

Northern Glass Works and Northern Glass Co.

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The secondary sources (Kupferschmidt & Kupferschmidt 2003:28; Noyes 1962:7; Peters 1996; Reilly 2004 [1997]; Toulouse 1971:386-387) were all slightly confused about the company they variously called the Northern Glass Works and Northern Glass Co. The discovery of the actual incorporation records, however, as well as local newspapers, opened up the real story.

Histories

These two firms were part of a series of glass companies – all at the same location – that began with the Chase Valley Glass Co. (1880-1881), followed by the Wisconsin Glass Co. (1881-1886), than a pause for two years when the plant remained idle. The Cream City Glass Co. was next (1888-1893), followed by the two incarnations of Northern Glass described in this study. The final firm in the series was William Franzen & Son (1900-1921). See the sections for all these firms for more information.

Northern Glass Co., Milwaukee, Wisconsin (1894-1896)

On February 8, 1894, William Marx, John W. Mariner, and Frederick B. Ricketson chartered the Northern Glass Co. (note “Co.”) for the “manufacture and sale of glass-ware, and the purchase sale or leasing of processes and formulae for the manufacture of glass” with a capital stock of \$200,000 (Incorporation Records). This replaced the defunct Cream City Glass Co., leasing the plant from the Marine Bank – the organization that had foreclosed the earlier glass firm. The equipment of the old plant must have been in good shape. The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reported on February 22 that the factory was “operating six shops at full blast.”

The firm apparently went through a serious reorganization almost immediately. For reasons not stated, the company discharged Ephraim Mariner (a relative of John W.?) in on April 25, 1894, and ordered him to turn over the property he possessed to Elizabeth Pfister, Louis W. Vogel, and Charles Pfister – almost certainly the new directors. Arthur P. Ayling was listed as treasurer (Roller 1998). The Sentinel noted on May 16 that Ayling had been “mysteriously shot

in the thigh several days ago” but never followed up with an explanation. The Pfister family dated back to the beginning of the Wisconsin Glass Co., when Guido Pfister was the first president, and Ayling had been an officer of the Cream City Glass Co.

According to Noyes (1962:7), the firm lost many of its older customers by attempting to take short cuts in the glass making process, leading to the takeover by William Franzen. Specifically, *China, Glass & Lamps* reported on May 15, 1895, that the plant used red-brick clay rather than sand, had two-man teams instead of three, and added the finish at the “glory hole instead of the ring hole” (Roller 1998). On October 18, however, the *Journal Sentinel* reported that the factory had begun use of its new gas-operated continuous tank, allowing the firm to compete with such major glass houses as the Streator Bottle & Glass Co. and the Illinois Glass Co. In addition, the company had control of “several patents invented by A.P. Ayling” that would reduce the costs of production.

This end of the firm becomes *very* unclear. The reason for the change is unclear, but a new corporation called the Northern Glass Works incorporated on June 12, 1896, apparently taking control of the plant. See the sections on the Chase Valley Glass Co., Wisconsin Glass Co., and A Marked Coincidence, Part 2 (Cream City Glass Co.) for more information on the preceding firms.

Northern Glass Works, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (1896-1898)

On June 12, 1896, William Franzen, Arthur P. Ayling, and Cora B. Ayling incorporated the Northern Glass Works (note “Works”) with a more modest capital stock of \$10,000, replacing the Northern Glass Co. The purpose of this second corporation was recorded as “the manufacture and sale of glass-ware and the leasing and purchasing of formulae and patents for the manufacture of the same” (Incorporation Records). The new firm continued production with only a short break. On June 28, the factory – located at Lincoln Ave., near the Kinnickinnick River – suffered \$10,000 worth of damage from a fire.

On December 30, 1896, *China, Glass & Lamps* reported that the Northern Glass Co. had “assigned. They manufactured beer and mineral bottles, but have been in shaky condition for some time past” (Roller 1998). The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* noted on December 22 that

Michael Seeboth was appointed to take over the distribution of the assets – \$10,790.40, but the liabilities were \$21,218.30 (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* 12/23/1896; 1/7/1897). The Northern Glass Works – at least in this incarnation – was at an end.

The Marine Bank still owned the property but continued to operate the plant – suffering to a small fire on January 22, 1897. Apparently William Franzen remained in charge of the factory during the transition period, although it is unclear whether he operated the plant under his own name or still as the Northern Glass Works. The factory remained the Northern Glass Works, probably until Franzen ceased operations in the 1920s. Everything changed on September 3, 1898, when Franzen ran a notice in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* that he had taken on his son, William R. Franzen, as a partner, the firm now becoming William Franzen & Son, owners of the Northern Glass Works.

Containers and Marks

NGCo or NGCo MILW (1894-1896)

Toulouse (1971:386) dated the use of the NGCo mark from 1894 to 1896, although his explanation was confusing (Figures 1 & 2). Both



Figure 1 – NGCo MILW (eBay)

the scarcity of the mark and the incorporation of the Northern Glass Works in 1896 support his dates.

Peters (1996:9), too, assigned the same date range to bottles with the NGCo or NGCO mark. Peters (1996:57) also cited a Hutchinson

soda bottle from Hartford, Wisconsin, embossed “NGCO WISC” on the front heel. Hutchbook (Fowler 2017) cited four Hutchinson soda bottles, one with “NGCO MILW” on the front heel, another with “NGCo” on the reverse heel, the third with “NGCO” on the reverse heel, and the final one with “WNGCO” on the front heel. Von Mechow (2017) confirmed two of the bottles. There was certainly little consistency in the Northern Glass Co. logos.



Figure 2 – NGCo bottle (Hutchbook)

NGW (1896-1898)

Toulouse failed to list this mark, but Peters (1996:9) suggested that it exists. If so, there were probably few bottles made with the logo, and we have never seen one. The mark may have only been used in 1896, although Franzen may have continued it until his partnership with his son in 1898.

Discussion and Conclusions

Our current research suggests that the Northern Glass Co. was founded in 1894 and supplanted by the Northern Glass Works in 1896. In 1900, William Franzen & Son replaced the Northern Glass Works, although the factory continued to function under that name during the Franzen period. Few bottles have survived marked with “NGCo” or “NGW.” Both historical and empirical evidence support the hypothesis that Franzen used the “WF&S” mark during the Northern Glass Works period and continued to use the mark when the reorganization applied his own name to the corporation in 1900.

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