

Nuttall & Co.

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Emerging from an earlier factory (possibly with the same name), Francis Dixon relocated his Nuttall & Co. factory to St. Helens, Liverpool, England, in 1871 and began production of glass bottles. At some point – still undetermined – the firm became a limited corporation and eventually merged with five other glass houses to form United Glass Bottle, Ltd., in 1913 (see the section on UGB for more information).

History

Dixon & Merson, Thatto Heath, Liverpool, England (1840s-1872)

In the 1840s, Francis Dixon teamed up with his brother-in-law, John Merson, to build a glass factory with two pot furnaces at Thatto Heath, near Liverpool – close to the Ravenhead Terminus of the local canal.¹ Dixon purchased Merson's half for £850 in 1854 (Barker & Harris 1993:356-357; Toulouse 1971:380-381).

In 1859, Thomas Nuttall bequeathed his Nutgrove Hall (a two-story British estate) to Dixon, with the stipulation that Dixon add "Nuttall" to his own personal name. Having no heirs, Nuttall wanted the family name preserved. Dixon thus became Francis Dixon-Nuttall, possibly retiring from the glass business at that time. He was certainly back in the business (if he ever left) by 1869, when John Cannington of Cannington, Shaw & Co. sued him over the use of a patented tank installation (see the section on Cannington, Shaw & Co. for more information on that firm). By this time, the firm was called Nuttal & Co. (possibly from 1859). In 1870, Dixon-Nuttall declared bankruptcy as a result of losing the lawsuit (Barker & Harris 1993:357-358; Toulouse 1971:381; Maria Walsh, personal communication 7/10/2008).

¹ Toulouse (1971:380-381) claimed that the original factory was at Edge Hill Station, Liverpool, in the 1840s. At some point prior to 1852, Dixon moved the operations to Thatto Heath.

Nuttall & Co., St. Helens, Lancashire, England (1871-1913)

Dixon-Nuttall relocated the glass factory in 1870, again as Nuttall & Co., now relocated to a site near Ravenhead Colliery, beside the newly opened St. Helens-Huyton Railway at St. Helens, Lancashire (later, the site of the U.G.B Ravenhead factory). The plant operated six day tanks. Tank No. 5, with 12 rings was one of the largest in England. Business declined radically between 1905 and 1914, when European competition undercut British prices by 10% (Toulouse 1971:381-382).

When Dixon-Nuttall died in 1900, his son, Frederick R. Dixon-Nuttall, took over the business, and this *may* have been when the firm became a limited corporation, although Toulouse (1971:381) stated that the son took over in 1890). By this time, the plant had two tanks, each making pale green bottles with two additional tanks making darker green ware. The plant added a fifth tank in 1899 and a sixth one sometime later. At some point after 1905, the firm installed several Kilner narrow-mouth machines (Toulouse 1971:382). Turner (1938:255) noted that Nuttall-Dixon & Co., St. Helens, England, used seven machines by 1907 – almost certainly the Kilner machines noted by Toulouse. The plant became part of the United Bottle Mfg. Co. in 1913. The use of the hyphenated name may or may not actually reflect a name change in the business.

Ravenhead Factory, United Bottle Mfg. Co., St. Helens, Lancashire (1913-2001)

Nuttall was one of six companies that merged to form the United Bottle Mfg. Co. on March 31, 1913 (Maria Walsh, personal communication 7/10/2008), almost certainly in response to the European price threat. The firm purchased Owens machines as soon as they were available after World War I (Toulouse 1971:383). For more information on United Bottle, see that section.

Containers and Marks

Toulouse (1971:383) noted that:

many “N&Co.” bottles and jars came to the American West during the later mining days, carrying British beer, ale, whiskey, jams, pickles, and other prepared

foods. These bottles are being unearthed in California, Nevada, and other mining states, showing the hand bottle-blowing techniques of the 1880s and 1890s.

“N&Co” trademarked bottles are reasonably plentiful—their business was good.

N&C^o (1872-ca. 1900)

Toulouse (1971:380) attributed the N&Co mark to Nuttall & Co, St. Helens, Lancashire, England – 1872-1913. Jones (1963:[12]) showed the mark as N&C^o 1591 (downward arch) with an offset “keyhole” in the center. The mark was on a bottle made by a three-piece mold (dip mold plus shoulder parts). She, too,

attributed the mark to Nuttall & Co. We recorded similar marks at the 2004 bottle show in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Six bottles had N&C^o in an arch at the top of the base with 1579 (or other 3- or 4-digit numbers) embossed horizontally in the lower area. Most (but not all) had “keyhole” or “teardrop” marks in the center, often at odd angles to the lettering. Most (possibly all) had applied finishes.

We have observed variations of the mark and/or configurations of the mark and codes. The mark can appear with either “^o” or “o” (plain or underlined – but always superscript) in “C^o” (Figure 1). The 3- or 4-digit number is also often in an inverted arch at the bottom of the base. The “N&C^o” was also sometimes accompanied by “S^TH” in an arch below it (Figure 2).



