Western Glass Mfg. Co.

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The Western Glass Mfg. Co. and its predecessors are well known to insulator collectors, but the company also made numerous bottles. The publication of Ted Oppelt’s book (2005) on Colorado soda bottles opened a new line of inquiry into manufacturer’s marks. Opplet provided new information about known marks (especially the “buckle” used by the Western Glass Mfg. Co.). Recently, enough data have been collected to confirm a much greater variety of marks than was previously recorded. This paved the way for still more revelations about the mark and its accompanying numbers, especially with model numbers that appear on bottles with no other manufacturer’s marks.

Histories

Denver Art and Plate Glass Co., Denver, Colorado (1887)

Denver Flint Glass Co., Denver, Colorado (1887-1890s)

J.W. Whitney and S.D. Hayward organized the Denver Art and Plate Glass Co. in 1886, and completed the plant in 1887. In December, however, the name was changed to the Denver Flint Glass Co., but the plant was generally called the Valverde Glass Works. Production apparently ceased during the early 1890s (Miller 2007:3). An 1892 listing included a Denver Glass Co. but gave no other details (American Glass Review 1927:16). The firm apparently never used any form of manufacturer’s mark.

Valverde Glass Works, Denver, Colorado (1896-1899)

Although Robert Good, Jr., arrived at Denver in 1895, he probably did not rent the defunct Denver Flint Glass Co. until the following year. Good continued to call the plant the Valverde Glass Works, but he never used that as a logo on his merchandise (McDougald & McDougald 1990:99-100). On April 16, 1896, the Denver Republican quoted Good as saying:
We are running full and can’t keep up with our orders. Our factory is making all the soda bottles used in Denver. Orders are in now for about 100,000 soda bottles, beer bottles, and pickle goods also form a large part of our output. This fall we expect to produce the bulk of the fruit jars used in Colorado and ultimately in the entire west. (Reprinted in McDougald & McDougald 1990:99-100)

Fire caused by a bursting tank destroyed the plant on June 27, 1899. The structure was a one-story stone building owned by P.C. Tomson, and the damage was estimated to be more than $5,000. (Miller 2007:3; Miller & Katonak 2005).

One area that needs further research is the name of the plant under Good. Secondary sources have listed the name as the Denver Flint Glass Co. Although the 1898 Snaborn map used the title “The Denver Flint Glass Co. (R. Good Jr. Lessee),” the name actually used by Good in his 1897 ad was the Valverde Glass Works (McDougald & McDougald 1990:95-97). This suggests that the name used by Good was always Valverde Glass Works, and the Denver Flint Glass Co. title was only used by Whitney and Hayward. The Valverde Glass Works was still listed in 1900 as using 6 pots to make its produces (National Glass Budget 1900:11).

Containers and Marks

Oppelt (2005:7) noted that Robert Good’s Valverde Glass Works produced soda bottles (and possibly other containers) along with insulators, but no bottles have been found embossed with Valverde, Good, or any other mark that would suggest the company. McDougald and McDougald (1990:99-100) illustrated several examples of insulators marked GOOD or ROBERT GOOD, JR.

GOOD, R. GOOD JR., and PETTICOAT (1896-1899)

According to MacDougald & MacDougald (1990:96), Valverde Glass produced insulators in a variety of colors that included “amber-swirled aqua, with some of the amber-swirled glass being homogenized into a brilliant green.” These were embossed “GOOD,” “R. GOOD JR.,” and “PETTICOAT” on the skirts (Figures 1 & 2).
20 (probably other numbers) on Base (1896-1899)

Our study of model numbers associated with the “buckle” logo of the final company in this series also discovered that the same numbers – without the “buckle” – were also embossed on identical containers. Some of these were dated much earlier than the Western Glass Mfg. Co., the final firm, and were almost certainly made by this earlier company.

Western Flint Glass Co., Denver, Colorado (1899-1900)

On September 14, 1899, a group of investors incorporated the Western Flint Glass Co. with a capital of $25,000, and the plant began production on October 11, 1899, renting the same building from Emma Tomson, the widow of P.C. Tomson, noted in the Valverde section. Frank Ashley was the president with William S. Hurd as vice president, John Porter as secretary and treasurer, and Galigher as general manager. Ashley also operated the Western Chemical Co., across the street, and Western Flint made at least one bottle for Western Chemical (Miller 2007:3; Roller 1997).

