

Bellaire Bottle Co.

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For the most part, the Bellaire Bottle Co. seems not to have used a mark. However, the firm embossed its initials on selected bottles.

History

Bellaire Bottle Co., Bellaire, Ohio (1882-1922)

The Bellaire Bottle Co. was incorporated on October 14, 1881, with a capital of \$25,000. Julius Armstrong was the initial president, with John Kelley as secretary and Thomas K. Sheldon as the factory manager.¹ The plant was under construction by November and planned to make vials, bottles, and flasks. By February 1882, the factory was operational, using 80 men and boys on the ten-pot furnace (Cranmer et al. 1890:485; Roller 1998).

The *Crockery & Glass Journal* (1883:18) reported that the factory was making prescription bottles in 1883. The plant was “flush with orders and are turning out flasks and prescription ware to their full capacity” in 1885 (*American Glass Worker* 1885:2). On January 15, 1885, *Crockery & Glass Journal* reported the Bellaire’s election of directors: Thomas K. Sheldon, J.R. Wickline, J.A. Evans, W.A. Boyce, N. Fox, T.K. Smith, and George W. Yost. Smith was now president, with Yost as secretary. Sheldon remained as manager (Roller 1998).

Later in 1885, Thomas B. Smith became president with George W. Yost as secretary, but Sheldon again remained as manager (Roller 1998). The next year, the plant had two furnaces (*Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* 1886). By at least 1888, Bellaire used an acorn trade mark and made “Flint Prescription Ware, Flasks, etc.,” according to its letterhead (Tyson 1971:5-6).

¹ Toulouse (1971:396) only mentioned the Bellaire Bottle Co. in passing and claimed (incorrectly) that the firm was gobbled up by the Owens Eastern Bottle Co. as part of its acquisitions in 1912. It is strange that Paquette (2002) did not discuss the factory at all, despite 18 pages of references to the town of Bellaire.

D.A. Colbert had replaced Sheldon as manager by 1891, and Smith sold his interest in the firm to Yost, Colbert, and William Cleaver, the following year. The group elected W.C. Bergenthal president in 1893. The 1894 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map shows the factory between Monroe and Noble Streets, with a note that there was a watchman at nights and on Sundays. The plant had a 100-foot, two-inch hose for fires but no clock. A stove heated the factory, lighting was furnished by natural gas, and the fuel for the furnace was coal. The main building had a single central furnace with four glory holes and five lehrs. In addition, the complex boasted a mixing room, warehouses, and an office that included the molding repair and engineering sections (Figure 1).

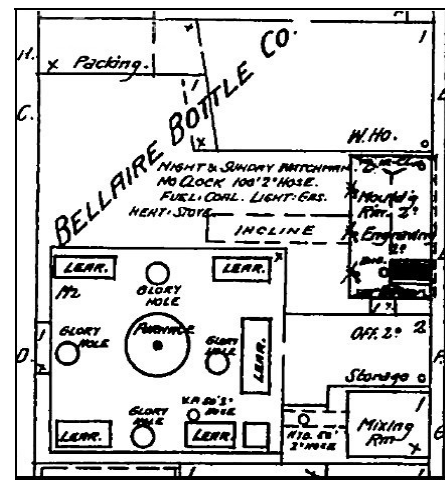


Figure 1 – 1894 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

An 1896 letterhead showed a spray of oak leaves and acorns and added cologne bottles to the product list (Roller 1998). The following year, the company had “one 13-pot furnace in operation, making flint bottles,” and the number of pots varied from 10 to 12 during the rest of the century (*National Glass Budget* 1897a:7; 1897b:4; 1898:7; Roller 1998).

The *Crockery & Glass Journal* reported on October 5, 1899, that the firm was “trying to solve the boy problem by employing girls for carrying out (i.e., carrying bottles from the machine to the lehr). It is thought they will be steadier and pay more attention to their work” (quoted in Roller 1998). Boys were inclined to run away, prone to absenteeism, and frequently truculent.

