

# Lockport Glass Works

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Located at Lockport, New York, the Lockport Glass Works was in business for 87 years. Beginning in 1843, the plant had already changed hands twice and been rebuilt by 1846. A group of glass blowers purchased the factory in 1866, renaming the business as the Lockport Glass Mfg. Co. and shifting the primary product to fruit jars. When Salmon B. Rowley bought the firm in 1869, he reverted to the Lockport Glass Works name. Although the plant continued to change owners, it retained the name until it closed in 1908.

## History

### **Lockport Glass Works, Lockport, New York (1843-1908)**

The original factory was founded in the spring of 1843<sup>1</sup> in Lockport, New York, by a Mr. Twogood (first name unknown), but it did not open until September. Apparently Twogood lacked sufficient capital and was forced to sell to William Parsons and Abija H. Moss the following September. Parsons & Moss in turn released the factory to George W. Hildreth & Co. (Hildreth, Silas H. Marks, William Keep, and A.T. Webster) in August of 1845. The firm advertised druggists' ware and bottles on August 27, 1845, probably the same products made by the earlier factory. The Hildreth group built a new plant in the northeastern section of Lockport (upper town, corner of Green and Transit), and it began production in late August 1846 (Bilotta 1970:7; McKearin & Wilson 1987:137; von Mechow 2017).

Webster died in the fall of 1850, and Francis Hitchins purchased his share from his heirs, leasing the factory from the other partners in June of the following year. Under Hitchins' control, the factory increased both its variety and output to include vials, patent medicines, sodas,

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<sup>1</sup> Creswick (1983a:269) placed the starting date at 1840. She stated that the factory was sold to Hero in 1869 but was again sold to Alonzo Mansfield to become the Mansfield Glass Works in 1872. Bilotta (1970:7), however, cited the "*Lockport Daily Advertiser and Democrat*, February 12, 1861, and notes of Joshua Wilber, Niagra County Historians Office, Lockport, New York" for the 1843 date.

perfumes, and other bottles along with lamp globes and other items – including fruit jars ca. 1860 – although his largest customers ordered patent medicine, bitters, beer, soda, and mineral water bottles (Figure 1). The company supplied local breweries and many nationally-known firms that made pharmaceuticals, hair restorer, etc. Hitchins sold the business in July 1866 to a group of the plant’s glassblowers (McKearin & Wilson 1978:137-140).

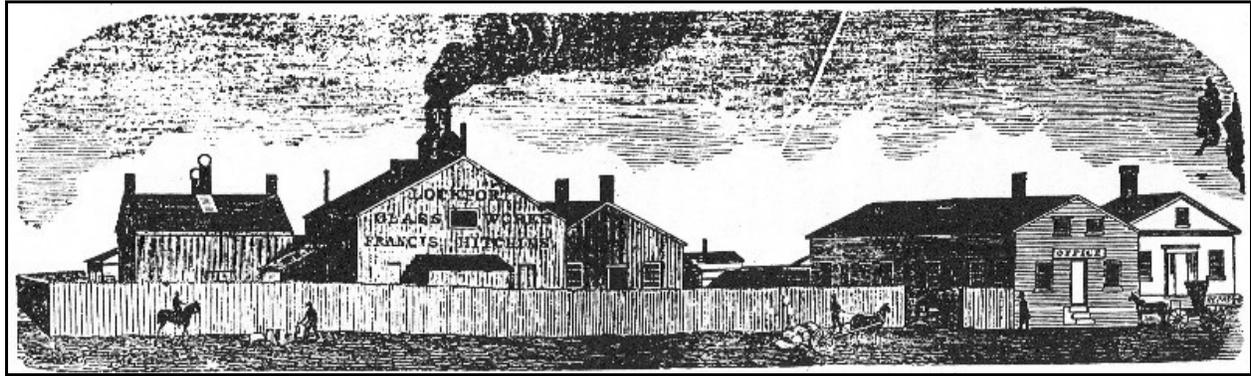


Figure 1 – Lockport Glass Works – 1860 (McKearin & Wilson 1978:138)

Luff (1955:4-5), Dunn (1971:7), and McKearin & Wilson (1987:140) noted that the glassblowers incorporated on July 21, 1866, under the name of the Lockport Glass Mfg. Co., with a capital of \$15,000.<sup>2</sup> Stockholders included John Shine, Robert Johnson, James Barony, Edward Batten, Michael Cahill, and Patrick Glynn – with the controlling share owned by Joseph Batten.<sup>3</sup> After 1866, the scope of production lessened, and the primary product became fruit jars, especially the Hero line (Bilotta 1970:7; McKearin & Wilson 1978:140-141). Spear (2004) discovered a bill of sale from the Lockport Glass Mfg. Co. to a local brewer for the purchase of 144 quart beer bottles on May 14, 1867. This indicates that Lockport, indeed, made beer bottles, although these would have been for local beer or ale – the export beer bottle was not invented for another six years.

