

Severn Glass Co. and Southern Glass Co. Who Used the S.G.Co. Mark?

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The Annapolis Glass Co. (1885-ca. 1890) and the Severn Glass Co. (1898-1901) occupied a site along the Severn River at Annapolis, Maryland. The older plant had a stormy existence, and the latter firm was short lived. Although glass markings for the earlier firm are questionable, the Severn Glass Co. almost certainly embossed the “S.G.Co.” logo on some of its products. The same initials however, fit another pair of glass houses – both at Atlanta, Georgia: the Atlanta Glass Co. (1887-1891) and the Southern Glass Co. (1894-ca. 1895). At least one set of initials on a bottle fits the Southern Glass Co.

Histories

Annapolis Glass Co., Annapolis, Maryland (1885-1889)

The Annapolis Glass Co. incorporated on May 12, 1885, with a capital of \$3,000. L.A Gassaway was the first secretary. The firm began construction of the factory at Horn Point on July 21, and the plant blew its first tentative glass on September 1, 1886, soon followed by full operations – making green and amber glass at a single continuous tank with three rings. One of the earliest orders consisted of amber Duffy’s Malt Whiskey bottles (*Annapolis Evening Capital* 9/1/1886; von Mechow 2019). On November 16, 1886, J. Wirt Randall, president of the the glass firm announced in the *Annapolis Evening Capital* that the Duffy’s Malt Whiskey Co. had become bankrupt, but it was able to pay for the final shipment of bottles before shutting down – thereby saving the glass house from a crippling blow. Duffy’s continued under new management.

Glass factory workers – members of the Knights of Labor – struck in January 1887, but the management settled, and business resumed. The plant became idle in 1889, and production remained at a standstill until the firm offered the plant for sale on July 28, 1891, but withdrew the offer, when the only bid was for \$4,000. The firm again offered the business for sale on

September 9, 1893. Again the sale fell through, but the group tried once more – also apparently in vain – on September 15, 1894. The Severn Glass Co. acquired the property in 1897 (Roller 1998; Von Mechow 2019).

Severn Glass Co., Annapolis, Maryland (1898-1901)

On July 23, 1897, the Severn Glass Co. incorporated, with a capital of \$10,000. The plant was noted as “in operation” on September 22, 1898. An 1898 ad listed a sales office in Baltimore. By at least the following January (1899), the plant used a single continuous tank with eight rings. In August, the firm elected Samuel R. Frazier, George C. Barton, A.A. Stites, Charles Weiss, Thomas Kane, Samuel Carman, and John Walker as directors. Barton was the general manager. The officers enlarged and remodeled the plant in September of 1900 (Roller 1998; Von Mechow 2019).

According to the *Evening Capital* (12/6/1901), the company entered receivership on December 5, 1901, because it was unable to compete with larger factories. By that time, the glass works “had been running as an independent co-operative factory, most of the stock being held by workers.” However, one of the directors contradicted the reason in the *Capital* on December 9, saying that “the real cause of the suspension . . . was that the company were working on short capital and there was money out, which it was impossible to get in.” Clearly, the factory produced no glass after 1901.

The *Evening Capital* (4/29/1902) announced a meeting of president Thomas S. Kane and eighteen stockholders on April 30, 1902, to discuss how to liquidate the company. Although we have not discovered the details, the plant was demolished during the month of December (1902), and the Old Dominion Glass Co., Alexandria, Virginia, purchased all the molds and tools from the Severn plant in late 1904 (*Evening Capital* 10/29/1902; Roller 1998; Von Mechow 2019).

Atlanta Glass Co., Atlanta, Georgia (1887-1891)

Reed (1889:465) discussed the early development of the Atlanta Glass Co.:

The Atlanta Glass Works Company was incorporated in 1887, the incorporators being S.M. Inman, E.P. Howell, D.W. Curry, A.G. Candler, J.L. Pinson, Theodore Schuman, H.G. Hutchinson and J.W. Rankin. The officers of the company are J.W. Rankin, president; H.G. Hutchinson, vice-president; J.L. Pinson, secretary and treasurer, and A.E. Finkel, superintendent. The capital stock of the company was authorized to be \$50,000, with the privilege of increasing it to \$100,000. Since the organization the capital has been increased to \$60,000. The factory is outside the city limits on South Pryor street, where are employed one hundred and fifty hands, the weekly pay roll amounting to \$1,500, and the weekly output of bottles and chimneys amounts to about \$3,000.

