

## **The Sheldon-Foster Glass Co. and Related Companies**

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

Thomas K. Sheldon, Adelbert M. Foster, Elmer G. Foster (Adelbert's father), and Charles L. Dean were variously intertwined in a series of glass works and glass jobbers that produced and/or sold medicinal containers, including drug store bottles along with a more general line of bottles and jars. Also see sections on Dean, Foster & Co.; A.M. Foster & Co.; Marion Flint Glass Co.; Sheldon-Foster Glass Co.; Upland Co-Operative Glass Co.; and Upland Flint Bottle Co. All these companies can trace their ancestry back to Joseph Foster, who opened a factory in Stoddard, New Hampshire, in 1842. Foster's sons (George, Charles, Wallace, and Joseph Jr.) built the New Granite Glass Co. at Mill Village (Stoddard) about 1860, and George went on to help found Dean, Foster & Co.

We use the word "related" somewhat loosely in this title. The Sheldon Glass Co. may have been entirely unrelated to the Sheldons involved in the Sheldon-Foster Glass Co. The timing of the Sheldon Glass Bottle Co., however, suggests a connection with Sheldon-Foster.

### **Histories**

#### **Sheldon Glass Co., Bradford, Pennsylvania (1893)**

Located at Bradford, Pennsylvania, the Sheldon Glass Co. incorporated on January 18, 1893, with a capital of \$15,000. F.M. Sheldon, Morris W. Sheldon, William C. Peebles, A.J. Edgett, and George A. Berry were the directors, intending to make champagne bottles. Note that these were not the same Sheldons involved with Sheldon-Foster, and they may have been completely unrelated. William C. Peebles was the manager (Hoenig 2008; *National Corporation Reporter* 1893:509; *Patriot* 1/19/1893).

The factory opened on February 9, 1893, but was in receivership under T.J. Melvin by November 17. Thomas Smart & Co., Ellenville, New York, acquired the plant and continued to operate in Bradford until at least January 5, 1894 (Hoenig 2008; Roller 1998a). Smart & Co. may have continued to use the Sheldon name, although the *Bridgeton Evening News* may have

used the older name when it reported the troubles between the Sheldon Glass Co. and a disgruntled worker on January 23, 1896. The plant was not listed in the 1904 glass factory directory, so the actual closing date may have occurred any time between 1894 and 1904.

### **Sheldon-Foster Glass Co., Gas City, Indiana** (1894-ca. 1902)

The Sheldon-Foster Glass Co. incorporated in July 1894, with a capital of \$40,000, and took over the plant of the Marion Flint Glass Co. at Third and H Streets, adjacent to the Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad, in Gas City. Thomas K. Sheldon was the president with Adelbert M. Foster (see section on A.M. Foster & Co.) as vice president and Charles Eshelman as secretary and treasurer. The plant made drug and liquor bottles and maintained offices in Chicago (Bethman 1991:77; Roller 1994:32; 1997a). In 1895, the plant began the manufacture of “Homeopathic and screw top vials” (*American Manufacturer* 1895:734).

Marion Flint Glass was already one of the main suppliers for Dean, Foster & Co. and A.M. Foster & Co., both jobbers for prescription bottles, druggists’ supplies, and other containers. When Sheldon-Foster acquired the Gas City plant, that factory continued to supply the two jobbers. We have not discovered whether Marion Flint Glass continued to furnish some of the bottles as well.

The Lewis Publishing Co. (1896:857) presented a biographical sketch of Sheldon that included a brief and somewhat cryptic statement: “In 1887 [Sheldon] moved to Marion, Indiana, where he became connected with the Marion Flint Glass Company, with which, in 1892, his present plant was consolidated. In 1894 a division of the property was made, and the Gas City works were accepted by Mr. Sheldon as his portion.” To understand the quote, a bit of background is necessary (also see the section on the Marion Flint Glass Co. for a more complete history).

The Marion Flint Glass Co. incorporated in 1887, with Thomas K. Sheldon as the president plus George Frederick “Fred” Seitz and Charles E. Seitz as other incorporators. The term “present plant was consolidated” refers to that corporation. In 1892, Marion Flint built its second factory at Gas City – the one discussed in this section. Although we have never found an

explanation, there was a split between Sheldon and the Seitz family in 1894, with Fred Seitz becoming president of Marion Flint at Marion, while Sheldon retained the Gas City plant “as his portion.” Sheldon brought Adelbert Foster into the firm, hence the name Sheldon-Foster.

In 1897, the plant used four pots to make “green bottle[s] and hollowware,” and that number increased to eight pots the following year. The total remained at eight until 1902, when it rose to 12. A September 1898 listing, however, noted that the plant had one continuous tank with 14 pots (*National Glass Budget* 1897:7; 1898a:7; 1898b:3; 1900:11; 1901:11; 1902:11).

