

Essex Glass Co.

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During its brief 14-year history, the Essex Glass Co. became one of the major milk bottle manufacturers in the U.S. The company continually expanded its locations and improved its equipment, growing from a single hand plant at Mt. Vernon, Ohio, to five factories with fully automatic machines. The Essex E4 logo was well known.

Histories

Crescent Milk Bottle Co., Mt. Vernon, Ohio (1911-1912)

According to the Dairy Antiques Site (2015), the Crescent Milk Bottle Co. was incorporated on October 31, 1911; however, *Industrial World* (1911) noted the firm as a new corporation with a capital of \$15,000 in its November 6, 1911, issue. The incorporators were Charles M. Tigner, Rex M. Lamb, R.C. Cearbrough, R.R. Hart, and H.W. Hamilton. Tigner was the manager of the plant as well as the Essex Glass Co., also located in Mt. Vernon. Crescent filed for corporate dissolution on December 31, 1912, and became a factory of the Essex Glass Co. New York, New Jersey, and Wisconsin all assigned the number “39” to Crescent, and, even though the firm was no longer in business, the number was still listed by the *Stevens Point Journal* (1916a) in 1916.

Containers and Marks

The Crescent Milk Bottle Co. was only in business for two years and apparently used only one logo.

Crescent Symbol

Although the identification is not absolute, Crescent was the probable use of an embossed crescent placed on milk bottle bases. As we discussed in the Creamery Package Co.

section, the base of the #2 Ideal milk bottle, sold through Creamery Package, was embossed with a notable crescent (Figure 1). The manufacturing characteristics are consistent with a production in 1911 or 1912, and the crescent symbol on a milk bottle very strongly suggests the Crescent Milk Bottle Co.



Figure 1 – Crescent base

Essex Glass Co., Mt. Vernon, Ohio (1906-1920)

The Essex Glass Co. opened in 1906 at Mt. Vernon, Ohio, and was certainly making milk bottles by 1907, when it operated one continuous tank with six rings. The president was Owen P. Lamb, with J.W. Seidensticker as secretary, Rex M. Lamb as treasurer, and Charles M. Tigner as manager. Essex expanded, apparently buying the former Crescent Milk Bottle Co. – also at Mt. Vernon – in early 1913 (Roller 1997). Roller (1997) reported an Essex letterhead dated January 6, 1913, with Crescent Milk Bottle Co. lined out.

It is perhaps worth expanding a bit on two key players in both of these plants. Rex Lamb headed the group that formed the Lamb Glass Co. in 1921 – a plant that became an industry leader in the production of milk bottles – and a thorn in the side of the powerful Thatcher Mfg. Co. (the firm that eventually purchased Essex Glass). Charles Tigner was older and had formerly been involved in the Fairmount Glass Works, Tigner Glass Co., and the Winslow Glass Co. See the sections on these various firms for more information. It was not unusual for glass men to move from glass house to glass house or two be officers in more than one company simultaneously.

In 1913, Essex also obtained the former Standard Milk Bottle Mfg. Co. factory (founded 1911) in Parkersburg, West Virginia. Although Essex had begun as a hand operation, a 1913 survey of the industry listed the two Mt. Vernon plants as having three continuous tanks with 19 rings, operating entirely on machines (Toulouse 1971:172-174; Thomas Register 1907:799; *Journal of Industrial and Engineering Chemistry* 1913:951-954). Although the article failed to mention machine types, these were certainly some of the early press-and-blow machines.

In 1915, Essex built another factory at Dunkirk, New York, and in 1916 the company leased a factory in Fairmount, Indiana, that had previously been operated by the Illinois Glass

Co. Thus, by 1916, Essex had five plants in four cities: Mt. Vernon, Parkersburg, Fairmount, and Dunkirk (*Dunkirk Observer* 1915; 1916; *Glassworker* 1917a; *Milk Dealer* 1918).

In October 1916, Essex announced that “henceforth the E-4 milk bottles [i.e., those produced by Essex – see the Containers and Marks section below] will be made by . . . automatic machines.” The company planned to first convert the machines at Parkersburg and follow with the other three factories (*Milk Dealer* 1916a:50). An Essex ad in the same issue noted that the Dunkirk plant had “the new Hartford-Fairmount Automatic Milk Bottle Machine” and that “our other four plants will be equipped immediately” (*Milk Dealer* 1916b:58-59).¹

By 1918, Mt. Vernon had four semi-automatics in place and added a Hartford-Fairmont automatic. Parkersburg had four one-man machines (semiautomatics operated by a single man) in 1917, and the same number a year later. Fairmount started the 1916/17 blast with six semiautomatics, added two more within a year, and added a Hartford-Fairmont automatic in 1918. In the latter year, Dunkirk had one Hartford-Fairmont machine and two one-man machines, the former being used for quarts and the latter for pints (Bristow 1917; 1918a; 1918b; 1918c; *Glassworker* 1917a; 1917b; 1918a; 1918b).