The glass plant made its products at a single tank with three rings. While the firm was successful in the production of insulators, it was less successful with bottles. The investors had capital, but they were not experienced glass men, so they never were able to control the quality of the color of their products. While color consistency was of little importance in insulator manufacture, bottlers wanted much more uniformity. More investors entered the company, and the name was changed to the Western Glass Mfg. Co. on November 8, 1900, because a Western Flint Glass Co. was already in existence in Eaton, Indiana (Jewels of the Wire 2005; Miller 2007:3; Roller 2005 & Etsy)
The Western Flint Glass Co. was still listed (using six pots) in 1901, with an increase to 12 pots the following year (*National Glass Budget* 1901:11; 1902:11). The *Budget* was obviously a couple of years behind on its choice of names.

**Containers and Marks**

According to Oppelt (2005:7), the Western Flint Glass Co. “manufactured bottles, insulators, fruit jars, and so on. . . . insulators have been found marked ‘W.F.G.Co.’ . . . no bottles with this mark are known.” Clint (1976:36) added that the plant produced amber, green, and colorless bottles.

**W.F.G.CO. (1899-1900)**

The firm made insulators of various colors, embossed on the skirts with “W.F.G.CO.” (Figure 3 [also see Figure 1]).

**20 (probably other numbers) on Base (1899-1900)**

These model numbers were discussed in the Valverde section above but probably continued in use throughout the brief life of the Western Flint Glass Co.

**Western Glass Mfg. Co., Denver, Colorado (1900-1909)**

The Western Flint Glass Co. incorporated on November 8, 1900, with a capital $500,000. As with the earlier firm, Frank Ashley remained as president with John Porter still as secretary, Merrit Gano as treasurer, and Michael Nester as plant manager. By February of 1901, the factory operated two continuous tanks with 11 rings. With the business running full blast in 1901, a 14-year-old boy working at the factory assaulted Nester with a hot blowpipe striking him repeatedly in the head and face. Although management fired the boy and his relatives, Nester faced a long recovery. Fire destroyed the roof and parts of the plant on December 28, 1901, but the damage was immediately repaired, and the firm purchased the factory lots from Emma
Nester left in February of 1903 to take over the Kansas Glass Works, a recent acquisition of his family’s firm the Obear-Nester Glass Co. In 1904, Western made a “general line of bottles, milk jars” (American Glass Review 1934:175; Roller 1997). On May 5, 1906, another fire broke out in the gas-producing building, quickly burning out of control and destroying the entire plant at a loss of $150,000. The factory ceased the production of milk bottles and insulators that year, probably as a result of the fire. The plant was listed in the 1909 Thomas Register (1909:198) as making “prescription, beer, wine, soda, brandy, proprietary medicine, preservers’ [and] packers’” bottles. Sales declined steadily beginning in 1907, causing the company to lower wages. When ensuing disputes with the workers could not be settled, management closed the factory in 1909 (Miller & Katonak 2003). Although other sources stated that the plant had closed in 1909, it was still listed in the 1912 edition of the Thomas Registers, a publication notorious for continuing to enumerate closed glass houses (Thomas Publishing Co. 1912:477). The American Glass Review (1975:175) noted that the company was “out of business since 1914,” but this date was also incorrect.

Containers and Marks

Oppelt (2005:7) stated that the Western Glass Mfg. Co. embossed beer and liquor bottles with “W.G.M.Co.,” but used the “buckle” mark (see below) to identify soda bottles. The 1909 Thomas Register (1909:198) listed the firm as making prescription, beer, wine, soda, brandy, proprietary medicine, preservers’, and packers’ bottles.