Salmon B. Rowley, owner of the Hero fruit jar patents and Hero Glass Works (see that section), purchased the firm on July 16, 1869, reverting to the old Lockport Glass Works name. Rowley enlarged the plant, actually doubling its capacity. Despite his improvements, Rowley

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<sup>2</sup> Dunn (1971) apparently drew heavily from the Luff (1955) manuscript, frequently even using the same words.

<sup>3</sup> As an aside, it is interesting that these were all English names. Ethnic groups seem to have often banded together to form glass houses, often either German or English.

sold the business to Alonzo J. Mansfield in 1872. The factory suffered three fires in 1878, the final one causing severe damage to the plant. Mansfield rebuilt and enlarged the factory, continuing the emphasis on fruit jars (Bilotta 1970:7; McKearin & Wilson 1987:142). The sources – including online searches – are virtually silent about the Mansfield years.

In 1897, the “Lockport Glass Company” had “one 7-pot furnace in operation making fruit jars” and that number continued to be used until 1900. In 1901, however, the number of pots increased to 20 and remained at that level the following year (*National Glass Budget* 1897:5; 1900:11; 1901:11 1902:11). The *American Glass Review* (1934:159) noted that Lockport made “proprietary ware and fruit jars” in 1904. According to Bilotta (1970:13), the plant made “Common Prescription, Patent medicine, and all kinds of Vials; Castor oil, Packing, Heavy Perfumery, Cologne, Hair, Acid, Mineral, and Soda bottles.”<sup>4</sup> Although McKearin & Wilson reported that the factory closed in 1904, Dunn (1971:7) noted that the company again reorganized on April 9, 1904, to recapitalize the corporation, then went out of business in 1908. According to a former plant manager, the “competition became too great for their out-of-date machines.”

## Containers and Marks

Although Creswick (1987:16, 28, 90, 95, 120) suggested that jars embossed “BELLE,” “THE CHAMPION,” “INDICATOR,” “THE KING PAT. NOV. 2 1869,” and a style of “MASON’S IMPROVED” jar were all made by the Lockport Glass Works, none of those were confirmed by the editors who updated Roller (2011:100, 129, 257, 282).

Creswick (1987:5) and Roller (2011:22) agreed that the “ALL RIGHT” jar was made by the Lockport Glass Works. Roller noted that the jar was featured on the inside cover of a pamphlet published by Salmon B. Rowley in 1870. From 1869 to 1872, Rowley owned the Lockport Glass Works. Rowley apparently made no attempt to have his different factories use distinguishing marks on their products.

In 1860, Frederick Hitchins advertised a “Patent Fruit Jar” – although the ad gave no description of the jar nor included any name. An eBay auction featured a wooden crate with

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<sup>4</sup> Bilotta (1970:11-39) devoted most of his study to the specific bottles and glassware manufactured by Lockport.

“ONE DOZ. / MASON’S / COMPLETE / FRUIT JARS / LOCKPORT GLASS WORKS” printed on two sides along with drawings of fruit jars labeled “MASON’S / PATENT / NOV 30<sup>TH</sup> / 1858” – clear evidence that Lockport produced Mason jars at one point.

**LOCKPORT GLASS WORKS (1840s-1860s)**

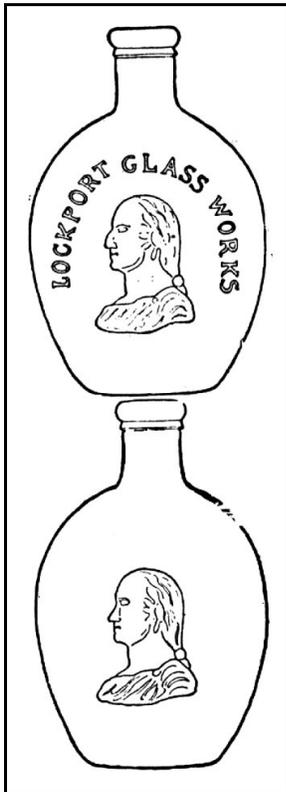


Figure 2 – Lockport (McKearin & Wilson 1978:539)

At least two flasks were marked “LOCKPORT / GLASS / WORKS” (Bilotta 1970:7; McKearin & Wilson 1978:142, 144; 539, 673). One had a bust of Washington on both sides with “LOCKPORT GLASS WORKS” in an arch surrounding one head on one face and a double-ring finish. McKearin & Wilson (1978:142) dated the flask late 1840s-1850s (Figure 2).

The other was embossed “LOCKPORT (slight arch)/ {8-point star or flower} / GLASS / WORKS (both horizontal)” on one face with “TRAVELER’S (slight arch) / {drawing of a goose}/ COMPANION (slight inverted arch)” on the reverse and a single-ring finish (Figure 3). McKearin & Wilson (1978:144) dated this flask late 1850s-1860s.