At some point during 1919, Essex converted its semiautomatic machines at Dunkirk to fully automatic with the installation of feeders (“Lake View” 1919:15).² The Fairmount plant burned in 1919, but the company transferred some of its workers to the Mt. Vernon factory to operate the new machine being installed there (*Glassworker* 1919:1). The Thatcher Mfg. Co. – the nation’s largest milk bottle producer – purchased Essex in 1920 as part of its expansion program (Moody 1921:615). For many years, Thatcher had gobbled up smaller plants in an attempt at a monopoly. For more information about the purchase, see the Thatcher Mfg. Co. section.

¹ These reports are at odds with the 1913 article stating that all bottles produced at the Mt. Vernon plants were machine made.

² The new feeders converted semiautomatic machines to fully automatics during the 1915-1920 period.

Containers and Marks

Essex milk bottles often solarize to a light purple color due to the use of manganese as a decolorant. The company's only product was milk bottles, and the majority of these were marked with a variation of the company's E4 logo. Often, the E4 mark was accompanied by a one- or two-digit number that was frequently embossed immediately to the right of the logo, although sometimes it was placed on the back heel (see Discussion and Conclusion section below for more details). We have been unable to determine any type of plant code, so the numbers were probably mold codes.

E4 (ca. 1913-1920)

According to Toulouse (1971:172-173), Essex used the E₄ mark from 1906 to 1920. He noted that:

The figure 4 as part of the trademark is part of an identification with milk-bottle production. To conform to state licensing of milk bottles as "measures" as well as containers, and to indicate the glassmaker's responsibility in furnishing correct measure, each glass company was assigned or it adopted a serial number. Through interstate cooperation, the same number was used for the same glass company in other states, thus making the number a recognition of the glass company.

We have not seen a single bottle marked with a subscript "4." This may well have been a Toulouse misunderstanding based on hand-written letters from collectors. It is, however, remotely possible that such a mark is one of the variations (Figure 2).



Figure 2 – E4 logo

Giarde (1980:40-41) followed Toulouse, both in the configuration of the mark and the date. In addition, however, he noted that "the E has been found as part of a seal mark on the neck slug plate of tin tops" (see discussion about seals below). Essex ads for the E4 mark began at least as early as 1918 (*The Milk Dealer* 1918:59). The use of the numbering system began in New York on January 1, 1910, so the E4 mark cannot

predate that year. Since we have yet to discover “E” marks without the “4,” it is likely that Essex did not use a logo prior to ca. 1911 – after the number system was in place. Bottles in our sample were all machine made, so use of the E4 logo probably began with machine use ca. 1913.

E4 heelmarks are usually embossed on the front heels of bottles, although a few are found on back heels. None have been reported on bases. Single-digit numbers accompanying the mark are occasionally placed on the back heel or several spaces to the right of it. In our admittedly small sample, these range from 1-7.

E 4

This variation (with the “E” and the “4” divided by some space) appears on occasional bottles (Figure 3). Like the mark with the “E” and “4” adjacent, it is always embossed on the front heels of bottles. We have not been able to ascertain whether this variation has any real meaning, temporal or otherwise. It was likely just an engraver’s whim. There was probably a mark used during the early teens, but there is no way to determine an exact date range.

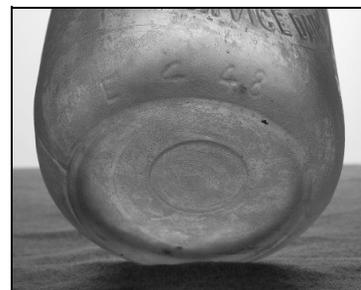


Figure 3 – E4 expanded logo

E - 4

Like the variation above, we have yet to determine if the dash (-) logo has any real meaning. This code was used for Essex bottles sold to Wisconsin dairies (*Stevens Point Journal* 1913:1). Brad Blodget (personal communication, 1/25/2007) reported an “E - 4 EMPIRE” mark on the front heel (offset to the left) or a milk bottle with the Massachusetts seal (see discussion on the seals below).

4E

According to the 1916 source, the 4E mark was used by Essex in Maine (*Kennebec Journal* 1916). However, we suspect this was a typographic error. All E4 marks we have found – used in Maine or elsewhere – were configured with the “E” preceding the “4.”

ESSEX

According to Giarde (1980:40), “the Essex mark has also been said to be “ESSEX” but there has been no confirmation of this.” Giarde (personal communication 2/21/2007) explained that he obtained his information from Gordon Taylor’s *Milk Bottle Manual* (1972). Taylor likely misread the mark or made a typographical error, adding a “E” to “ESSX” (see next entry).

ESSX

Several collectors sent information to Jeffery Giarde (personal communication, 2/21/2007) on the ESSX mark, almost certainly the logo intended by Taylor. Collectors sent Giarde additional information after his 1980 book, *Glass Milk Bottles: Their Makers and Marks*, was already published. One collector described a bottle embossed with “P-3 EMPIRE. ESSX” on the heel roll and “123-P 124-P” on the opposite heel. Another sent information on a bottle embossed “E - 4 ESSX X” on the heel. An eBay auction also included an “E - 4 EMPIRE ESSX” heelmark with the typical Empire 1901 patent date on the base. The Dairy Antique Site (2015) noted that the Empire Bottle and Supply Co. catalog called a specific type of milk bottle the “Essx style,” suggesting that the bottles were made by Essex. Empire was a jobber, selling milk bottles and supplies, and Essex was certainly one of Empire’s manufacturers. See Other E section for a discussion of Empire. Although this mark certainly exists, we have not found an example.