W.G.M.Co. (1900-1909)

Toulouse (1971:535) never identified this mark. He stated, “Several companies could fill these initials, translated . . . ‘— Glass Manufacturing Co.’ . . . but there is not an iota of evidence that any companies actually used these initials. . . . Without proof the initials must be considered unknown.” He dated the mark 1880 to 1910 based on the manufacturing techniques. Toulouse made the error of believing that since he did not find evidence that it did not exist.
According to Oppelt (2005:7), the Western Glass Mfg. Co. used the “W.G.M.Co.” mark to identify liquor and beer bottles but not those used for soft drinks (Figure 4). Clint (1976:36-37) explained in more detail that some bottles were marked with “simply the initials W.G.M.Co. in small letters on the bottom of the bottle,” but, “it is uncertain exactly when the company used their W.G.M. Co. trade mark, although one bottle . . . dates it at around 1906.” Clint (1976:130, 154) illustrated two bottles with the “W.G.M.Co.” logo (Figure 5). One, a whiskey bottle with a two-part, applied “brandy” finish, was dated 1906-1907. The other was a crown-finished beer bottle with a tooled crown finish dated 1907-1908.

Berge (1980:65) illustrated a single example with “W-CM-Co.” embossed horizontally across the center of a round base (Figure 6). He identified the colorless base as belonging to a relish bottle, but it was more likely used for soft drinks. He noted that the mark was used by the Williamstown Glass Mfg. Co. (1866-1917), although Western is much more likely on a bottle found in the West. Possibly, Berge’s “C” was actually a “G,” and the hyphens may have been glass flaws – or it may have been the mark of some other glass house.

“Buckle” (1900-1909)

Western Glass Mfg. Co. used a trade mark known as the “buckle.” On a 1909 letterhead, the buckle was shown that included the company name and Denver (Figure 7). The letterhead
advertised bottles, insulators, and battery jars (McDougald & McDougald 1990:99). According to Clint (1976:37), the buckle “symbolizes the corporate seal, which was registered on January 22, 1901.” The buckle was embossed on bottles made by the company (Figure 8). Oppelt (2005:7) described and illustrated the “buckle” but reported that it was only used on soft drink bottles. He noted that the “buckle” was also found on soda bottles from Utah, Wyoming, and New Mexico. Berge (1980:135, 138, 149) illustrated several examples of the mark found at the Simpson Springs State Station in Utah (including one bottle that was square in cross section and two flasks). Obviously, the “buckle” appeared on more than just soda bottles.

Miller (1999:13) and Lockhart (2000) both illustrated two bottles used by the Douglas, Arizona, branch of Houck & Dieter – an El Paso liquor dealer and soda bottler. Both were marked with the “buckle.” Miller dated the two bottles in a range from 1904 to 1906. Lockhart extended the dates from 1903 to 1907. Although the typical buckle – as used on bottles – was an oval bisected by a horizontal line, at least one example was more complex, very similar to the actual trade mark (Figure 9).

10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 70, or 100 (plus 5 & 15) (1896-1909)

Oppelt (2005:7) provided the key to a question that had baffled one of our researchers for several years. He stated:
The Western Glass Manufacturing Company used mold numbers 10, 20, 40 on several shapes of Hutchinson soda. These numbers are on the front near the base. The mold numbers 30 and 50 were used on other types of bottles such as Baltimore loop or the later crown tops.

Oppelt (2005:52-72) supported his contention well – with illustrations and descriptions of 85 Colorado bottles. Six of these were embossed on the base with the buckle mark and on the heel with 20. An additional five bottles were embossed on the heel with 20 but had bare bases. Two bottles had both buckle and 40; three more had 40 alone. All of these were Hutchinson-style bottles. Oppelt also provided photos and descriptions of three crown-finished bottles, respectively, embossed with 10 (heel), 30 (heel), and 70 (heel) plus the buckle on the base.

Clint (1976) had earlier presented even more evidence in 66 illustrations of two-digit numbers (and three of the single digit, 5) accompanying the buckle mark. All of the bottles were topped by tooled finishes. A total of 22 bottles (including flasks, Hutchinsons, and bottles with crown finishes) – marked with the “buckle” – were accompanied by no number. The consistency of the numbers as applied to bottle styles strongly suggests that each number represented a distinct style of bottle.

Clint’s dates for the bottles suggest that virtually all style numbers were used throughout the company’s tenure from 1900 to 1909. Clint also added the number 5, embossed on the front heels, to the list of sodas and showed that bottles in the 50 series were available with crown, blob, or Baltimore Loop finishes. Finally, Clint (1976:102) illustrated an interesting variation in the 30 mark. This one had a vertical line through the “0” to make it into a “buckle” logo (Figure 10).