The *Era Blue Book* (Haynes & Co. 1900) listed the Bellaire Bottle Co. as making “flint bottles & perfumers’ ware” in 1900, and Daniel A. Colbert remained as the manager. H.L. Dixon began building a continuous tank for Bellaire early in the year. The tank had been completed the next year, when the plant operated one furnace with ten pots and a single continuous tank with eight rings (Roller 1998).

The 1900 Sanborn map reflected the changes. The furnace remained in the center of the greatly-expanded main building, with three of the glory holes still surrounding it. The new

continuous tank had been installed in the southeast corner, with a small lehr in the southwest corner and three large annealing ovens in the north end. An additional building to the east was identified as Molding Room #2. The watchman remained, as did the hose, but the map added that the plant was on city water and had casks located at various places for additional fire control. Heat was now steam driven in addition to stoves, but lighting was still by natural gas (Figure 2).

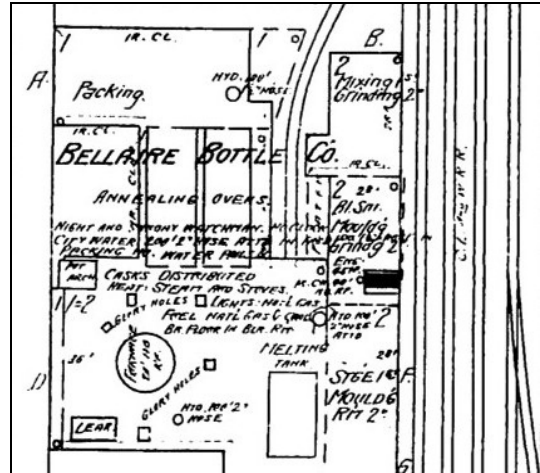


Figure 2 – 1900 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

In 1903, G.S. Armstrong was president (probably a typo for Julius Armstrong, the first president), and Sheldon was secretary (Roller 1998). The plant made “proprietary, liquor, prescription and packers’ ware” at one furnace, one continuous tank, and one day tank in 1904. R.M. Gilleland was the president, but Yost had resumed as secretary, and Colbert retained his position as manager (*American Glass Review* 1934:191). The first Thomas Register (Thomas Publishing Co. 1905:104) noted that the plant made “flint prescription [and] druggist’s” bottles, and that remained through the 1912 edition (1912:480).

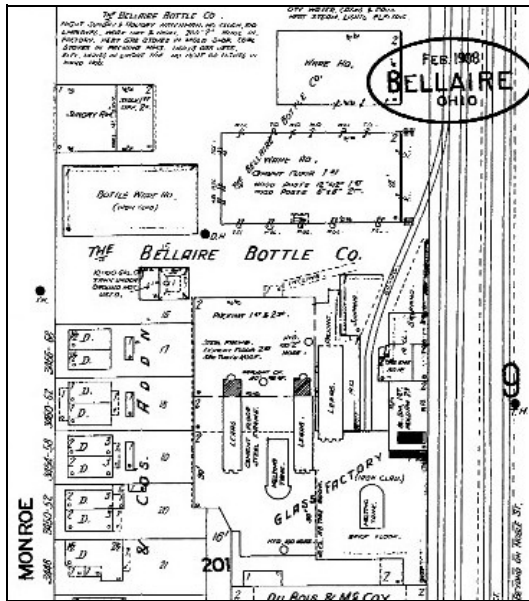


Figure 3 – 1908 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

By 1908, the factory had grown again, with two continuous tanks – the second in the place of the old furnace – and three lehrs to the north (Figure 3). Just north of the lehrs was the packing room, although the mold rooms remained to the east. The firm apparently acquired land to the north, where it erected three warehouses and a building with a sundry room and the office. The plant employed 100 men, who worked day and night. The firm heated the mold rooms with natural gas, but the packing rooms used coal. The engine room had electric lights, but the engine of the operation used natural gas for illumination. The warehouses had no light or heat (Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1908).