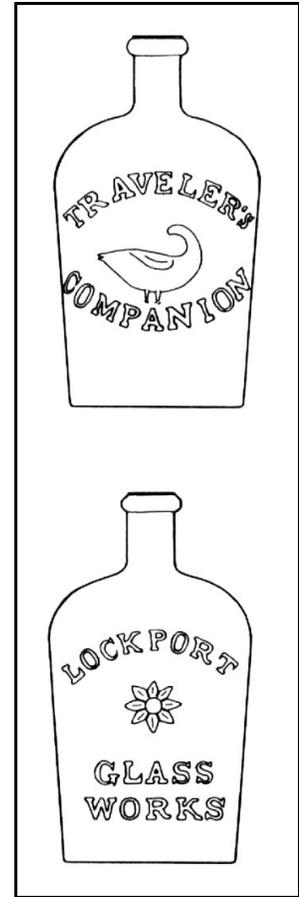


Figure 3 – Lockport (McKearin & Wilson 1978:673)

**LG WKS and LOCKPORT, N.Y. (1870-1872 and 1873-1886)**

Von Mechow (2017) listed a single blob-top “pony” soda bottle embossed “J.A. LOMAX / 14 16 & 18 CHARLES PLACE / CHICAGO” on the front; “THIS BOTTLE / MUST BE RETURNED” on the reverse; and “L.G.WKS” on the base (Figures 4 & 5). He attributed the bottle to the Lockport Glass Works.



Figure 4 – L.G.WKS. (Farnsworth & Walthall (2011:349)



Figure 5 – Pony bottle (Farnsworth & Walthall (2011:349)

and noted Lomax in business from 1858 to 1886. Farnsworth & Walthall (2011:335-366) extensively traced the Lomax history and bottles. Lomax used two bottles made at Lockport (as well as 50+ others), one embossed “L.G.WKS.” on the reverse heel, the other with “LOCKPORT, N.Y.” in the same location (Figure 6). They placed the “LOCKPORT” bottle during the 1870-1872 period and the “L.G.WKS.” variation at 1873-1886.



Figure 6 – Lockport (Farnsworth & Walthall (2011:339)

This timing is interesting. Rowley certainly concentrated on fruit jars during his tenure, but these bottles suggest that he also made other containers. The second marking would have been during the Mansfield period.

### **GLASS FROM F HITCHINS FACTORY LOCKPORT NY (1848-1860)**

McKearin & Wilson (1978:140) discussed a round bottle topped by a two-part, tapered finish with a sharp lower ring that was embossed “OAK ORCHARD / ACID SPRINGS” on one side of the shoulder and “H.W. BOSTWICK / AGT. No 574 / BROADWAY. NEW.YORK.” on the other (Figure 7). The bottles were apparently made in three-piece dip molds, and the bases were embossed “GLASS FROM F. HITCHINS FACTORY LOCKPORT NY” in a Rickett’s mold around the outside edge of the base (Figure 8). Oak Orchard Acid Springs was a resort from 1848 to 1860 in Genessee County, New York. The water came from five different springs, each with its unique taste – and the color of the bottles identified each specific spring (McKearin & Wilson 1978:140; von Mechow 2017).

## Discussion and Conclusions

It is clear that the vast majority of Lockport products were unmarked, and most of the ones with logos or the name of the manufacturer were obvious. The LGW monogram, however, posed a bit of a challenge. We have discovered four companies that were open during the correct period and had the proper initials:

Laurens Glass Works (1911-1968)

Louisville Glass Works (ca. April 1885-January 1886)

Lancaster Glass Works (1840-ca. 1909)

Lockport Glass Works (1843-1904)



Figure 7 – Oak Orchard bottle  
(Norman C. Heckler)

Toulouse and Creswick, both of whom had looked at numerous jars, seemed to think the jars were made during the very early 20<sup>th</sup> century, certainly prior to 1930. The Louisville Glass Works Co., suggested as the maker by Toulouse, therefore, is clearly out of the running because of its early tenure. Laurens was in business late enough, but we can find no reference to the company's making jars prior to ca. 1934 – too late.

Lancaster, too, was in business during the right time period, but we can find no reference that the plant made jars. Although the Lockport Glass Works closed by 1908 (possibly a few years earlier), the company was a known jar manufacturer. Creswick had already identified Lockport as making one style of Mason's Improved jar, and the company used machines prior to going out of business. Therefore, the LGW monogram was very likely used by the Lockport Glass Works.

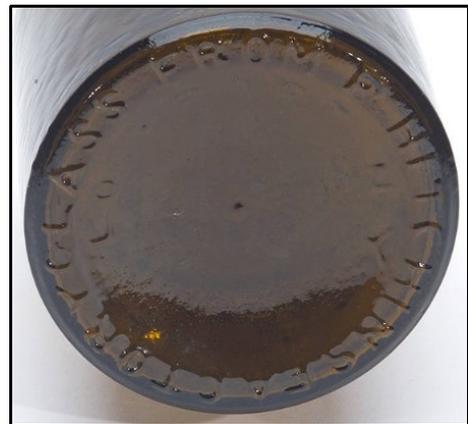


Figure 8 – Hitchins base (Norman C. Heckler)

## Acknowledgments

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