

Poughkeepsie Glass Works

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The Poughkeepsie Glass Works began production in 1880 at the first continuous tank built in the United States. The plant made a variety of bottles and jars, and the firm prospered for the first thirty years, falling into financial difficulties in 1912 that led to bankruptcy in early 1914. C.T. Nightingale purchased the property and renamed the company as the Empire Milk Bottle Co. to make his patent milk bottles. He closed the operation in 1916.

Histories

Poughkeepsie Glass Works, Poughkeepsie, New York (1880-1913)

In 1879, a group of businessmen from Rochester and Clyde, New York, created the Anglo-American Glass Co. at Poughkeepsie, bringing Robert Good, Sr., from England to construct a continuous tank for the plant – the first of its kind ever built in the U.S. The group purchased a plot of land formerly used as a whaling dock at the foot of Hoffman St. in July, and the factory opened in March 1880 at the first effective continuous tank in the U.S. (Roller 1997).

When the Poughkeepsie Glass Works incorporated in November 1880 with a capital of \$85,000, William C. Ely was president with Henry C. Wisner as vice president, George O. Baker as secretary, and Evan R. Williams as treasurer and superintendent. Other incorporators were Charles W. Reed, Charles D. Ely, and George H. Hoyt.¹ On December 1, 1881, fire destroyed most of the plant, causing \$200,000-250,000 worth of damage with only \$190,000 insured. The fire was apparently caused by an “incendiary” (arsonist), but – because the continuous tank was essentially undamaged – the firm rebuilt and resumed production in January of 1882, returning to the production of bottles and jars. Postcards from 1884-1886 show drawings of jars embossed “MASON’S / PATENT / NOV. 30TH / 1858” and suggested that buyers look for the CFJCo

¹Most of the group operated the Clyde Glass Works as Ely, Sons & Hoyt from 1886 to 1904. For more on that company, see the section on the Other E marks.

monogram on the jars. This shows that Poughkeepsie Glass was producing jars for the Consolidated Fruit Jar Co. (Roller 1997; von Mechow 2018).² See the section on Consolidated for more information.

The *New York Times* (8/26/1892) reported that negotiations settled a strike by the workers in August of 1892, just one of the constant series of strikes and labor disputes the plagued Poughkeepsie Glass throughout its existence. Another fire caused \$15,000 in damage to the factory on October 23. The plant operated two seven-ring continuous tanks at that time. Again, the firm rebuilt the plant and had it back in production by September 4, 1893 (Roller 1997; von Mechow 2018).³

The factory again burned to the ground on April 9, 1897 – at a loss of \$100,000 (insured for \$90,000) – and the firm replaced the plant with one built of brick and iron on Dutchess Ave. While the operation was being rebuilt, the company leased a factory at Middletown, New York, as well as having the Clyde Glass Works fill some of the orders. The new building began production in October 1897. At that time, the plant made “prescription and druggists ware, beers, sodas, minerals, wines, brandies, flasks, proprietary medicine goods, milk jars, packers and preservers’ ware” (Roller 1997; von Mechow 2018).

Charles Ely died in 1903, and the firm reorganized. Henry C. Wisner became the president with Charles P. Buckley as vice president, George O. Baker as secretary and attorney, William G. Baker as treasurer and superintendent, and Robert Good, Sr., as general factory manager. George H. Hoyt and George K. Diller were additional directors (Roller 1997).

The *American Glass Review* (1934:161) listed the company as making a “general line of bottles and containers” in 1904, and a 1906 listing placed the firm under the heading of Jars, Fruit, Glass and Jars, Milk, Glass. The plant operated three continuous tanks with 26 rings by 1907 (National Assoc of Mfrs. 1906:337; Roller 1997). The *Newark Advocate* (3/25/1911)

² Both Roller (1997) and von Mechow (2018) provided numerous entries from primary sources, such as newspapers, glass factory journals, and city directories.

³ This was the first report we have found for the resumption of operations. The factory may have been completed earlier.

described the operation in 1910: “No. 3 tank at the Poughkeepsie Glass Works . . . was placed in operation recently with three machines, after being idle since 1903. No. 1 tank is being rebuilt and No. 2 is operating steadily” (von Mechow 2018). Later that year, the *Bridgeton Evening News* (8/8/1910) reported that the plant was “operating this summer on milk bottles. The machines have been running double shift.