Atlanta Glass advertised in the Proceedings of the Georgia Pharmaceutical Association in 1890 and 1891 as “Manufacturers of Druggists’ Glassware.” The plant made “flint prescription bottles, lamp chimneys, green and amber ware” and noted, “private molds for proprietary medicine a specialty” (Georgia Pharmaceutical Association 1890:79). The following year, the glass house replaced “lamp chimneys” with “long-neck panels” and stressed that they manufactured “all styles of Druggists’ Glassware, making a special feature of our lettered prescription ware.” Of special interest to Georgia drug stores, the firm noted that, “Owing to our short haul we can furnish you with glass quicker, with less breakage and better freight, than any other house” (Georgia Pharmaceutical Association 1891:124).

Seegar & Gurnsey (1890:144) listed the Atlanta Glass Co. as making pressed flint glass and lamp chimneys in 1890. However, the first plant burned on December 30, 1891. The company began rebuilding in January but went into receivership by March. A new corporation, the Rankin-Nichols Glass Co., bought the plant by March 17 and had resumed operations by April 13. J.W. Rankin was the president of the new operation with L.R. Vandiver as vice president, F.W. Scott as secretary and treasurer, and William Nichols as manager. By December, however, this group, too, had gone into receivership, and the Southern Glass Co. took control of the property (Roller 1997). The *Columbus Weekly Enquirer* explained on March 5, 1892, that because Rankin had been the prime mover for the second operation, the stockholders did not want to continue the business after Rankin’s recent death. It is pretty certain that the plant was never rebuilt.

Southern Glass Co., Atlanta, Georgia (1894-ca. 1895)

James Rogers purchased the Atlanta Glass Co. in December of 1893 and quickly incorporated the Southern Glass Co. with F. Bloodworth as president, Rogers, himself, as vice president and general manager, and R. Gray as an additional incorporator (Roller 1997). According to the *Tacoma Daily News* (2/23/1894), however, the plant did not light its fires until February 1, 1894, and actual production likely began about mid-month. On February 18, 1894, Southern advertised in the *Columbus Daily Enquirer* that the plant's specialty was fruit jars – although the firm also made bottles (Figure 1).

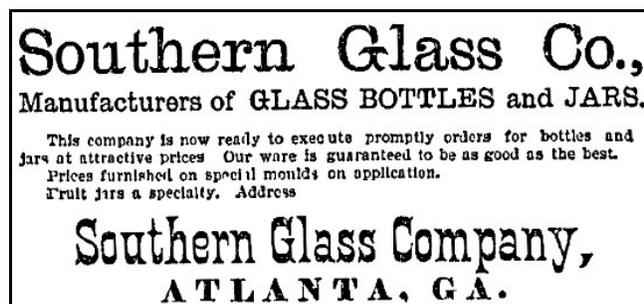


Figure 1 – Southern Glass Co. ad (*Columbus Daily Enquirer* 2/18/1894)

Little else has been recorded about the Southern Glass Co., except that it sold a half carload of ½ pint and pint flasks along with pint and quart round whiskey bottles to the South Carolina Dispensary in 1894. The receipt for the bottles showed the word “Southern” superimposed over “Atlanta,” suggesting that the Rankin-Nichols company had continued to use the Atlanta Glass Co. name. The Dispensary bottles did not contain any manufacturer’s marks (Teal 2005:96). We have discovered no further information about the company, although it likely closed soon after 1894.

Containers and Marks

A poster on the door of a residential house in the Eastport section of Annapolis noted that the structure was the head office of the former Annapolis Glass Co. and Severn Glass Co. A photo on the poster showed a house and, presumably, the factory next door. Three glass containers, a colorless, strap-sided Union Oval flask, an amber beer bottle, and an aqua “bowling pin” soda bottle, appeared in a second photo. Although no text accompanied the photos, this suggests that one of both of these factories made the strap-sided variation of the Union Oval flasks.