Wood (1998; Wood & Lockhart 2020) illustrated three Hutchinson bottles embossed on the reverse heel with 15 and on the base with the buckle. All varied from a smoky colorless to a solarized amethyst color. Two other Hutchinsons with the buckle on the base and 40 on the front heel were used in Santa Fe and Santa Rosa, New Mexico (Wood 1998; Wood & Lockhart...
The Arizona bottles with the buckle embossed on the base also have numbers at the front heel (Figure 11). The Hutchinson is embossed 20 on the front; the crown bottle with 100 (Lockhart 2000; Miller 1999:13).

Additional Hutchinson bottles from the Lynn Loomis collection showed other characteristics from Western Glass Mfg. Co. Along with the bottles shown in Wood (buckle embossed on the base and either 20 or 40 on the front heel), three bottles were embossed with the buckle on the base and 15 on the back heel. In addition, the collection contained bottles without the buckle on the base but embossed with 10, 20, or 40 on the front heel (Figure 12). A final, unusual placement included two bottles embossed on the bases with 15 and the back heel with 19 and another embossed on the base with 15 and the back heel with 99 (Figures 13 & 14). These last examples may have nothing to do with Western Glass. Thus, we can at least add the buckle plus 15 on the back heel to the list of known Hutchinson marks by Western Glass.

A comparison between the Oppelt photos and photos of New Mexico Hutchinson bottles from the Lynn Loomis collection was enlightening. All Hutchinson bottles embossed with 20 (heel) or 20 plus the buckle were notably the same style. The style seems to have been offered with two distinct finishes. The differences in finishes, however, occurs with both markings. Similarly, both bottles marked 40 and those marked 40 plus buckle were clearly all the same style.
Likewise, all three examples of Hutchinson bottles (Loomis collection) marked with 15 on the back heel and the buckle on the base were the same style with “beer-mug” bottoms (i.e., decagonal bases). Only the 15 is currently know to have been embossed on the reverse heel. Thus, it is evident that the two-digit numbers on the obverse or reverse heels of bottles made by the Western Glass Mfg. Co. are catalog or style numbers. The number 20 style seems to have been the most popular with Colorado bottlers.

Currently, we can comfortably state that the following numbers equate to specific bottle styles:

Hutchinson
10, 15, 20, 40

Crown
5, 30, 70, 100

Crown or Baltimore Loop
50

Clint’s (1976) illustrations also added additional information about numbers with no accompanying buckle. The 20 series was embossed on bases in both large and small formats. The date ranges of the bottles, however, is enlightening. Clint’s combined date ranges for 11 bottles from 20 series (basal markings) with no buckles extends from 1896 to 1900 (with a single outlier reaching to 1910). The 20 series embossed on heels (12 examples) was given a combined range of 1897 to 1909.

Clint (1976) also showed two 40-series Hutchinson bottles (one embossed on the front heel, the other on the back), dated 1902-1907. Crown-finished variations included two 30s (front heel – dated 1898-1899) and four 50s (front heel – dated 1897-1902). The various date ranges combined with the bottle styles suggests that the same models were made from about 1896 to 1909. Since Western Glass Mfg. Co. did not begin business until 1900, another glass company may have used the same design (possibly even the same molds) prior to that time. The likely contenders are the Western Flint Glass Co. and Robert Good’s Denver Flint Glass Co.
(Valverde Glass Works). Thus, we now have a probable way to identify at least some of the bottles produced by the earlier two companies.

Kyte (2005:8, 12, 17-18, 21) showed two Hutchinson bottles marked with 20 on the front heel, one with 20 on the base, and two with 40 on the front heel. All of these were used by companies in Utah, and all fit within the 1900-1909 date range. None of these were accompanied by the “buckle.”

The 20-series numbers on bases are of particular interest. These date from 1896 to 1900. This suggests that the basal marking was *only* used by either Good’s Valverde Works or Western Flint Glass. The heelmarks with no buckle may have been from either company, but the basal marks are a good indicator for the earlier companies.

