

Bagley & Co.

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Archaeologists and collectors have found numerous British bottles and jars in the United States, both mouth-blown and machine-made. Bagley & Co, Ltd., is one of the British glass houses whose machine-made bottles are sometimes found in the United States. Through time, Bagley & Co. used at least four different logos to mark its bottles. As usually happens, secondary sources disagree about dates, timing, and other specifics regarding the firm's development. We have put together what seems the most logical interpretation based on the available sources.

Histories

Bagley, Wild & Co., Knottingley, Yorkshire, England (1871-1890)

Born at Hunslet, England, in 1842, William Bagley was initially employed at a glass plant by the Pilkington Bros. of St. Helens in 1850 – at the age of 8. Bagley became the secretary of the Yorkshire Glass Makers Trade Protection Society in 1867.¹ William and his cousin, John W. Bagley, joined with John Wild to form the firm of Bagley, Wild & Co. in 1871. The firm built a single-pot furnace on a site next to the canal in the Bendles, Knottingley. Wild apparently left the company in 1890 (Gosney n.d.; Great Glass 2006; Issitt 2005; von Mechow 2008).

Bagley & Co., Knottingley, Yorkshire, England (1890-1898)

Great Glass (2006) noted that Wild left the original firm in 1890, and the name became Bagley & Co. Although Toulouse (1971:77-78) claimed that William Bagley began his own plant, Bagley & Co., in 1871, he was certainly confusing that with the date of the Wild

¹ Little seems to be known about this group. It was apparently a loose consortium of Yorkshire glass houses trying to maintain the dominance of the area in glass production. It was apparently short lived.

partnership. Like its predecessor, Bagley & Co. made bottles and other containers. When John W. Bagley died in 1897, however, William Bagley began major changes (Gosney n.d.).

Bagley & Co., Ltd., Knottingley, Yorkshire, England (1898-1962)

Bagley & Co. became a private limited company in June of 1898 with a capitalization of £60,000. William Bagley was both Chairman and managing Director. In 1899, Bagley & Co., Ltd., purchased half of the patent rights for the Ashley-Arnall bottle machine, the remaining share going to Cunningham, Shaw & Co. of St. Helens (Gosney n.d.; Toulouse 1971:77-78).

Like both of its predecessors, Bagley & Co., Ltd., produced bottles. Turner (1938:252, 255) asserted that Bagley & Co. used a number of Ashley machines by 1897 [probably 1899] and had 13 machines in operation by 1907. Apparently dissatisfied with the Ashley-Arnall devices, Bagley was one of the early adopters of the Owens Automatic Bottle Machine.² The Owens machine was the first practical device with a capacity to make narrow-mouth bottles as well as being the first fully automatic machine (Gosney n.d.; Roller n.d.; Toulouse 1971:77-78). Sources disagree on the year when Bagley received its Owens machines, but Biram (1958:21N-28N) noted that ten Owens machines were in use in Great Britain between 1907 and 1914. It is virtually certain that one or more of those ten were used by Bagley.

Despite these advances in bottle manufacture, Bagley shifted its main production to lead glass and pressed tableware, under the subsidiary name of the Crystal Glass Co. in 1912 – although the firm continued to make bottles. When William Bagley died – on January 16, 1924 – Percy and Stanley Bertram Bagley, the sons of the two founders (John W. and William Bagley) took control of the firm. The firm instituted “Crystaltint” – a colored tableware glass process – in 1933 (Gosney n.d.; Great Glass 2006; Issitt 2005; Roller n.d.; von Mechow 2008). Although we have not discovered a date or a reason, it is almost certain that bottle production ceased in favor of tableware at some point – probably during the late 1920s or early 1930s.

² Like most pioneers, Ashley was ahead of his time. Although his machine produced acceptable bottles, it apparently ran slowly. It was soon replaced by the huge variety of bottle machines invented in the 20th century. See English (1921) for more discussion about these machines.