Figure 1 – N&Co (eBay)



Figure 2 – N&Co. St H (eBay)

N&C^o L^{TD} (ca. 1900-1913)

Jones (1963:[16]) showed a cod-stoppered bottle with a base marked N&C^o L^{TD} (downward arch) / {keyhole} / 2863 (horizontal). Her drawings show two variations of the “keyhole” – one with a round “top”; the other looking more like the side view of a nail. We have recorded bottles marked



Figure 4 – N&Co Ltd St H (eBay)

“N&C^o L^{TD} (arch) / {keyhole} / {4-digit number} (inverted arch)” (Figure 3). The actual “L^{TD}” had the “T” in the crook of the “L” and the “D” underlined. An interesting variation of the logo was “N&C^o (S^TH) L^{TD}” (including the parentheses) in an arch with the keyhole and a 4-digit number followed by two dots (Figure 4). Unfortunately, Toulouse did not mention a date when Nutall became a limited partnership, an important consideration in dating this change in the mark.



Figure 3 – N&Co Ltd (eBay)

NUTTALL & CO. MAKERS S^T HELENS (1886-1916)

Von Mechow (2017) noted that the firm also used “NUTTALL & CO (arch) / MAKERS (horizontal) / S^T HELENS (inverted arch)” on the reverse heels of at least three cod-stoppered bottles used by the Biggam Bros. at Yakima, Washington (Figure 5). According to a Worthpoint seller, Biggam Bros.:



Figure 5 – Nuttall & Co (eBay)

began business in 1886 as the Yakima Mineral Springs Company, with several different proprietors thru [sic] 1910. In 1911, James Biggam became owner (with his brother) of this . . . Soda Works. An ad in the 1911-1912 Yakima County Business Directory showed them as owners of the Yakima Mineral Springs Company and Yakima Brand Soda Waters . . . located at the End of East Chestnut. The Biggam Bros sold out in 1916 to Robert A. LaBissoniere.

“Keyhole” or “Tear Drop” mark (ca. 1870-ca. 1895)

Although Jones (1963[16]) used the term “keyhole” to describe this mark, it actually looks more like the side view of a nail or a teardrop because of its sharp point (Figure 6). On bases where the embossing is strong, an indentation in the head of the “nail” may appear as a hole. This is easy to see in at least four examples (Figure 7). Toulouse (1971:556-557) preferred the term “tear drop.” Toulouse noted that this was probably a mold cutter’s “flourish” or “signature.” It has been found on bottles both with and without the N&C^o mark and was still present on the N&C^o L^{TD} mark. If this actually *is* a mold cutter’s “signature,” then the same man made virtually all of the molds used by Nuttall & Co. for at least a twenty-year period – possible, but unlikely.



Figure 6 – Teardrop (Ft. Laramie)

Toulouse also stated that the “tear drop” was found on bottles with the letters “LBS” encircling it. However, the few examples we have found with those letters had a dot or mamelon in the center rather than a “tear drop.” This may be another case of misreporting, or we may just have not found a tear drop example. The meaning of the letters was unknown to Toulouse and remains such to us (see the Other L section for an example).



Figure 7 – Hollow teardrop (eBay)

Ayres et al. (1980:43-44), however, considered that the Toulouse evidence (not reported in full here) was insufficient and suggested that the user of the mark should be considered uncertain, and the “keyhole” should be dated to the ca. 1870-ca. 1895 period. The presence of the mark with the known Nuttall logos, however, is sufficient for a probable identification in our opinion. In any case, the date ranges given by Toulouse and the Ayres researchers are quite similar, except for the extension at the end of the Toulouse dates.

It is worth noting that we have not discovered the teardrop on any machine-made bottles – with or without the “N&Co” logo. All bottles with Owens machine scars would have the UGB mark. Thus far, we do not know what types of scars were left by the Kilner machines.

UGB + R (1913-at least 1971)

This mark was used by the former Nuttall & Co. plant when it became the Ravenhead unit of the United Bottle Mfg. Co. from 1913 until at least 1971 (Toulouse 1971:381). Although Toulouse illustrated the Ravenhead logos as “UGB / R,” the examples we have seen were much more complex. An eBay auction included a photo of a base embossed “A663 / R 6 / HAIG 9 / UGB” (Figure 8). The “R” in the second line indicated Ravenhead, and the “HAIG 9” identified Haig Scotch. See the section on the United Bottle Mfg. Co. for more information about the history and the marks.



Figure 8 – UGB + R (eBay)

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Discussion and Conclusions

We have yet to locate a source for the change to a limited partnership (the use of “Ltd.” in the name), but we *may* have a clue in Nuttall’s death in 1900. When his son took charge, he may have brought in some outside investment to beef up the firm. Future research should concentrate on discovering this point in time. The use of the name “Dixon-Nuttall Co.” by Turner is also interesting.

Sources

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