By March 1911, the *Evening News* (3/29/1911) observed that Tank No. 3 “was placed in operation recently after being idle since 1903. No. 1 tank is being rebuilt and No. 2 is operating steadily.” The plant began testing a new machine for making beer bottles by May (*Bridgeton Evening News* 5/23/1911). By October, the *Evening News* (10/10/1911) commented that Tanks No. 2 and No. 3 were running on machines, but the hand operations had ceased – with no notice about when they would resume. The plant shut down in October, but the *Evening News* (12/18/1911) reported that “a new company recently acquired the plant and steps may be taken toward resuming in the near future.” Unfortunately, the paper did not state the name of the new company.

Business decreased dramatically in 1912 – possibly connected to Robert Good’s move to Swedesboro, New Jersey (replaced by Isaac Good) – and the plant closed temporarily.⁴ In June 1913, Poughkeepsie obtained a contract with the Empire Bottle & Supply Co. to produce milk bottles and a preserve jar contract for the Wallace Co. (*Bridgeton Evening News* 12/4/1911; Musso 2018). That year, the factory used three continuous tanks with 28 rings to make a “general line” of bottles by both semiautomatic machine and hand production (*Journal of Industrial and Engineering Chemistry* 1913:953). Another source for the same year noted three tanks with 24 rings. J.C. Otis was president with M.O. Hutton as secretary and William H. Hoyt as treasurer and manager (Roller 1997).

According to the *Evening News* (8/22/1913), Harry Bates had resigned his position with Whitall Tatum to become the plant manager for Poughkeepsie Glass, almost certainly part of the new management plan in 1913. In November, the *Evening News* (11/25/1913) reported that the plant was operating seven machines, exclusively making milk bottles.

⁴ Good’s son, Robert Good, Jr., became an integral part of the glass business in Denver, Colorado. See the section on the Western Glass Mfg. Co. for more information on the son. Isaac Good may have been another relative.

The extra orders and new manager only created a temporary respite. Poughkeepsie Glass was plagued by financial difficulties from 1912 until the ultimate failure of the firm. John Sprague had been president in 1913, but he relinquished that title to C.T. Nightingale by January of 1914 in an attempt to stave off insolvency proceedings, but the board, back under John K. Sprague, filed voluntary bankruptcy on February 20. Edward E. Perkins was assigned as referee, and the plant was sold at public auction on April 7, 1914 (von Mechow 2018). It seems probable that production ceased sometime in 1913.

Empire Milk Bottle Co., Poughkeepsie, New York (1914-1916)

The Empire Bottle & Supply Co. apparently purchased the plant, reorganizing as the Empire Milk Bottle Co., with C.T. Nightingale as president. The plant now made flint and green beer, soda, mineral, and milk bottles as well as machine-made packers' and preservers' ware (Musso 2018; Roller 1997). The *American Glass Review* (1934:161) stated that the firm went out of business in 1916. See the Other E section for more on the Empire firms.

Containers and Marks

During the majority of the plant's life, the Poughkeepsie Glass Works seems to have produced jars for other sales outlets. The factory made fruit jars for the Consolidated Fruit Jar Co. from at least 1884 to at least 1886 – as shown on post cards from the period. Consolidated had a long life, so Poughkeepsie may have made jars for the firm for its entire existence. Other advertised jars included the SMALLEY FULL MEASURE AGS QUART (see the A.G. Smalley section in the A volume), TRADEMARK FULL MEASURE REGISTERED QUART for W.H. Yager & Co. of Binghamton, New York, and HANSEE'S PH PALACE HOME JAR for R.H. Hansee – although the dates the Poughkeepsie produced these jars – except Hansee's (see below) – are unclear (Roller 1997).

On July 14, 1906, Wm. R. Farrington advertised in the *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle* that “the ‘Best Mason’ fruit Jars are the square shaped ones made by hand in the Poughkeepsie Glass Works. We sell them-and guarantee to deliver every jar perfect.” Unfortunately, we do not know if these jars had any identifying marks. The Ackley China Co. advertised in the June 23, 1913, *Daily Eagle* that it had “Purchased the Entire Stock of the Poughkeepsie Glass Works Quart

Sized Root Beer Bottles with patent stoppers. These bottles usually sell at \$1.25 per dozen. This entire lot to be sold at 79c PER DOZEN. Order at once. Fruit Jars, Jellies, and the celebrated Rex Rubber Jar Rings” (both quoted in von Mechow 2018). The Wallace Co., too, offered a large quantity of fruit jars on October 10, 1913, that it had purchased on sale from Poughkeepsie Glass.

