

The New England Glass Companies

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Three unrelated glass houses carried the “New England” name. The first, and earliest – The New England Glass-Works – was short lived and used no known mark. The New England Glass Co. followed, almost three decades later, primarily making tableware – although it produced a few figural flasks embossed with its initials.

The third factory – the New-England Glass-Bottle Co. – was created by one of the founders of the New England Glass Co. who had left the older firm a year earlier. The new firm, however, concentrated on bottles rather than the tableware – and produced a single “beer” bottle with the firm name embossed on the base.

History

New-England Glass-Works, Temple, New Hampshire (1780-1781)

Robert Hewes constructed this ill-fated glass works in May 1780. Although he made some bottles and flasks, the plant was beset by difficulties from the beginning and closed the following year. His last known ad was on October 29, 1781 (Wilson 1972:51-57). Upon its failure,

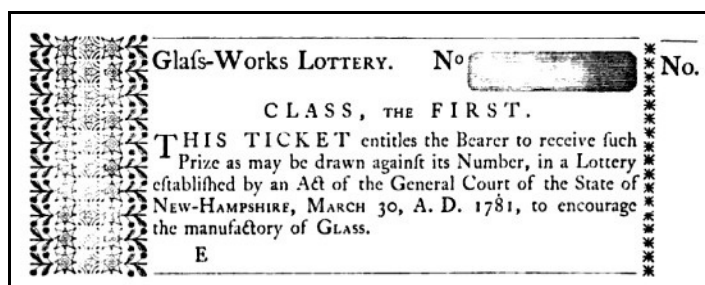


Figure 1 – Lottery ticket (Blood 1860:171)

Hewes applied for help to the New Hampshire House of Representatives. The House set up a lottery to provide Hewes sufficient funds to continue, but the lottery was also a failure (Blood 1860:170-172 – Figure 1). The factory was unrelated to the later New England Glass Co., and it is highly unlikely that Hewes produced the flasks marked “NEG.” No marked products have come to light.

New England Glass Co., Cambridge, Massachusetts (1818-1888)

Deming Jarves, Amos Binney, Edmund Munroe, and Daniel Hastings incorporated the New England Glass Co. on February 16, 1818, to make flint and crown glass, moving into the former Boston Porcelain and glass Co. factory (established 1814). The group rebuilt the plant with two flint furnaces and equipment for cutting and polishing glass. The factory primarily made high-quality tableware (as well as vases, lamps, insulators, chandeliers, and other fine glass items) and crown window glass, but it also produced some flasks by at least 1819. By 1850, the works employed 450 hands at five furnaces with ten pots each (Cambridge Historical Society 2016; Watkins 1930:5-6, 18 – Figure 2). Watkins (1930:20) presented a description of:

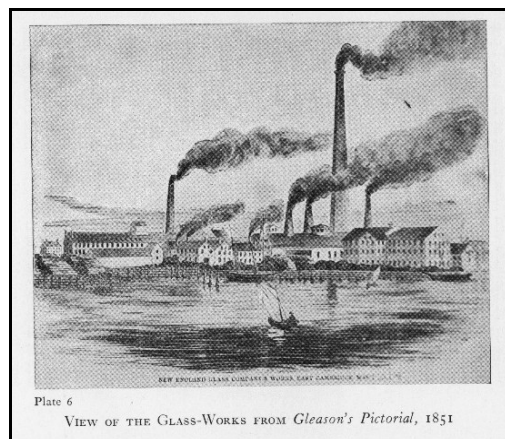


Figure 2 – New England Glass Co. ca. 1851 (Watkins 1930:19)

the chimney 235 feet high twenty-four feet in diameter at the base and fifteen feet at the top. . . . the draught was created solely by the high chimney, which was connected by flues with every part of the factory. The flues were of brick laid in cement, were about fifteen feet in diameter, and led underground from every furnace in the plant to the central nine-foot flue in the big chimney. In this way, the smoke and the gasses were carried from the leers and kilns, and even from the blacksmith's shop, and let off into the upper air at a height that the surrounding atmosphere was kept free and clear.

The firm was experiencing problems with its workers, particularly theft. William L. Libbey leased the plant in 1878 (Figure 3). By that time, only one furnace with ten pots was in operation, and three furnaces were idle. William's son, Edward D. Libbey became a partner in 1880 and continued to operate the factory, when his father died in 1883. After several strikes, Libbey vowed to close the plant permanently, if another occurred. When another strike commenced in 1888, Libbey, true to his word, terminated the operation and moved the business to Toledo, Ohio (McDougald & McDougald 1990:12; McKearin & Wilson 1978:104; Watkins

1930:32, 37-38; Wilson 1972:229-233). Wilson (1972:234-261) presented numerous details about the tableware, flasks, and other fine glass, along with descriptions of ads.