**15 on Base**

Another interesting embossing is found on the bases of at least four New Mexico Hutchinson bottles (see Figures 13 & 14). The number 15 was embossed on bases with 19, 20, 99, or nothing embossed on the heel (reverse or side). These are very similar (although not identical) in style to the Hutchinson bottles embossed with the 20 on the front heel and the buckle. The style, however, is very different from those bottles embossed with 15 on the reverse heel and the buckle on the base. Clint (1976) did not show a single Colorado bottle with a 15 basemark. These are not necessarily made by Western Glass, but the similarity of the numbering system calls for their inclusion here. Also see the discussion about the number 15 above.

**Other Numbers on Colorado and Utah Bottles**

Clint (1976) and Kyte (2005) also showed several other numbers embossed on Colorado and Utah bottles. Although we cannot currently claim to make any identifications based on these numbers, they are presented in Table 1.

The Bottle Research Group has determined that heelmarks of 10, 15, 20, and 40 were used by the Western Glass Mfg. Co. on Hutchinson bottles – often in conjunction with the well-known buckle trademark. However, the Western Glass Mfg. Co. was only in business from
November 1900 to 1909. The 15 basemark, however, could not have been used by Western Glass because its New Mexico user, Harsch, only used the term “A. Harsch” from 1886 to ca. 1888.

Table 1 – Colorado Bottles Only Marked with Numbers (after Clint 1976 and Kyte 2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Location of Number</th>
<th>Finish</th>
<th>Manufacturing Technique</th>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>heel</td>
<td>Hutchinson</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>1906-1909</td>
<td>34 (Kyte)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.02</td>
<td>heel</td>
<td>Hutchinson</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>ca. 1903</td>
<td>10 (Kyte)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>base</td>
<td>Hutchinson</td>
<td>tooled</td>
<td>1884-1889</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>base</td>
<td>Hutchinson</td>
<td>tooled</td>
<td>1891-1893</td>
<td>158, 165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33'02</td>
<td>back heel</td>
<td>Hutchinson</td>
<td>tooled</td>
<td>1902-1908</td>
<td>101, 188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>base</td>
<td>Hutchinson</td>
<td>applied/tooled</td>
<td>1890-1914</td>
<td>104, 137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.02</td>
<td>back heel</td>
<td>Hutchinson</td>
<td>tooled</td>
<td>1890-1904</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>back heel</td>
<td>crown</td>
<td>tooled</td>
<td>1910-1915</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>front heel</td>
<td>crown</td>
<td>tooled</td>
<td>1910-1911</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>566</td>
<td>back heel</td>
<td>crown</td>
<td>tooled</td>
<td>1901-1910</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>793</td>
<td>back heel</td>
<td>crown</td>
<td>tooled</td>
<td>1913-1915</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* It is possible that codes ending in .02, ‘02, or -02 could have been date codes for 1902. The Illinois Glass Co. may have tried that system during 1901-1903 but gave up on it.

Although more evidence would be nice, it seems likely that these numbers were used by the previous firms that led to Western Glass. In 1887, J.W. Whitney and S.D. Hayward opened the Denver Art and Plate Glass Co., but renamed it the Denver Flint Glass Co. in December. Despite the term “flint,” the factory made soda, beer, and pickle bottles, aqua in color. To keep track of his bottle styles, Good could have picked up the numbering system from them or could have devised it himself. Fire destroyed the plant in June 1899, but a new group of investors rebuilt the factory and reorganized as the Western Flint Glass Co. Based on the bottles used by Harsch, it now seems highly likely that the model number 15 on the base was used by the Denver Flint Glass Co.
Discussion and Conclusions

Table 1 and the evidence presented above make it quite clear that our study of number codes on bottles is far from complete. Lockhart et al. (2005a:55, 58-50) discussed the similar use of catalog codes by the Illinois Glass Co., and the Bottle Research Group has noted numerous other examples throughout this Encyclopedia. This use of catalog (or model, sometimes called mold) codes to identify bottle types as well as the manufacturing company may prove useful in identifying bottles with embossed numbers but no manufacturer’s marks.

In the case of the Western Glass Mfg. Co., it is clear that the plant used at least two manufacturer’s marks as well as catalog codes on bottles with and without the company logo and that earlier firms – the Denver Flint Glass Co., the Valverde Glass Works, and the Western Flint Glass Co. – used some of those model numbers as well.

Acknowledgments

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