In 1962, the Jackson Brothers (or the Jackson Glass Co.), another local Knottingley firm, acquired Bagley & Co., Ltd. The Rockware Glass Co., in turn, took over the Jackson operation in 1964 (Gosney n.d.; Great Glass 2006; Issitt 2005; Roller n.d.; von Mechow 2008). Jones (1965:[23]) claimed the company remained in business until 1975 – although none of the other sources mentioned a continued use of the Bagley name. According to Gosney (n.d.) “a succession of National and International mergers or take-overs saw the disappearance of local founders.”

Von Mechow (2022) noted that the plant closed in 1975 but the Austrian-based Stolze Oberglas AG acquired the former Bagley plant in 1994 and formed a subsidiary of this group under the name of Stolze Flacconage. The firm remained in business as of 2022.

Containers and Marks

B&C^oL^d and B & C^o. LTD (1898-ca. 1920s)

Jones (1961:[12]) showed a “machine molded” bottle base marked “B&COL^d (arch) / K (center) / 6,” although she did not illustrate the bottle or jar. She also noted mark variations of “B&C^oL^d” and “B&C^o.LTD.” Jones (1965:[23]) identified the company using this mark as Bagley & Co, Ltd, “circa 1830 Knottingley – still operating.” Later, she amended the beginning date to 1832. Toulouse (1971:77) attributed the mark to Bagley & Co. and noted, “Unknown date of incorporation, probably by time of machine bottle making circa 1899.”

Roseworn (1971:40) illustrated a similar mark “135 / K / B&C^oL^{TD}” on the base of a wide-mouth food bottle (Figure 1). His illustration shows a bottle that was square in cross-section with chamfered corners. The mold seams extended through the finish with a parting line just below the finish. The embossed markings were in a slightly convex central circle on the base.

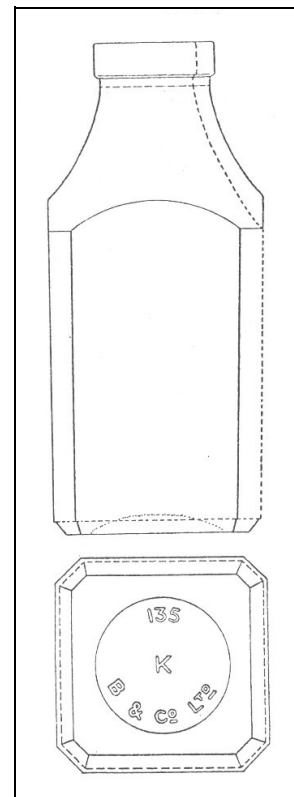


Figure 1 – B&C^oL^{TD} basemark (Roseworn 1971:40)

Creswick (1987:10) illustrated two 10-panel jars embossed “B&C^oL^d / K / 358” on the bases (Figure 2) and noted that they were light green in color. These were very likely food (product) jars, and she dated them ca. 1899.

Bagley & Co., Ltd., is the most almost certain user of this logo. The firm was an early machine adopter and continued to improve its machines. The firm made wide-mouth bottles and jars by machine by at least 1899 (possibly 1898), but narrow-mouth production would have been later, probably after 1907. Use of the B&C^oL^d mark probably extended from 1898 to ca. 1920s or later.

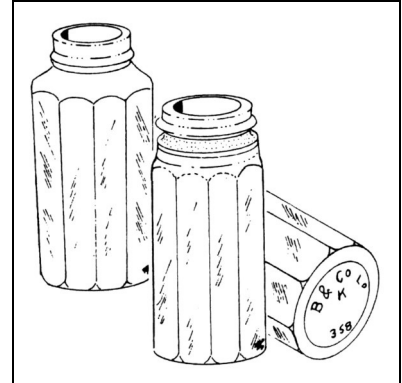


Figure 2 – B&C^oL^d basemark (Creswick 1987:10)

B&C^o (ca. 1907-ca. 1920s)

This mark was found on the base of a cylindrical, aqua bottle at the Bottle House, Rhyolite, Nevada. The base was divided into four quadrants by a cross with “5” in the upper left; “9” in the upper right; “B&” in the lower left; and “C^o” in the lower right – with a ditto mark (“”) below the “o” (Figure 3). The house was built in 1905-1906, but occasional bottles were added to make repairs over the years. The photo seems to show a machine scar on the base. Since the bottle was imbedded in concrete, there is not way to determine any finish characteristics, although the building was almost entirely made from beer bottles. This bottle was likely of British manufacture.