Containers and Marks

The New England Glass Co. advertised “4 [packages] Prest Pocket Flasks” on October 4, 1819, and “9

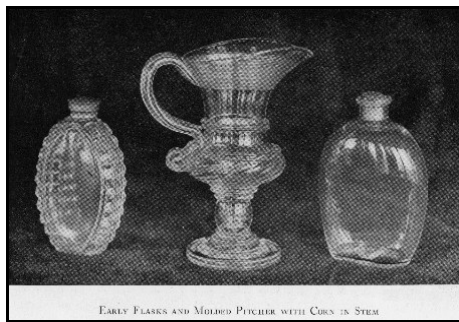


Figure 4 – Flasks (Watkins 1930:74)

[packages] pint and half pint green Pocket Flasks” and

“1 [package] molded Liquor Bottles” on March 27, 1820 (Watkins 1930:63, 65). As noted by McKearin & Wilson (1987:104), “Prest” almost certainly meant embossed in this case. Watkins (1930:74) illustrated two flasks made by the firm (Figure 4).

As early as 1825, the New England Glass Co. Advertised “apothecaries, chemical and table wares” (Watkins 1930:68). The firm manufactured door knobs by 1836. A drawing of the showroom in 1855 showed a large variety of bottles, many of which appear to be common styles – rather than only the fancy display-type of bottles – although those also appeared in the drawing (Watkins 1930:24, 27, 72 – Figure 5).

N.E.G. (ca. 1818-ca. 1840)

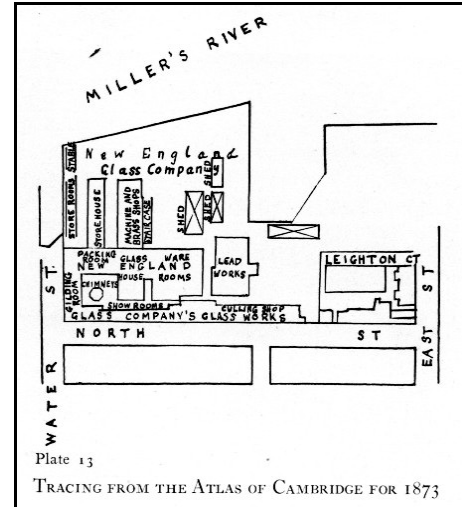


Figure 3 – 1873 map (Watkins 1930:33)

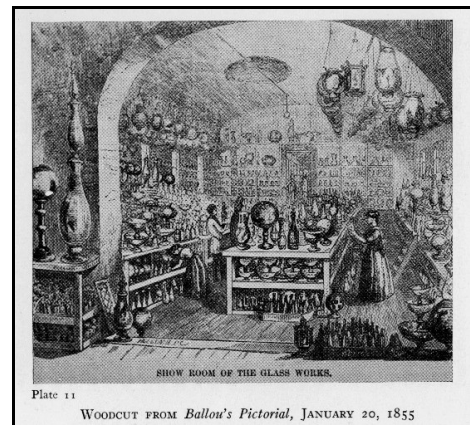


Figure 5 – Showroom (Watkins 1930:27)

This mark was used by the New England Glass Co. on the reverse of a Masonic flask (Figure 6). The logo was in an oval frame below an eagle (McKearin & Wilson 1978:104, 596-597). Toulouse (1971:385) noted that Van Rensselaer (1921:161) mentioned a flask marked NFG. Toulouse thought that the letter “F” was either “faintly blown up, or misread,” although he conceded that the mark could have been a “mold-cutters error.” Since the error was not picked

up by McKearin and Wilson (1978), we assume that this was a misreading by Van Rennselaer. Toulouse dated the mark ca. 1820-1830 based on manufacturing characteristics; he did not know who made the flasks. We have dated all four marks attributed to these companies ca. 1818 (when the New England Glass Co. opened) to ca. 1840 – although the end date was arbitrarily chosen.