In 1913, the firm used two continuous tanks with 20 rings to make a “general line” of bottles by both semiautomatic machine and hand methods (*Journal of Industrial and Engineering Chemistry* 1913:953). An undated catalog in our possession (Bellaire n.d.) was probably printed between ca. 1905 and ca. 1910. It had a small section on “Machine Made Bottles and Jars,” all of which were wide mouth and undoubtedly made by semiautomatic machines. Although the main products in the catalog were prescription bottles, drug store accessories, and perfume and other toiletry bottles, the company also made an extensive line of liquor flasks and bottles, some food (mostly catsup) bottles, soda, and beer bottles.

By 1914, the Thomas Registers added “perfumers & Wide & Narrow-mouth” bottles made by machine, and that listing continued until at least 1921 (Thomas Publishing Co. 1914:531; 1921:781). There were no major changes in the 1915 Sanborn map, except that the entire plant now used electric lights. A letterhead signed by Yost, dated June 6, 1922, stated that the firm was “Manufacturers of Hand and Machinemade Flint Glass Bottles and Jars” (Digital Shoebox Project 2011). The June 1924 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showed the factory as “Not In Operation” (Roller1998), but the plant actually closed in 1922, probably fairly late in the year.

A slight postscript suggests that the Bellaire factory never made milk bottles and solidifies the closing date. In January 1923, the *Bottle Maker* (1923:13) announced that Harry Neff and others were planning a new bottle plant to move into the old Bellaire Bottle Co. location. Starting with a capitalization of \$200,000:

the present Bellaire Bottle Company will take \$75,000 he said and \$50,000 additional has already been subscribed. The plant of the Bellaire Bottle Company which has been idle for the past few weeks would be remodeled and placed in operation. Milk bottles would be manufactured exclusively as there is a ready market for this product.

There is no evidence that the plan was placed in operation. This was almost certainly an attempt that failed before it was born. Since the article noted in January 1923 that the plant had been idle “for the past few weeks,” that factory had to have ceased operation in late 1922.

Containers and Marks

The *Crockery & Glass Journal* (1883:18) stated that “the card of the firm [i.e., the mark of the Bellaire Bottle Co.] is neatly blown in each bottle.”

Acorn (ca. 1882-ca. 1890)



Figure 5 – Packer bottle (David Whitten & Eric Christensen)

A representative example of the acorn mark is in the David Whitten collection. The acorn logo was embossed on the base of a colorless, cylindrical bottle, with a wide-mouth “packer” finish.

The container was mouth blown and had a cup bottom, but it was otherwise generic with no additional identifying features (Figures 4 & 5). We have seen identical logos on other round and square bottles. The stem of the acorn could lean to either the right or the left.



Figure 4 – Acorn logo (David Whitten & Eric Christensen)

This symbol was embossed on colorless prescription bottles. The acorn logo, along with the words “Trade Mark,” was part of the Bellaire Bottle Co.

letterheads in 1888 (Figure 6). In an undated letter that could have been sent no

later than 1904, T.K. Smith, the Bellaire representative, instructed mold maker Charles Yockell not to “cut acorn on bottom of the Colonge (*sic*) Moulds for us that I ordered of you – unless I advise you differently – think they will look better with plain bottom” (Tyson 1971:6). This letter unquestionably places the use of the acorn on medicinal and other bases as the logo of Bellaire. The mark did not appear anywhere in the 1910 Bellaire Bottle Co. catalog.



Figure 6 – 1888 Bellaire letterhead (Tyson 1971:5)

The firm replaced the acorn on the letterhead with a spray of oak leaves and acorns by at least 1896 (Figure 7) and continued to use the same logo on letterheads until at least 1910 (Roller 1998). A 1922 ad featured Bellaire’s “Acorn Brand” – suggesting that the acorn logo remained in use during the entire existence of the firm.