According to one of the Foster descendants (cited in Roller 1997a), Sheldon-Foster moved from Gas City to Chicago Heights, Illinois, in 1901. However, the *American Glass Review* (1934:155) listed the plant in Gas City in 1904, making glass at a single furnace with 14 pots. A note stated that the plant was abandoned ca. 1908. The Glass City Window Glass Co. incorporated on January 4, 1904, and occupied the Sheldon-Foster Marion location, although it closed about 1906.

### **Sheldon-Foster Glass Co., Chicago Heights, Illinois (1901-1912)**

As mentioned above, Sheldon-Foster likely moved to Chicago Heights in 1901, although the firm may have maintained the Gas City plant for a few years. The plant used 15 pots in 1901 (*National Glass Budget* 1901:11). In 1904, the factory made prescription, proprietary, and packers’ ware at one furnace with 14 pots and one continuous tank (*American Glass Review* 1934:155). This is such a close match with the 1904 description of the Gas City plant that it probably indicates that the firm had moved by that time. We are unable to resolve these conflicting accounts with current information.

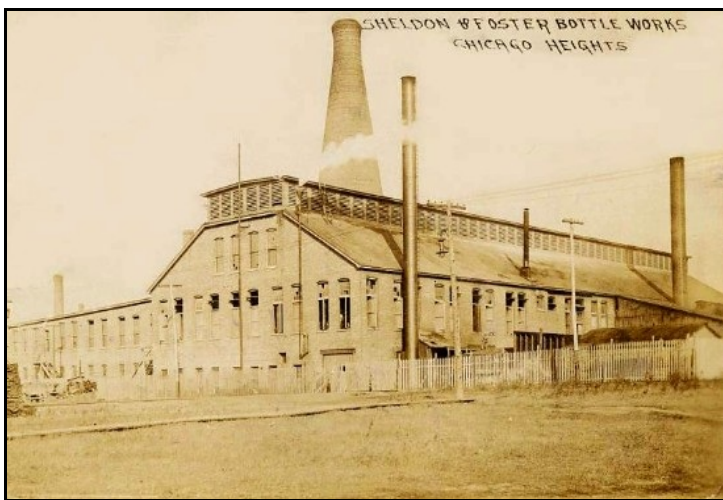


Figure 1 – Sheldon-Foster, Chicago Heights (Chuckman’s Photos)

In 1905, the plant used one furnace with 15 pots and one continuous tank with 12 rings to make its products, and that listing continued until 1911 (Figure 1). That year, John M. Levis was the president with Charles Eshelman as secretary. The sales offices remained in Chicago (Bethman 1991:77; Roller 1997a; State of Illinois 1911:512). Sheldon-Foster also made fruit jars (Tomas Publishing Co. 1912:2726). The Schofield Brothers of Marion, Indiana, took control of the business in October 1912 and replaced the furnace with a second continuous tank adding an additional 12 rings. The brothers changed the name to the Chicago Heights Bottle Co. in January 1913 (Roller 1998b). See the section on the Chicago Heights Bottle Co. for more information.

### **Sheldon Glass Bottle Co., Shirley, Indiana (1915-1920)**

The *Portland Sunday Telegram* reported on September 12, 1915, that the Sheldon Glass Bottle Co. had “recently purchased the Shirley, Ind., plant of the Woodbury Glass Company. Roller (1994:93; 1997b) listed the firm in 1917, making flint prescriptions, vials, packers and flasks at one continuous tank with nine rings. The factory closed by 1920. The plant was not listed in the 1916 Thomas Register but appeared in the 1917 edition and continued to be listed until at least 1921<sup>1</sup> (Thomas Publishing Co. 1916; 1917:729; 1921:780). The plant made prescription and food bottles in 1918 (*Glassworker* 1918:12).

Although we have not discovered what went awry, the plant was idle by the end of 1920. Receiver George T. Tindall placed a notice in the January 1921 issue of *Glass Worker*, offering the glass house and all the equipment – including “two Nestor Blowing Machines” for sale on February 26. The Western Glass Co., of Streator, Illinois, acquired the property in 1923 and began production of plate glass in July (*Glass Industry* 1923:161).

Currently, we have not been able to determine whether this was Thomas K. Sheldon, whom was associated with Foster, but the timing is right; the Sheldon-Foster Co. closed at the end of 1912. There is no known mark for this company, and we have discovered no later associations with Sheldon and the glass industry.

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<sup>1</sup> The Thomas Registers are notorious for continuing to list closed factories.

## Containers and Marks

Griffenhagen & Bogard (1999:41) discussed the Chicago Oval, a bottle patented by A.M. Foster and made for both A.M. Foster & Co. and Dean, Foster & Co. by Sheldon-Foster. These carried the “A.M.F. & Co.”; “D.F. & Co.”; and “D.F.&D.” basemarks – see the sections of both of these firms for more details.