AGCo (1885-1889)

The AGCo mark was embossed on the bases of half-pint and quart flasks in a “smooth, large concave disk.” Both flasks were amber in color. McKearin and Wilson marked the glass house as “unidentified” and suggested that these flasks were “attributed to the last quarter of the 19th century.” Each flask was marked with an anchor in a “depressed circular panel” or “medallion” on the front (McKearin & Wilson 1978:666-668). McKearin and Wilson (1978:667-668) rated the quart flask as “comparatively scarce” with a “narrow round collar, lower bevel” finish. They rated the half-pint container as “common” despite their comment that they had “not seen this flask.” They described the mark on the quart flask as having full punctuation, but left all punctuation out of their description of the smaller flask. Unfortunately, these flasks were two of the few that they failed to illustrate.

Some strap-sided Union Oval flasks offered on eBay – probably the same ones noted above – had an anchor on the front and “A.G.Co.” initials on the base. It is possible that the mark was used on flasks by the Annapolis Glass Co. (Figures 2 & 3). The dates of operation for Annapolis Glass – 1885-1889 – fit with the period



Figure 3 – AGCo base (eBay)

noted by McKearin and Wilson. The poster on the Eastport Walking Tour (see above) suggested that either the Annapolis Glass Co. or the Severn Glass Co. (or both) made flasks. We add that the scarcity of the flasks fits a small factory

with local distribution. We also question the classification by McKearin and Wilson of “common” for the smaller flasks; it is inconsistent with their statement in the same sentence that they had never seen an example.



Figure 2 – AGCo flask (eBay)

Von Mechow (2019) noted the “A.G.Co.” logo on the bases of two champagne beer bottles, one used at Baltimore, Maryland, the other from Weldon, North Carolina. He assigned the marks on these two bottles to the Annapolis Glass Co. (Figure 4). We studied these

“A.G.Co.” logos (and others), publishing our results as the “A.G.Co. Logo” in the “A” section. Our findings are summarized in Tables 1 and 2. See the “A.G.Co. Logo” section for details.



Figure 4 – AGCo base (NPSWACC)

We have revised our thinking slightly since then. Although the Atlanta Glass Co. was a much more likely candidate for making the strap-sided flasks used by the South Carolina Dispensary (our only choice in the A.G.Co. Logo section), the Annapolis Glass Co. – with the connection to both the Naval Academy and the ocean – seems like a better choice for similar flasks with “A.G.Co.” basemarks and a large anchor embossed on the front. Either firm could have made the Grover Cleveland flasks. Also, see the Discussion and Conclusions section.

Table 1 – Glass Factories with A.G.Co. Initials

Glass Company	Location	Date Range	Products
Alexandria Glass Co.	Alexandria, VA	1905-1916	beer, soda, wine, brandy, packers
Anacortes Glass Co.	Anacortes, WA	1910-ca. 1923	packers; fruit jars (poss. sodas)
Annapolis Glass Co.	Annapolis, MD	1885-1889	green & amber glass
Atlanta Glass Co.	Atlanta, GA	1887-1891	prescription; lamp chimneys
Atlas Glass Co.	Washington, PA	1896-1902	fruit and product jars
Augusta Glass Works	Augusta, GA	1890-1894	flasks, druggist, soda, beer

S.G.Co. (1898-1901)

The Southern Glass Co., Vernon, California, was a well-known user of the “S.G.CO.” logo on some containers during the early 20th century. The logo was either in a segmented parallelogram (1923-1926) or in a horizontal line (1924-1925), generally on machine made soda bottles or mouth-blown wax-sealer fruit jars. Unlike most of the bottles discussed below, the ones from Southern had a capital “O” in “CO.” See the section on the Southern Glass Co. for more information.