HANSSE’S PALACE HOME JAR

The Monticello (New York) *Republican Watchman* reported on June 15, 1900:

On Friday of last week Dr. R.H. Hansee began the manufacture of his “Palace Home Jar” with the automatic fastener. He has the moulds for pint and quart jars, and at present the Poughkeepsie Glass Co. are doing his work. Samples of the patent are being sent to various parts of the United States for the purpose of advertising it, and soon larger concerns of the country will have the opportunity to pass judgment upon its usefulness and durability. Mr. Hansee expects to sell his patent as soon as possible. Should he not sell by September 1st he will put the jar on the market as fast as it can be manufactured. At present he is having a machine constructed for the manufacture of fasteners that will turn out 40 per minute.



Figure 1 – Palace Home Jar (North American Glass)

Toulouse (1969:232) described the lid as a “glass straddle-lip top seal, closed by lever with fulcrum in wire bail.” The jar was embossed “HANSEE’S (slight arch) / PH monogram / PALACE HOME JAR (all horizontal)” on the front (Figures 1 & 2). Toulouse noted that Rimmon H. Hansee received Patent No. 639,559 for the cover and dated the jars ca. 1900. Hansee applied for his patent for a “Jar-Fastener” on August 25, 1899, and received the patent on December 19 of that year (Figure 3).



Figure 2 – Palace Home Base (North American Glass)

Roller (1983:148; 2011:230) was more informative. Roller noted:

The patent drawing shows a coiled spring clamp, but the jars are found with clamps as shown on the trade card. In 1901, Hansee, a patent medicine merchant, offered his jar patent rights to Ball Bros. Glass Mfg. Co., who did not buy them. Perhaps Hansee’s 1900 prices (f.o.b. Poughkeepsie) of \$9.50 per gross of quart jars compared to Ball’s 1900 price of \$5.00 per gross of quart screw-top jars had something to do with his desire to sell out.

Creswick (1987a:80) illustrated the jar, showing the lid as having a PH monogram, and added that the base was embossed “PAT. DEC. 19 1899” (Figure 4). She noted that the jar was colorless but “will turn amethyst.” She named Poughkeepsie Glass Co. as the maker.

PO’KEEPSIE (ca, 1900-1913)

We found a colorless flask embossed “DR / SPECIAL / FLASK” in a triangle on the front with “TRADE” outside the left angle of the triangle and “MARK” beside the right angle. The base was embossed “BRANCH / UNION 62 (in a circle) MADE / PO’KEEPSIE” (Figure 5). The flask was mouth blown, although it could have been made anytime during the period when Poughkeepsie was in business.

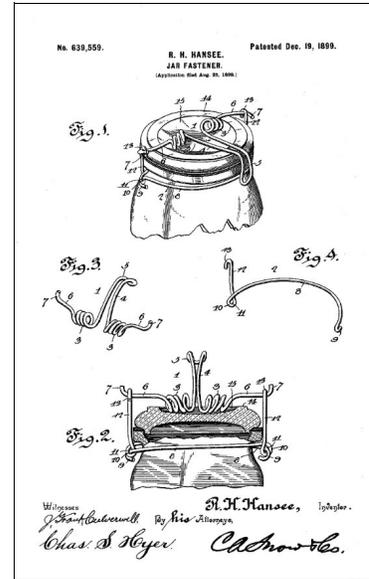


Figure 3 – Hansee 1899 patent

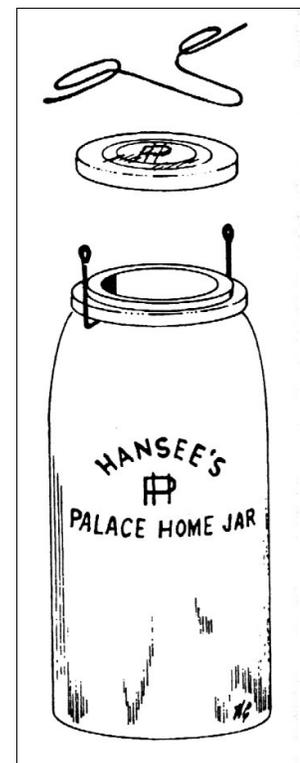


Figure 4 – Palace Home Jar (Creswick 1987a:80)



Figure 5 – Po'keepsie

Von Mechow (2018) included ten examples of champagne beer bottles embossed on their bases with “BRANCH 62 (arch) / UNION {letter in circle} MADE (horizontal) / PO’KEEPSIE (inverted arch)” (Figure 6). The letters could extend between at least A and G as well as one with OK in the circle. Unfortunately, we could only find dating information for two of these firms. One, Burke & Hastings of Clinton, Massachusetts, was a soda bottler, in business from at least 1906 to 1908. Robichaud & Gauthier of Gardiner, Massachusetts, was a liquor dealer that opened in 1900 and remained in business until at least 1904 (Figure 7). This suggests a date range for this bottle style in the early 1900s.