Figure 3 – B&C^o basemark

Toulouse (1971:77, 79) showed the logo as “B&Co” and considered it to have been used by Bagley & Co., Knottingley, Yorkshire, England, “by 1880 according to bottle-making techniques used, and possibly at start of company, 1871.” Toulouse also attributed the mark to Edgar Breffit & Co. (along with three others) sometime between ca. 1842 and 1913. Toulouse (1971:79) noted, however, “Due to the long life of this company, no dates have been possible for specific variations of the several marks used. The bottle’s age must be judged by the technique in which the bottle was made.”

According to Great Glass (2006) and Issitt (2005), however, the firm was called Bagley, Wild & Co. until Wild left in 1890. The initials suggest that the mark was used prior to the “limited” years, therefore, between 1890 and 1898. Because narrow-mouth bottles were not generally machine made until at least 1907, the B&Co logo – without the “L^D” – was probably only used from ca. 1907 to the 1920s – if the mark belonged to Bagley & Co. Also see the Edgar Breffit section.

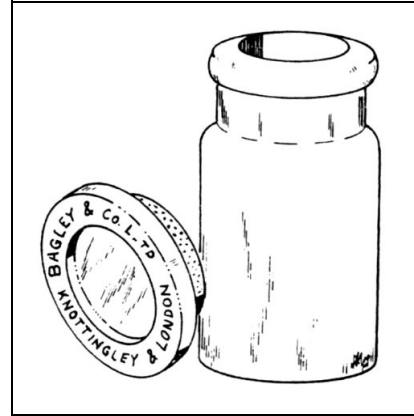


Figure 4 – BAGLEY & Co LTD mark on jar lid (Creswick 1987:10)

Bagley & Co Ld or BAGLEY & Co LTD (1898-ca. 1940s)

At least one cod-stoppered bottle on eBay was marked on the back heel with Bagley & Co. Ld.³ Creswick (1987:10) also illustrated and discussed a jar with a lid embossed “BAGLEY & Co LTD (arch) / “KNOTTINGLEY & LONDON (inverted arch).” The jar was light green in color, and she dated it ca. 1895. This was almost certainly a product jar (Figure 4).

Von Mechow (2022) discovered a single example of the mark on a Codd-stoppered bottle used by the Excelsior Bottle & Beverage Works, Ltd., West Toronto, Canada. The base was embossed “BAGLEY & Co LD / KNOTTINGLY” just above the reverse heel. The bottler was in business from 1931 to 1935 (Kewa 2017:8).

Discussion and Conclusions

The “B&Co” marks with an abbreviation for “Limited” were almost certainly used by Bagley. Many (possibly most or even all) of these also had a “K” on the base, an indicator for the Knottingley location – a common practice among British glass houses.⁴ The “K” and

³ Although the seller wrote it as mixed case, they mark was probably “BAGLEY & C^oL^D.”

⁴ Although we have not discovered any British registration regulations for bottles, it was very common for English glass houses to indicate the location of the factory by a single initial. See the section on the Kilner family for numerous examples.

“limited” markings essentially eliminate other possibly users of the marks. The one reported mark with the full company name, of course, is obvious. The firm likely used the mark from 1898 to the 1940s or later.

The identification of the “B&Co” logo without a “limited” indicator is more in doubt. Unfortunately, we have only seen a single example, probably made by machine. Without the “limited” indicator, the mark does not fit well with either Bagley & Co., Ltd., or with Edgar Breffit & Co. – although it could have been used by either firm.

We have never seen a bottle with an Owens scar and a Bagley mark. The Owens machine was limited to large runs of bottles because the molds were difficult to change, and the entire machine had to be stopped to remove a single mold. As a result, most Owens bottles were generic in nature. Many firms – apparently including the Bagleys – did not use logos on their generic bottles until the 1930s or even later.

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