Table 2 – Probable Users of the A.G.Co. Mark by Bottle Style

Bottle Type	Glass Company	Date Range
flasks and fruit jars	Atlanta Glass Co.	1887-1891
	Annapolis Glass Co.	1885-1889
Hutchinson soda or beer bottles	Alexandria Glass Co.	1905-1916
crown soda bottles	Alexandria Glass Co.	1905-1916
blob-top beer bottles	Alexandria Glass Co. or	1905-1916
	Annapolis Glass Co.	1885-1889
unknown round and peppersauce	Annapolis Glass Co. or	1885-1889
	Atlanta Glass Co.	1887-1891
fruit jars	Whitney Glass Works, poss. for	ca. 1885-1918
	American Grocery Co.	ca. 1905-1918

Von Mechow (2019) listed 19 beer bottles with the SGCO mark, 18 from Baltimore, Maryland – one from Savannah, Georgia. An eBay photo showed one of the Baltimore bottles listed by Von Mechow, with



Figure 6 – Beer heel (David Whitten)

“S.G.CO.” embossed on the heel (Figures 5 & 6). These bottles were mouth blown with one-part “blob” finishes. The Savannah bottle was embossed with the name of the Georgia Brewing Assn. According to Van Wieren (1995:63), the brewery was

open in Savanna from 1895 to 1902 – dates that match the Severn Glass Co. quite well (Von Mechow 2009).

At least one Hutchinson soda bottle was embossed “S.G.Co. / 4” on the base, with a lower-case “o” in “Co.” Von Mechow (2009) also noted the mark on a Hutchinson mineral water bottle from Philadelphia.



Figure 5 – Beer bottle (David Whitten)

Of even greater interest to this study, a number of strap-sided Union Oval flasks were embossed “S.G.Co.” in a central sunken basal area, sometimes superimposed over an anchor (Figures 7 & 8). These



Figure 8 – SGCo base (David Whitten; eBay)

have been found in amber and aqua colors with both post- and cup-bottom baseplates. According to von Mechow, flasks with the “S.G.Co.” marks have typically been found in East Coast contexts – especially in the Baltimore area – and Whitten (2019) ascribed the use of the logo to Severn (probably based on von Mechow). Thus, there is little doubt that these flasks were made by the Severn



Figure 7 – SGCo flask (David Whitten)

Glass Co. See the section on the Clyde Glass Works for an interesting comparison between strap-sided flasks embossed “S.G.Co.” and those with “C.G.W.” basemarks.

Discussion and Conclusions

We originally sought out nationally known factories with “S.G.Co.” initials and found candidates in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, as well as the Southern Glass Co., Richmond, Virginia, and the Southern Glass Co. of Atlanta, Georgia. In a personal communication (1/15/2009), von Mechow noted that there were no known beer bottles from Richmond, Virginia, with “S.G.Co.” marks (eliminating Southern Glass at Richmond); none from Washington, DC, and only one from Philadelphia. We would expect any bottles produced in Pennsylvania or New Jersey to show up in Philadelphia in at least equal quantities with those in Baltimore, yet by far most of the known bottles were used by Baltimore breweries. This virtually eliminated all factories but the one in Annapolis.

In addition, the various Baltimore breweries using bottles with the “S.G.Co.” marks were all in business during the ca. 1892-1901 period. For example, the Standard Brewing Co. was open between 1884 and 1899; Germania Brewing Co. – 1892-1899; and Lion Brewing Co. 1895-1901 (Van Wieren 1995:133-135). Thus, the timing fits almost perfectly with the operating dates for the Severn Glass Co. (1898-1902), and a Baltimore office strongly suggests business there.

A single oddity remains to be explained: the bottle used in Savannah, Georgia. There are two possible explanations, neither fully satisfactory. First, the bottle may have been made by the Southern Glass Co., Atlanta, Georgia. For this to have worked, the brewery would have had to have been in business a year earlier than shown above – which is certainly a possibility. However, a check of Southeastern glass factories during the 1895-1902 period revealed that only three glass companies were in business at that time, and none had initials that would suggest an SGCo mark. Second, the Severn Glass Co. really made the bottle and shipped it to Georgia. Either is possible.

The strap-sided flasks with “S.G.Co.” basemarks were pretty obviously made by the Severn Glass Co., but the two apparently more recent prescription or medicinal bottles remain unexplained.

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