Figure 7 – 1896 Bellaire billhead (eBay)

B.B. (early 20th century)

Whitten (2013) attributed this mark to Berney-Bond (1905-1930). Jones (1966:15) suggested Bryce Bros., 1880-1910, but also noted Butler Bros. We have found no reference to the Butler Bros. as such, and the mark is not listed by any other source we have found. We have only seen this mark on a colorless, wide-mouth, machine made bottle, probably intended for food, household products, or medicine and on solarized amethyst, Curtice Brothers catsup bottles, both from eBay and in our possession. These two forms should be discussed separately.

Packer Bottle

The colorless round, machine-made bottle was embossed “BB” – with no serifs and no punctuation (Figure 8). While the letters *could* indicate Berney-Bond, Bell Bottle, or Bellaire Bottle, we would expect such initials to be at least fairly common on bases, if the bottles were made by any of these firms. However, we have only found this single example. It is thus likely that the “BB” initials indicated the manufacturer of the *contents* of the bottle – rather than a glass house.



Figure 8 – Round household bottle base with BB (El Paso Coliseum collection)

Curtice Brothers Catsup

In our original study of the Bellaire Bottle Co., we attributed the “BB” and “B.B.” logos to this glass house; however, once we completed our study of the Curtice bottles, the view

looked quite different. It became increasingly obvious that the Bell Bottle Co. was very unlikely to have used the “BBCo” mark, transferring that logo to Bellaire Bottle. In addition, other evidence convinced us that the “BB” and “B.B.” marks were used by one of the factories of the Berney-Bond Glass Co. See the study of the Curtice Brothers Co. and the section on Berney-Bond for more information.

BBCo and Diamond-BBCo (1901-1911)

Mouth-blown Curtice Brothers catsup bottles were made with a large variety of manufacturer’s marks that are not found on any other bottle types (Figure 9). Clearly, the Curtice Brothers required their bottle manufacturers to emboss the initials or logo of each glass house on bottle bases, likely beginning with the 1901 reorganization of the firm. The earliest Curtice Brothers bottles had unmarked bases, but they soon required an embossed number. The use of logos or initials followed and continued on mouth-blown bottles until Curtice began its exclusive use of containers made on machines by the Owens Bottle Machine Co. in 1911.



Figure 9 – Curtice Bros. bottle (eBay)

As noted above, our current paper has rejected the Bell Bottle Co. as the probable user of the “B.B.Co.” logo (both by itself and in an elongated diamond), transferring the likelihood of these marks to the Bellaire Bottle Co. Our two examples of the former mark were both mouth blown, and each had the initials horizontal in the center of the base with a single-digit numeral below. One was embossed “B.B.Co. / 3”; the other “B.B.Co. / 1.” Both of our examples of the second logo also had a lower-case “o” in “Co” and full punctuation. The initial “B” in the elongated diamond was smaller than the second one with followed by a “C” of equal size but a much smaller “o.” The final period was centered after the “o” in the right > of the diamond (Figures 10 & 11).



Figure 10 – BBCo logo (eBay)

Bellaire reported packers’ ware in 1904, a category that included catsup bottles, even though they were not specified.



Figure 11 – Diamond-BBCo logo (eBay)

Although it was clearly a secondary item (not mentioned in factory lists), the Bellaire catalog (ca. 1911”) illustrated several styles of catsup bottles. The 1914 Thomas Register included narrow-mouth bottles made by machine, although it did not specify catsups. Aside from the Bell Bottle Co., no other glass house we have discovered had the correct sequencing of initials, the right time frame, and made catsup bottles – ergo, the Bellaire Bottle Co. is the only logical choice as the user of the “B.B.Co.” logo on Curtice Brothers bottles.