NEG / C^o (ca. 1818-ca. 1840)



Figure 6 – N.E.G. (McKearin & Wilson 1978:597)



Figure 7 – NEG / C^o (McKearin & Wilson 1978:597)

Knittle (1927:442) attributed an “N.E.G.Co.” mark to the New England Glass Co. This almost certainly referred to the mark described and illustrated by McKearin & Wilson (1978:104; 596-597) as one of the four marks used by the New England Glass Co. in an oval frame below an eagle on the reverse of a Masonic flask (Figure 7) We have dated all of these marks ca. 1818 to ca. 1845. Like the mark above, Toulouse (1971:385) dated this one ca. 1820-1830.

NG / C^o. (ca. 1818-ca. 1845)

This was also one of the four marks used on flasks by the New England companies (Figure 8). On this flask, the mark was embossed on the front center within a series of concentric circles with the “NG” above the “C^o.” (with the period below the “o”). The front was embossed with an eagle within concentric circles (McKearin & Wilson 1978:104, 574-575).

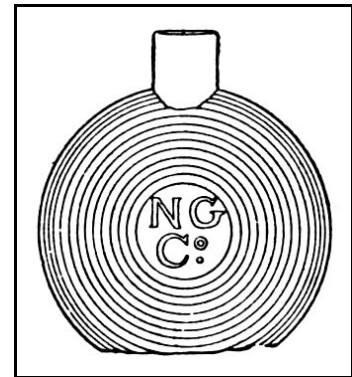


Figure 8 – NG / C^o. (McKearin & Wilson 1978:575)

N.G.C^o. (ca. 1818-ca. 1840)

Another NGC^o mark (with a dot or period under the “o”) was noted on the reverse side of a Masonic flask by McKearin and Wilson (1978:574, 594-595). On this flask, the N.G.C^o mark was on a single line in an oval below an eagle and contained punctuation after the first two letters (Figures 9 & 10).



Figure 9 – N.G.C^o. (McKearin & Wilson 1978:595)

New-England Glass-Bottle Co., Cambridge, Massachusetts (1827-1845)

Deming Jarves and Edmund Monroe incorporated the New-England Glass-Bottle Co. at Cambridge, Massachusetts, on February 15, 1826, with a capital of \$50,000 – although production did not begin until the following January. Recall that Jarves was one of the founders of the New England Glass Co. just nine years earlier. Jarves left the original firm in 1825 to found the Boston & Sandwich Glass Works. There must have been hard feelings between Jarves and his former associates for him to return to Cambridge and set up a rival glass house with such a similar name (McKearin & Wilson 1978:104-106; Watkins 1930:185; Wilson 1972:185-191).



Figure 10 – N.G.C^o. (Corning Museum)

The plant made blackglass bottles for wine porter, oil, and snuff, along with flasks, carboys, vials, and other bottle types – and this selection of products may explain the rift. The New England Glass Co. manufactured tableware as its predominant line – with containers as a small sideline. Jarves may have wanted to expand the business into a greater concentration of bottles and flasks – and idea blocked by his associates. The concentration on containers by the New-England Glass-Bottle Co. may have reflected his desire. The plant closed “for unknown reasons” in May of 1845 (McKearin & Wilson 1978:104-106; Watkins 1930:185; Wilson 1972:185-191).

Containers and Marks

Watkins (1930:186) noted that the New England Glass Bottle Co. advertised “160 [gross] half pint and pint Pocket Bottles” on March 5, 1827, along with porter, wine, and oil bottles. On January 21, 1828, another ad for the factory offered “250 [gross] ½ pt. and qt. Flasks” along with acid, soda, mead, and blacking bottles; preserve and mustard jars; and demijohns (Watkins 1930:186-187).

NEW ENG. GLASS BOTTLE CO. (1827-1845)



Figure 11 – New England Glass Bottle Co. (Norman C. Heckler)

This mark is found in a circle (Rickett’s type mold) on the base of a blackglass “English” beer bottle (Figures 11 & 12). McKearin and Wilson (1978:106, 188-189) noted that this “may have been one of the first American-made bottles to be inscribed on the base.” The authors illustrated the bottle but not the basal marking. This was apparently the only bottle made with company identification.



Figure 12 – “Beer” bottle (Norman C. Heckler)

Discussion and Conclusions

It is virtually certain that all the flasks described in this section were made by the New England Glass Co. from 1818 to ca. 1840. Any individual flask (or bottle) may have actually been produced at any period during those dates. It is impossible by current methods to ascertain any closer date ranges for the individual marks or flasks. There is no question that the “beer” bottle with the New-England Glass-Bottle Co. name was made by that factory – apparently its only marked product.

Acknowledgments

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