

Chapter 5

The Unique Triangle – Minnesota Seals

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Like many of the other states, Minnesota instituted a seal law – in 1913 – to assure that milk bottles sold in the state held the correct capacity. Again, like the other states, Minnesota let the law lapse in the late 1940s, long after the need was over. Minnesota’s seals were unique, however, in their triangular shape, originally embossed on the shoulders of bottles, later on the heels.

The Minnesota Seal Law

The November 12, 1913, issue of the *Albert Lee Times-Enterprise*, reported the new milk bottle law. Beginning the first of December:

all milk bottles purchased by milk dealers in . . . the State of Minnesota must bear the mark required by the new state law showing that they are of recognized standard measurement. Providing for this contingency the state department of weights and measures had made contracts with manufacturers to furnish approved bottles, guaranteed standard and marked with the state weights and measures seal, as well as with the serial number of the firm making them. This is one of the first steps of the bureau of measures to get back to the manufacturer and place the responsibility for incorrect measurements where it belongs.

The ordinance allowed milk dealers to continue using the bottles they currently owned but forbade the purchase of new ones lacking the seal – which could only be the Minnesota triangles described below. The original contracts went to the Thatcher Mfg. Co., Michigan Glass Co., Illinois Glass Co., and Winslow Glass Co., although many more were added later. According to Dairy Antiques (2016), that number reached an even dozen:

1 MINN in a triangle	Thatcher Mfg. Co.
3 MINN in a triangle	Atlantic Bottle Co.

E4 MINN in a triangle	Essex Glass Co.
5 MINN in a triangle	Winslow Glass Co.
7 MINN in a triangle	Liberty Glass Co.
8 MINN in a triangle	Woodbury Glass Co.
10 MINN in a triangle	Universal Glass Products Co.
45 MINN in a triangle	F.E. Reed Glass Co.
48 MINN in a triangle	Berney-Bond Glass Co.
52 MINN in a triangle	Lamb Glass Co.
L52 MINN SEAL in a triangle	Lamb Glass Co.
57 MINN in a triangle	Knox Glass Bottle Co.

In addition, we have discovered a bottle with a “58” in the triangle, made by the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. and embossed with the Owens-Illinois logo and codes on the base (18 <(I)> 1 – Factory No. 18, Columbus, Ohio, 1931). Although Owens-Illinois continued to use the 48 minn code when it bought the Berney-Bond Glass Co., it often embossed its own logo and codes on the bases as well. After Owens-Illinois instituted a new glass process in 1940, it added the “Duraglas” embossing on most milk bottle bases.

The typical early format was an embossed triangle with the glass house number above “MINN” with a horizontal line in between. An ad placed by the Essex Glass Co. in 1916 illustrated the E4-triangle mark (*Milk Dealer* 1916:58). The earliest example we have found was a Thatcher Mfg. Co. bottle made in 1918 with the triangle in a circular plate at the shoulder, but an atypical Thatcher container had a 1922 date code and “MINN (arch) / 1 / SEAL (inverted arch)” in a small, circular pate on the shoulder (Figure 5-1).



Figure 5-1 – Circular MINN 1 SEAL

Shoulder placement of the mark continued until at least 1941 (probably using an older mold), but the seal had moved to the heel by at least 1940. According to Owens-Illinois records, Minnesota – like the New England states – relinquished the need for the triangles in 1947, although empirical evidence shows that the use of the Minnesota Triangle on the heel continued into at least the 1950s, possibly later as the firm used up old molds. The triangles often appear on bottles used in other states, probably just making use of the molds.

The 1932 Sears catalog illustrated milk bottles, each with a triangle in round plate embossed “32 / MINN / SEAL” (Rawlinson 1969:28). This is the only case we have found where *any* seal was bestowed upon a department store. Although some seals went to jobbers and distributors, the majority were granted to glass houses.

Specific Minnesota Triangles

1 / MINN – Thatcher Mfg. Co.

As with most state seals, the most common triangle was the one assigned to the Thatcher Mfg. Co., the number 1. We have recorded these on both shoulder and heel locations, and the shoulder marks frequently had “SEALED / 1/11-14” below the triangle. (Figure 5-2) – although others (some in a round plate) only had the “1 / MINN” triangle. Many heelcoded bottles had “SEALED / 1/11-14” either on the heel or the base.

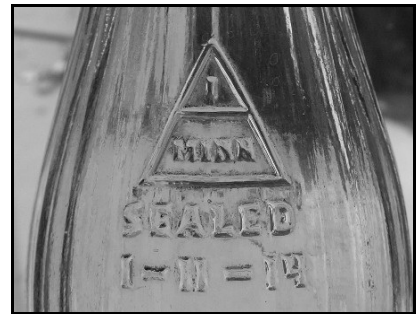


Figure 5-2 – 1 MINN

Since the bulk of our information came from eBay, it is difficult to assess the period or use of the heelmarks. Few sellers photographed the heels of bottle, especially the newer ones, and virtually none of them listed the logos or date codes in their bottle descriptions.