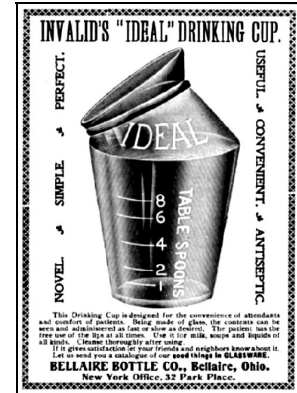


Figure 12 – 1897 Bellaire ad (*American Druggist* 1897)

Invalid’s “Ideal” Drinking Cup

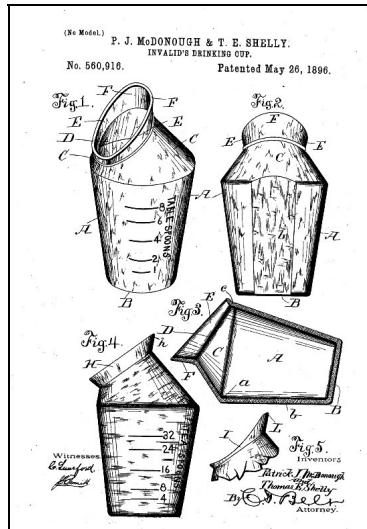


Figure 13 – McDonough & Shelly 1896 patent

A Bellaire Bottle Co. ad in the 1897 *American Druggist* featured the “Invalid’s ‘Ideal’ Drinking Cup” a device designed for “the convenience of attendants and the comfort of patients” (Figure 12). On November 16, 1895, Patrick J. McDonough and Thomas E. Shelly – both of Bellaire, Ohio – applied for a patent for patent for an “Invalid’s Drinking Cup” and received Patent No. 560,916 on May 26, 1896 (Figure 13). Their patent formed the design of the Bellaire cup (Figure 14), although it is

unclear how long the glass house made the cups. Whitall Tatum & Co. also produced the cups, and the vast majority of them on eBay and other online auctions were made by Whitall Tatum.



Figure 14 – Invalid’s cup (eBay)

A printed sheet that accompanied an Invalid’s Cup sold on eBay noted that McDonough & Shelly were “Owners and Inventors” and that the cups were “Manufactured Only by the Bellaire Bottle Co.” (Figure 15). The base of the cup was embossed “PATAPPL’DFOR” (Figure 16). Apparently McDonough & Shelly (both Bellaire residents) made their original agreement with the local glass house in 1895 – before they were granted their patent – then switched to the



Figure 15 – Info Sheet (eBa7)

larger firm by 1897 or so.

Whitall Tatum may have made a better offer (like lower prices), or McDonough & Shelly may have just figured that the larger firm would reach a wider audience.

This suggests that the Invalid's Cups made by the Bellaire Bottle

Co. were all embossed with the patent applied for basemark, probably only during 1895-1897, possibly for another year or two.



Figure 16 – Base (eBay)

Discussion and Conclusions

Primary source evidence (i.e., the “card” of Bellaire being blown into each bottle) from 1883 indicates that a Bellaire logo (either initials or the acorn symbol) was used in by that year. Unfortunately, we have no examples from that early period. Both the letterhead and the letter from the Belleville Bottle Co. in 1888 make it clear that the acorn was an icon for the firm. It is thus virtually certain that the acorn logo on prescription and possibly other bottle types was used by Belleville.

The temporal span for the acorn, however, is less clear. The acorn may have been used from the beginning of the firm, and the logo was certainly being used during 1888. By at least 1896, however, the single acorn on the letterhead had been replaced by a spray of oak leaves and acorns, and that continued until at least 1910 but was gone by 1922. Thus, ca. 1882-ca. 1890 is an estimate for the embossed use of the acorn.

As noted above, by far the best choice for the user of the “B.B.Co.” marks was the Bellaire Bottle Co. The first recorded instance for packers’ ware we have found for the glass house was in 1904, so we can hypothesize that catsup bottles were not produced prior to the 1901 requirement by Curtice Brothers. By 1913, the plant had at least one machine, but the continuous tank had been built in 1900. It is likely that Bellaire continued to make bottles for the Curtice Brothers until Curtice switched to machine-made bottles 1911 (produced by the

Owens Bottle Machine Co. As noted in the discussion above, the BB and B.B. initials were probably used by Berney-Bond.

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