as samples from issues between 1878 and 1882. North Baltimore began to advertise in the journal in May 1888, almost immediately after it opened and continued the ads until at least the point when Wilson and Caperton stopped recording in December 1890.

North Baltimore Bottle Glass Co., Albany, Indiana (1895-1902)

The Albany factory opened in 1895, with Pfau as president and Richardson as vice president and superintendent. Richardson's son, Isaiah Richardson, Jr., served as secretary until 1891, when Chapman Root (from the Root family of glass makers) took the position and held it until 1901. The younger Richardson regained the position when Root left and continued until the firm closed permanently (Paquette 2002:264; Roller 1997).

In 1896, the company advertised itself as making “All Kinds of Bottles in Green & Amber Glass, Beers & Minerals, Specialties” (Roller 1994:2). The factory made “beer and soda water bottles, exclusively . . . in three tanks of 29 rings” in 1897 (also reported as two day tanks, each with six rings and two continuous tanks with a total of 24 rings – a listing that remained until 1900). In 1900, the firm contracted for a \$90,000 addition to the factory. On December 29, the *Elkhart Daily Review* claimed that the plant would then be “the best equipped in the country” to make “a specialty of making all kinds of bottles.” The plant was not enumerated in 1901 and was listed in both Albany and Terre Haute in 1902, each factory with 36 pots (*National Glass Budget* 1897:7; 1902:11). The company decided to open a second plant and completed its arrangements to move to Terre Haute on May 13, 1900 (Roller 1994:2; 1997; Toulouse 1971:379). On July 7, 1902, the *Elkhart Truth* reported that North Baltimore was preparing to dismantle the Albany factory.

North Baltimore Bottle Glass Co., Terre Haute, Indiana (1900-ca. 1926)

The Terre Haute plant began production on the north side of Maple Ave., between the Vandalia Line and Big Four railroad tracks, on December 31, 1900, at a single 12-ring continuous tank. The factory at Albany continued to produce amber bottles, while the one at Terre Haute made aqua glass. Pfau remained as president with Richardson continuing the vice presidential position until his death on November 1, 1922. The factory opened its second tank in 1901, probably moving its headquarters to Terre Haute that year, and used two continuous tanks with 24 rings to make prescription ware, liquor and beer bottles, and packers' ware in 1904 (*American Glass Review* 1934:153; Paquette 2002:261-262; Roller 1994:104; 1998b; Toulouse 1971:380). In 1908, the plant operated two tanks, making beer, soda, and water bottles – although the production of liquor bottles almost certainly continued (*Commoner and Glassworker* 1908:1).

The factory installed an O'Neill semiautomatic machine at the Terre Haute plant in 1911 and initially used it to make pint export beer bottles. The management noted that “the most pleasing feature . . . is the superior quality of the product” (*National Glass Budget* 1911:3). The company used both O'Neill semiautomatic machines and mouth-blown production in 1913 to make “beer and water [i.e., soda]” bottles on three continuous tanks and 107 pots (*Journal of Industrial and Engineering Chemistry* 1913:952). The “107 pots” indicates a large hand production unit.

In 1917, the plant made “Soda, Wine, etc.,” but Prohibition was catching up with the company by the following year. The new listing was for “cereals, beverage” bottles, probably a misunderstanding of bottles for cereal beverages – also known as near-beers – non-alcoholic drinks that tasted like beer (Thomas Publishing Co. 1917:730; 1918:809; 1920:826). The plant operated three tanks with “26 one-man O'Neill machines on which green and amber beers and sodas” were made (Bristow 1917:13). Like many others, North Baltimore hoped to survive Prohibition by making near-beer bottles, but that market, too, dissipated (Ayres et al. 1980:30). By 1924, near-beer sales had dropped drastically, and most breweries ceased production. A study of El Paso, Texas, newspapers, for example, showed that near-beer ads had completely ceased by 1924 (Lockhart 2000).

There is virtually no question that North Baltimore met its end as a result of Prohibition, but the timing is unclear. The *American Glass Review* (1934:153) stated that the company ceased operations in 1926 – confirmed by Paquette (2002:264) – although Roller (1994:104) last listed the plant a year earlier. Toulouse (1971:379) set the closing date at 1930. In an ironic finale, Terry (2003:48-50) claimed that the company closed in 1933, the year that Prohibition was repealed. In 1927, the *American Glass Review* noted that the plant made “green and amber beers and minerals, and that listing remained until 1930 (1927:141; 1930:92). The term “beers” in the listing probably means that the publication was using old data, a common practice. Thus, the closing was probably ca. 1926, shortly after the bottom fell out of the near-beer market.