### Milk Bottles

Toulouse (1971:266) stated that the Gas City plant made milk bottles beginning in 1905 and that the milk bottle business transferred to the Bell Bottle Corp. in Fairmount, Indiana, in 1912. Giarde (1980:108) noted that Sheldon-Foster made milk bottles from 1905 to 1912, but “whether the company used a mark on its milk bottles remains unconfirmed.” He suggested that the IGCo in a diamond was the most likely mark used (citing the Illinois Glass Co. as one of the partners beginning in 1900) and dated the mark on milk bottles at 1905 to 1912. At this point, the BRG has not found a milk bottle with the IGCo-in-a-diamond mark (or any other Illinois Glass Co. log) on it.

By 1913, Sheldon-Foster was granted the number “3” in the Wisconsin system for milk bottle codes (*Stevens Point Journal* 1913:1). Wisconsin required all glass manufacturers who sold bottles to Wisconsin dairies to register and commit to state standards. However, the only number “3” we have discovered on milk bottles was a “P3” heelmark. The state of New Jersey assigned the “P3” designation to the Poughkeepsie Glass Co. in 1913. See the section on the Poughkeepsie Glass Co. for more information.

It seems highly probable that Sheldon-Foster began the transition into milk bottle manufacturing in late 1912, when the Schofield Brothers took control of the plant. Bottle production likely began in early 1913 – by the Chicago Heights Bottle Co. In other words, it is highly improbable that Sheldon-Foster ever made a single milk bottle.

## S.F.G.Co. (with “rays”) (1895-ca. 1907)

Bethman (1991:77) noted “S.F.G.Co.” with rays and dated it from 1895 to 1913 (Figure 2).



Figure 3 – SFGCo - DF&Co. bases (eBay)

Bethman (1991:546, 549) illustrated two examples of the mark, both dated ca. 1895. The bottles are identical with those embossed “D.F.&CO.” with rays, bottles made by Sheldon-Foster for Dean, Foster & Co. (Figure 3). Preble (2002:458) showed a single example of this mark, dated 1895-1907). This was the same Eastside Oval made for Dean, Foster & Co.



Figure 2 – SFGCo bottle (eBay)

## S-FGCo (1895-ca. 1897)

The “S-FGCo” mark, in an arched format, was recorded by Miller (1999:104) on the base of a drug store bottle and dated 1898 (Figures 4 & 5). The mark was almost certainly used by the Sheldon-



Figure 5 – S-FGCo base

Foster Glass Co. (1895-1913). Preble (2002:520, 657, 700) illustrated four examples of this mark in the 1895-1897 period with one outlier extending to 1912. It is likely that the mark was used during the early days of Sheldon-

Foster. An eBay auction offered a coffin flask for sale that was embossed S-FGCo on the base. This suggests that Sheldon-Foster made flasks as well.

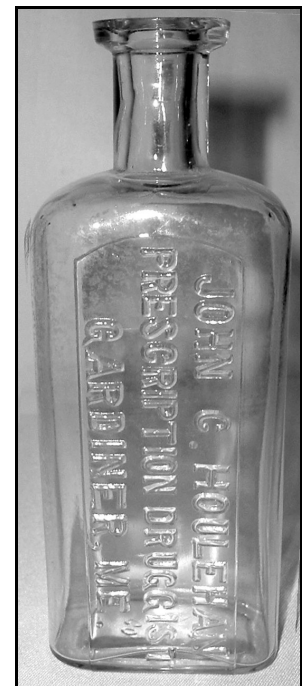


Figure 4 – S-FGCo bottle (eBay)

## SHELDON (ca. 1900-ca. 1907)

According to Bethman (1991:78):

This trademark for a certain style prescription bottle appears to have been used from about 1900 to 1906. I think the bottle style was name[d] after Mr. Sheldon, who was a partner with A.M. Foster in the Sheldon-Foster Glass Company. It is probable that this style bottle was produced by the Sheldon-Foster Glass Company. The “SHELDON” style of prescription ware is shown in the 1900 Dean, Foster & Co. catalog . . . which indicated that they sold this particular style of bottle.



Figure 6 – Sheldon (eBay)

Although the bottle was illustrated, the catalogs gave no description or sizes.

Bethman (1991) illustrated numerous examples of bottles embossed on the bases with a backwardly-slanted SHELDON (Figures 6 & 7). These were all dated between 1900 and 1907, and all were clearly the same bottle style. Another illustration was presented by Berge (1980:96), although he misidentified the bottle as having belonged to Dr. Leonard L. Sheldon, a Boston physician of the 1870s.