Massachusetts Seal

In 1901, Massachusetts became the first state to institute a “seal” law that required each dairy to bring its bottles to a “sealer” to be measured for correct capacity and etched with a mark (Figure 4). In late 1909, the law shifted to allow bonded glass houses to emboss the “seal” on the bottles, guaranteeing that each bottle held the correct capacity. These seals could initially be embossed virtually anywhere on the bottle and could be in almost any format. By ca. 1914, the seals were usually circular plates with distinct seams embossed inside with MASS (arch) / {company initial} /



Figure 4 – Etched Mass Seal
(Al Morin)



Figure 5 – MASS SEAL E (eBay)

SEAL (inverted arch). Each glass house had its own initial or initials for the central position (Blodget 2006:8; Schadlich [ca. 1990]).

The Mass seal was reported in association with both the E4 mark and “E - 4 EMPIRE” marks on the front heels of Massachusetts milk bottles. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts assigned the letter “E” to the Essex Glass Co. Essex used two formats for the seal. Probably the earliest was embossed “MASS SEAL (slight arch) / E” on either the shoulder or the reverse body (Figure 5). These were used at least as late as 1917 on bottles for the Hood Dairy. Hood had four-digit date codes embossed on the bases of its bottles (Figure 6). The second, more common variation, consisted of an arched “MASS” above an “E” with “SEAL” in an inverted arch completing the circle. The circular format was in use by at least 1914 and may have been used that early by Essex. Some were embossed on the body of the bottle (Figure 7), but the most common location was the shoulder (Figure 8). The latter format lasted until the sale to Thatcher in 1920.



Figure 6 – Hood 1917 base (eBay)

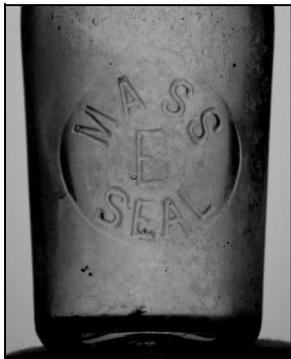


Figure 7 – MASS E SEAL – body



Figure 8 – MASS E SEAL – shoulder (eBay)

Maine Seal

The Maine seal was similar to the Massachusetts circular format, except for the word “MAINE” replaced “MASS” at the top with “E4” in the center (Figure 9). Maine instituted a seal law in 1913 that had no direction for the location of the seal. Two years later, the requirement placed the mark in the upper half of each bottle. The shoulder became the standard

location in all three “seal” states (Massachusetts, Maine, and Rhode Island). The law remained in force until 1947 (Public Laws of Maine 1913:78-79; 1915:28; 1947:295-296).

Other Seals

A 1916 ad indicated that Essex sold milk bottles with some kind of seal specifications in ten states. New York, New Jersey, and Illinois were satisfied with the E4 code alone, probably embossed at the heel. West Virginia, Michigan, and Wisconsin each required the E4 code with the word “SEALED” either preceding or following the code, presumably at the heel of the bottle. Massachusetts and Maine developed the “seal” system described above. The Pennsylvania system was unique, requiring a triangle divided by a horizontal line with the code above the line and “minn” below it (*Milk Dealer* 1916b:58-59).

Originally, the triangle was embossed at the shoulder, but it eventually migrated to the heel. The earliest Pennsylvania triangles were embossed on the shoulders of bottles, often in a round plate. Our only examples of the E4 triangle were embossed in plates at the shoulder (Figure 10). At some point, currently unknown but likely in the 1920s, the mark migrated to the heel.



Figure 9 – MAINE E4 SEAL



Figure 10 – E4 Triangle

EMPIRE

Milk bottles basemarked “EMPIRE” and “PAT AUG 13, 01” were often accompanied by E4 heelmarks (Figure 11). “EMPIRE” referred to the Empire Bottle & Supply Co., in business from 1901 to 1914 at New York City. See Other E section for a discussion of the EMPIRE mark on milk bottles.

Discussion and Conclusion

In our study of 120 boxes of milk bottles at the California State Parks collection (Sacramento), we only found ten with the



Figure 11 – EMPIRE base (Jay Hawkins)

Essex mark. Several had two-digits embossed below the E4 logo on the front heel. Although “17” and “18” could be date codes, large numbers, like “26” and “31” would have been too late for Essex. Three of the bottles were marked “E4 EMPIRE” or “E - 4 EMPIRE” on the heel, and one was also basemarked “EMPIRE / PAT.D AUG 13 01.” These were made by Essex for the Empire Bottle & Supply Co. (see Other E Marks for a discussion of Empire).

Instead of being whims of the engravers, the variations of the “E4” logo may have been set to meet the individual demands of certain states. The Wisconsin code, for example, was E-4, according to the Essex ad, and the code for Maine was 4E. This needs to be verified with a much larger sample.

Acknowledgments

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