Containers and Marks

Terry (2003:49) noted that “private molds were different, and carried no distinguishing mark. For example, Frank J. Cheney, a Toledo, Ohio druggist/medicine manufacturer, had his bottles made in North Baltimore. In one year alone, the bottle works churned out nearly 500,000 of the 4-ounce Hall’s Catarrh Cure bottles,” although Fike (1987:99) did not list any marks on the bases of the Hall’s bottles. Since we have also neither discovered nor seen in print any prescription or medicinal bottles with the NBBGCo mark, we assume that they did not apply their logos to such bottles.

It is notable that the North Baltimore Bottle Glass Co. made fruit jars as well as bottles (e.g., Terry 2003:49). However, a thorough search of Creswick (1987) failed to turn up any bottles marked with the NBBGCO, NB, or any similar mark. It appears that the plant only used the NBBGCO mark on beer and soda bottles.

N.B.B.G.CO. (1888-1920s)

Toulouse (1971:379-380) attributed the N.B.B.G.CO. mark to the North Baltimore Bottle Glass Co., during the entire tenure of the firm. The company made beer and soft drink bottles with numerous finish options. He mused that the company may have had diminished success in the 20th century because it never used other than semi-automatic machines. Jones (1966:17) and Terry (2003:49) also claimed that the mark was used by the North Baltimore Bottle Glass Co., although Terry noted the logo was “placed on the rear heel of the bottle.”

According to Ayres et al. (1980:29), the North Baltimore Bottle Glass Co. advertised itself at one time (possibly 1889) as “the largest exclusive beer-and-beverage-bottle manufacturer in the United States.” The Ayres researchers (1980) showed the mark embossed horizontally across the center of the bottle base or at the bottle’s heel followed by a three-digit number (Figure 1). When the Bottle Research Group examined the Tucson Urban Renewal Collection (TUR) in 2006, we found two examples of export beer bottles with N.B.B.G.CO. embossed on the heel along with a three-digit number. Each of these was amber with a tooled, crown finish. We also found one example with the mark embossed on both the heel and base of an amber export beer bottle with a one-part, tooled finish.



Figure 1 – N.B.B.G.CO. heelmarks (eBay)

Elliott and Gould (1988:132) listed a single Hutchinson soda bottle embossed on the base with N.B.B.G.CO. (Figure 2) The bottle was used by the Excelsior Soda Works, Hilo, Hawaii, during the late 1890s. Miller (1999:23, 38) illustrated three bottles with NBBGCo heelmarks and claimed a total use range between 1895 and



Figure 2 – N.B.B.G.CO. basemarks (eBay)

1899. Peters (1996) listed a large number of NBBGCO-marked soft drink bottles used by Wisconsin bottlers. Dates that local companies were in existence indicated that many of the bottles were made during the 1890s and the first decade of the 20th century. Fisher & Wienhardt (2011) listed five Long Island soda bottles with the NBBGCO logo. Date ranges for the bottlers involved were:

1899-1903; 1893-1910; 1903-1915; 1899-1910; 1900-1906

This suggests that the logo was used between ca. 1900 and ca. 1910.

We conducted a brief study of 27 beer bottles embossed with the NBBCO mark using information provided on the Dictionary of Embossed Beers website (Mobley 2004). Mobley recorded all marks as having a capital “O” at the end and with a period after “CO” in some cases and no punctuation in others (about 50% each way). Only two of the sampled bottles were embossed with the mark on the base; all others had heelmarks. More than half of the heelmarks were accompanied by two- to four-digit numbers (including one with a letter – 106E). All but one of the numbers was embossed to the immediate right of the heelmark.

The only exception was embossed with the mark on the heel and a number (783) on the base. The numbers appeared on bottles both with plate molds and with company names embossed on the body itself. Most marks were found on export-style bottles, although there were several other types. All marks were on mouth-blown bottles (identified by the finishes (tooled crowns and blobs). Mobley identified machine-made bottles by the designation “machine crown,” but none of the NBBGCO bottles were so designated. Clint (1976:192) showed a single example of a bottle with the NBBGCO heelmark (with no accompanying numbers) on a Hutchinson bottle with a tooled finish. He dated the bottle 1910-1915. In summary, there is no correlation between the marks and bottle type or the use of plate molds, although it appears only on non-machine-made bottles.