The Dean, Foster & Co. 1901 catalog (Freeman 1968:X8 [plate]) showed an example of the bottle with SHELDON embossed on the base as did the 1907 A.M. Foster catalog (Figure 8). The bottle was rectangular in cross section with

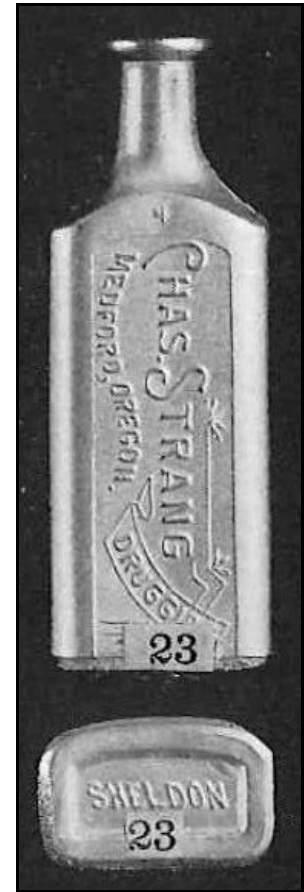


Figure 8 – Sheldon (A.M. Foster 1907 catalog)



Figure 7 – Sheldon base

Bergraaf and Southard (1998:430) showed a single bottle with this mark. Griffenhagen and Bogard (1999:128) noted the mark as being used by Sheldon-Foster in 1888, but they probably confused it with the same mark used by Dean, Foster & Co.

### **PARIS** (1900-ca. 1911)



Figure 9 – Paris (eBay)

In the section on A.M. Foster & Co., we discussed the bottles embossed “PARIS” in back slanted letters on their bases (Figure 9). The lettering was very similar to the “SHELDON” Ovals discussed above and were almost certainly made by the Sheldon-Foster Glass Co. for both A.M. Foster and Dean, Foster & Co. These appeared in the 1907 A.M. Foster & Co. catalog (Figure 10). The bottles were used between 1900 and ca. 1911. For more discussion, see the section on A.M. Foster & Co.



Figure 10 – Paris (A.M. Foster 1907 catalog)

### **PEARL** (1900-ca. 1911)

Although we discussed the “PEARL” mark on both prescription bottles and jars in the Other P section, we did not disclose the probable manufacturer. Drug store bottles with PEARL embossed on their bases are fairly common (Figure 11). Because the letters in the mark are backwardly slanted and *very* similar to the basemarks of SHELDON and PARIS, this logo was probably used by Sheldon-Foster. The “P” is almost identical to that letter in PARIS, and the “A” is very similar. Likewise, the “E” is practically identical to that letter in SHELDON.



Figure 11 – Pearl

Griffenhagen and Bogard (1999:45) identified the intermediary but not the factory:



If one or two words are blown in the base of a prescription bottle, such as *Pearl* [note that PEARL is in all capitals on actual bottles, and the letters are back-slanted – not in italics], it usually indicates the name of the bottle. The Pearl Oval sold by Meyer Brothers Drug Co. in St. Louis in the 1900s does not identify the name of the glass factory, even though there was a Pearl Glass Co. in Pennsylvania about 1910.

The Pearl Glass Co., Clarion, Pennsylvania, made proprietary medicine, packers' and preservers' ware in 1907 (Thomas Publishing Co. 1907-1908:160) – although we have found no evidence the Pearl Glass used any mark besides its full name. In 1908, the plant was purchased by the Berney-Bond Glass Co. (see the Berney-Bond and Other P sections for more information).

Although this bottle was not carried in the traditional distribution firms for Sheldon-Foster – A.M. Foster & Co. and Dean Foster & Co. – the similarity of the letters in the basemarks between PEARL and the two known Sheldon-Foster bottle names discussed above make the identification of Sheldon-Foster as the producer reasonably certain. We have assigned this mark the same date range as the PARIS discussed above.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

Although the Sheldon Glass Co. was probably unrelated to Sheldon-Foster, the Sheldon Glass Bottle Co. is a logical follow-up. The SFGCo, S-FGCo, and Sheldon marks were almost certainly used by the factory, and both “PARIS” and “PEARL” on prescription bottle bases were almost certainly made for both Dean, Foster & Co. and A.M. Foster & Co.

The name “Sheldon” and the bottles offered in the Dean, Foster & Co. catalog forges a strong bond between Dean, Foster and Sheldon-Foster. This bond is, of course, strengthened with the active presence of both Foster and Sheldon in each firm. In addition, both D.F.&Co and SFGCo marks are surrounded with identical “rays” extending outward from the marks to the edge of the bases. Thus, it is virtually certain that Sheldon-Foster made some of the bottles sold by Dean, Foster & Co. and A.M. Foster & Co., both jobbers rather than manufacturers. See Table 1 in the Dean, Foster & Co. section for a list of probable suppliers.

## Acknowledgments

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