3 / MINN – Atlantic Bottle Co.

The “3 / MINN” symbol is very unusual. According to Dairy Antiques (2016), it was assigned to the Atlantic Bottle Co. In all other states, Atlantic (and its predecessor Fidelity Glass Co.), used the number “2.” The only example we have found (on eBay) apparently lacked the “ABC2” heelmark found on all Atlantic bottles we have previously encountered. This bottle only had “50” on the heel and “28” in the ejection scar on the base (Figure 5-3). The “3” from Dairy Antiques may have been a typographic error for “2,” but that leaves us with the question: Who used the “3” code?



Figure 5-3 – 3 MINN (eBay)

E4 / MINN – Essex Glass Co.

E4 was the logo of the Essex Glass Co., and Minnesota allowed Essex to use the full mark on the Seal (Figure 5-4). So far, we have only seen the mark in round shoulder plates.



Figure 5-4 – E4 MINN (eBay)

7 / MINN – Liberty Glass Co.

The Liberty Glass Co. received the number “7” from Minnesota, and the number in the triangles is almost as common as the one from Thatcher. Although there were some shoulder triangles, most of these, were heelmarks (Figure 5-5).



Figure 5-5 – 7 MINN

10 / MINN – Universal Glass Products Corp.

The Universal Glass Products Corp. typically used the number 51 – even with its heelmark UGP51. However, both the Dairy Antiques (2016) and an eBay auction tied the 10 MINN triangle to Universal Products.(Figure 5-6).



Figure 5-6 – 10 MINN (eBay)

37 / MINN – ?

The number 37 is a mystery. An eBay seller offered our example, claiming the number was 37. While a 57 was used by the Knox Glass Bottle Co. (see below), the number on the eBay bottle really *does* appear to be 37 – although the photo is poor quality. The only other 37 seal code we have found was reported by Rawlinson (1969:28) as used on a Massachusetts Seal shown in the 1932 Sears catalog. Since Sears sold milk bottles at that time, 37 may have been a Sears seal number.

40 / MINN – ?

Another mystery number was 40. It appeared on a shoulder triangle in an eBay auction and is distinctly a 40, not a 10 or other number (Figure 5-7). We have not found that number recorded anywhere.



Figure 5-7 – 40 MINN (eBay)

45 / MINN – F.E. Reed Glass Co.

The F.E. Reed Glass Co. received the number 45 and embossed it on the shoulder of its bottles (Figure 5-8). The firm was in business using that name (other ones earlier and later) from 1909 to 1947, making milk bottles during that entire period, so the logo should also appear on heels – although we have not seen one.



Figure 5-8 – 45 MINN

48 / MINN – Berney-Bond Glass Co.

The Berney-Bond Glass Co. managed to capture number 48 in every state where it applied – including Minnesota (Figure 5-9). The logo was embossed on both shoulders and heels of milk bottles, although it could only have been used from 1913 to 1930, when the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. purchased the firm.



Figure 5-9 – 48 MINN (California State Parks Collection)

L52 / MINN /SEAL – Lamb Glass Co.

52 / MINN / SEAL – Lamb Glass Co.

52 / MINN – Lamb Glass Co.

The Lamb Glass Co. managed to receive the number “52” from every state where it sold milk bottles. We recorded the Lamb Glass Co. 52 Seal in three formats. Probably the earliest was “L52 (52 in the “crook” of the “L”) / MINN / SEAL” on the shoulder of a bottle with “L.G.CO.52” embossed on the heel. Although the research is not fully conclusive, Lamb probably evolved from the “L.G.CO.52” logo (heelmark) to the “L52 (crook)” mark (also on the heel) about 1929. Another unusual format – a triangle embossed “52 / MINN / SEAL” – was

probably the second configuration (Figure 5-10). Both of these were probably only embossed on shoulders. Lamb also used a “52 MINN” seal at some point, probably only on the heel.



Figure 5-10 – 52 MINN (eBay)

57 / MINN – Knox Glass Bottle Co.

The final seal that we have discovered was “57 / MINN” in a triangle in a round plate on the front shoulder. This was apparently used by the Knox Glass Bottle Co. The heel of the bottle was embossed “K-9” – the more typical Knox number. For a currently unknown reason, the glass house apparently did not receive the “9” designation from Minnesota.

Discussion and Conclusions

The Minnesota Triangles were unique among seals because of their shapes. The triangles migrated from the shoulders to the heels of the bottles in the late 1930s, and they were probably discontinued in the late 1940s, when the general industry moved away from the need for seals. Like some of the other seals, these frequently appeared on bottles used outside of Minnesota – possibly only indicating the use of marked molds with other plates. There is an interesting gap between 10 and 37 – although it is possible that none of the typical users of the intervening numbers chose to deal in Minnesota. It is also possible, of course, that we have just not located the missing numerals. Future research should concentrate of finding a larger sample of bottles with the triangles to increase the accuracy of when the marks were first moved to the heels and when they were eliminated.

Acknowledgments

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Sources

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