In all cases we have observed, the “O” in “CO” has been capitalized. Most basemarks have punctuation after each initial, although a few only have a period after the “O” in “CO.” All heelmarks appear to have full punctuation, although the marks (and/or punctuation) are faint in some case. Hutchbook (Fowler 2017) listed a total of 435 Hutchinson soda bottles embossed with the “N.B.B.G.CO.” logo, mostly placed on the reverse heels – although a few were on the front heels and some were on the bases. Von Mechow (2017) cataloged 203 examples, again with the marks on heels and bases.

North Baltimore seems to have exhibited a trait we have also observed in the Adolphus Busch Glass Mfg. Co. and the American Bottle Co. In all three cases, the glass houses only seem to have used manufacturer’s marks on mouth-blown bottles. We



Figure 3 – Machine heelmark (eBay)

have only seen the NBBGCO mark on a single machine-made container – a photo of an amber, long-necked, squat liquor bottle (Figures 3 & 4).

NBBCo

We have discovered an amber base embossed “N.B.B.C.o. / 2” – with a double strike on the initials. This was almost certainly an engraver’s error for “N.B.B.G.CO.” – the logo of the North Baltimore Bottle Glass Co. (Figure 5).

NBGCo



Figure 5 – N.B.B.CO.

Jones (1966:17) listed the NBGCo mark and wondered if that could have been used by the North Baltimore Glass Bottle Co.

(actually the North Baltimore

Bottle Glass Co.) – without the “Bottle.” We have not seen an example of this mark, so it may not exist. One of Jones’s informants may have misread or mistyped the NBBGCO mark and sent it to her.



Figure 4 – Machine bottle (eBay)

Feldhaus (1986:10) listed bottle styles used by the C. Birkhofer Brewing Co. between 1894 and 1906. Embossed on a single bottle style were two different marks: NBBGCO 748 and NBGC0. Unfortunately, he gave no other details such as whether the marks were embossed on the heel or base. The use of both marks on the same style of bottle, however, suggests that the NBGC0 mark may have also been used by the North Baltimore Bottle Glass Co. Although there are numerous typographical errors in the book, Feldhaus (1986:6) specifically noted N.B.G. (without CO.) as a separate mark from N.B.B.G. (again without CO.) and specified “Maker unknown.” He also omitted the CO. from at least one other mark. These were almost certainly either misunderstandings, typographical errors, or engraver’s errors.

Discussion and Conclusion

The North Baltimore Bottle Glass Co. was the obvious user of the N.B.B.G.CO. marks on both bases and heels of export beer bottles as well as the heels of Hutchinson soda bottles. With a single exception, we have *only* seen the mark on bottles with tooled finishes. A single bottle with the mark on both heel and base had a two-part, tooled finish. The bottles we have examined with heelmarks only had crowns, although our sample was very small.

We can predict that bottles from North Baltimore from 1888 to ca. 1896 would have applied finishes (see Lockhart 2007). Bottles made at Albany (ca. 1895-ca. 1903) were likely mostly made with tooled finishes, although applied finishes might have been used during the first few years at that location. Bottles from the Terre Haute plant (1900-ca. 1930), however, could be expected to have either tooled finishes or machine-made characteristics. However, the lack of applied finishes on any bottle we have observed suggest that North Baltimore was atypical of the beer-bottle manufacturers. Either the plant did not mark its bottles made at North Baltimore, Ohio (using the marks at the Albany, Indiana, plant), or it created tooled finishes during its entire tenure of glass making.

If the latter was the case, North Baltimore created a new trend in beer bottle manufacturing technique. As noted above, the general trend in beer bottle production was the use of applied finishes prior to ca. 1896, with virtually all exceptions being tooled finishes on *some* bottles embossed with brewery names as early as 1890. The major exception to this trend was the Adolphus Busch Glass Mfg. Co., using tooled finishes as the norm from 1893. *If* North Baltimore began marking its bottles when it opened in 1888, it would have been the earliest consistent user of applied finishes on beer bottles.

Future research needs to center on matching manufacturing processes of the bottles (machine or hand manufacture) and the finish (applied, tooled, or machine finishes – one-part, two-part, crown, etc.) with mark placement (base or heel). We hypothesize that basemarks were used earliest and will be accompanied by applied and tooled finishes, but heelmarked bottles will only have tooled crown finishes. It is likely that almost all machine-made bottles were not marked by the company. A final issue – undeterminable by current methods – is the discovery of when North Baltimore began embossing its initials on beer bottles.

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