Figure 6 – Po'keepsie (von Mechow 2018)



Figure 7 – Po'keepsie (eBay)

PGCO (poss. 1910-1913)

Some eBay sellers have offered flasks that were apparently mouth-blown into a two-piece mold with a post bottom. Embossed inside the post was “UNION (downward arch) / P.G.CO. (horizontal) / MADE (upward arch).” One example included the bottle volume (16 oz.), with “16” between “UNION” and “P.G.CO.” and “OZ” between “P.G.CO.” and “MADE.” One bottle appeared to be solarized to a light amethyst color. One side was embossed “GUARANTEED / FULL PINT.” The use of such designations was forbidden by law after Prohibition.

The 10 oz. designation in one post-bottom appears to have been a later add on. Both the “10” and “OZ” are smaller than the other letters and tucked in between the union-made logo. The volume designation was not required by federal law until 1913 (Lockhart 2006). Thus, the bottles had to have been used during that period, although they could, of course, also have been made either earlier or later. Von Mechow (2018) attributed a champagne beer bottle embossed

“3 P.G.CO.” on the base to the Poughkeepsie Glass Co. The user, a liquor dealer called J.F. Ryan & Co. (Boston) was listed in the 1900 city directory and remained in business until at least 1926. This all suggests a late usage of the “PGCO” logo – *if* the manufacturer was, indeed, Poughkeepsie Glass Works.

Ring (1980:353) listed a PGCo mark on an Old Mission Bitters, Kidney, Liver, Stomach and Blood Purifier bottle. The product was made by the Old Mission Bitters Co., San Francisco, California. This was probably a misreading of the IPGCo mark or a typographical error (see Pacific Glass Co. section).

Massachusetts P Seal (1909-1913)

In 1909, the state of Massachusetts awarded the Poughkeepsie Glass Co. the use of “P” in their milk bottle seal program (von Mechow 2018). Massachusetts instituted the first “seal” program in the U.S. in 1900, requiring that milk bottles be certified to contain the correct measure (e.g., one full pint). Initially, each dairy had to bring in its bottles to the sealer, but, in 1909 the law shifted the onus from the dairies to the manufacturers. In order to sell milk bottles in Massachusetts, a glass house had to obtain a “seal” that it embossed on the milk bottles. Although these were placed just about anywhere on the bottles in the beginning, by 1914, all had shifted to the shoulder, usually in the form of “MASS (arch) / P / SEAL (inverted arch)” (Figure 8). See Lockhart et al. (2017) for more information.



Figure 8 – Mass P Seal (Al Morin)

P3 (1913, poss. to 1916)

In 1910, New York was the first state to initiate a number system to identify milk bottle manufacturers. Each glass house wishing to sell milk bottles in New York was assigned a number and had to use one or more identifying letters as well, embossing these on the heel or base of each bottle. The system soon spread to other states and quickly became a de facto national numbering system. See Lockhart et al. (2017) for more discussion. The state of New Jersey assigned the P3 designation to the Poughkeepsie Glass Co. in 1913 (Waldron 1913:17).

This mark is probably *very* rare, only used for part of a year – although use of the number possibly may have continued with Empire until 1916. The only example we have found – one in our possession – was embossed on the heel roll with “P-3 EMPIRE” – showing a clear connection between the mark, Poughkeepsie Glass Co., and the Empire Bottle & Supply Co. (Figure 9).



Figure 9 – P-3

Discussion and Conclusions

The Hansee’s Palace Home Jar was almost certainly made by Poughkeepsie Glass for a few years beginning in 1900. We have not discovered specifically how long production of these jars lasted but probably not beyond 1904 or 1905. The firm used the term “PO’KEEPSIE” along with a union mark of “BRANCH 62” on both liquor flasks and champagne beer/soda bottles during the ca. 1900-1913 period, possibly earlier.

The identification of the similar “UNION MADE” and “PGCO” basemarks on other flasks and at least one beer/soda bottle is a bit more tenuous. It is possible that the operating firm was called the Poughkeepsie Glass Co. at some point, even though the plant remained “Works.” However, this is speculation based on the similarity of flasks and champagne beer bottles to the ones marked “PO’KEEPSIE.” Assuming that these were made by Poughkeepsie Glass, they were likely produced late in the sequence, probably ca. 1910-1913.

The milk bottle marks are easier to date. Solely listed in 1913, the “P3” could only have been used in that year. The Massachusetts P Seal, however, could have been used anytime between 1909 and 1913 – and possibly continued by the Empire Milk Bottle Co. until 1916. With the exception of “PGCO,” these marks are solidly tied to the Poughkeepsie Glass Works.

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