

Peerless Glass Co.

Bill Lockhart, Beau Schriever, Bill Lindsey, and Carol Serr

We have included two Peerless Glass Companies in this section, even though only one used a manufacturer's mark that we have found. The earlier firm began as the Peerless Stamping & Glass Co. in 1893 at Converse, Indiana, and became the Peerless Glass Co. in 1895, although the plant sold and was put out of commission the following year. This early plant is included because it made Mason fruit jars, and we may be able to eventually discover *which* type of Mason jar.

The second glass house was the Peerless Glass Co. of Long Island, New York. This operation grew out of the Bottler's & Manufacturer's Supply Co. opened in 1900, reorganizing into Peerless in late 1919 or early 1920. This plant made a variety of bottles, especially soda and mineral bottles, shifting to milk bottle production shortly before its sale to the Thatcher Mfg. Co. in 1933. At least two other glass houses used Peerless in their names, but neither made containers, so we have not included them in this study.

Histories

Peerless Stamping & Glass Co., Converse, Indiana (1893-1895)

Peerless Glass Co., Converse, Indiana (1895-1896)

Jasper A. Gauntt and other local businessmen built the glass factory for the Peerless Stamping & Glass Co. in 1892, but the plant did not commence production until January 1 of the following year (Figure 1). Gauntt was president, with Oldham Woods as manager. The factory manufactured Mason fruit jars at a four-ring continuous tank. On July 24, 1895, the firm petitioned for a change of name to the Peerless Glass Co. Although we have not discovered the date of the actual name change, it was certainly prior to the end of 1895 (Roller 1997).

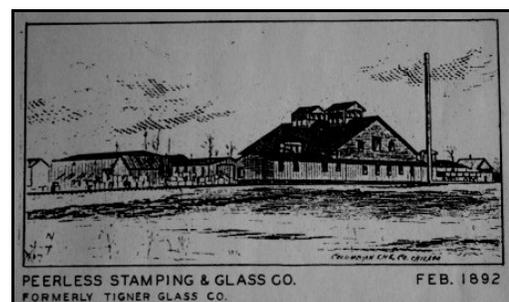


Figure 1 – Peerless 1892 (*Glass Chatter* 2005)

During its brief life, arsonists attempted to burn this non-union operation three times – each unsuccessful. One of the Ball Brothers, Edmund Ball, a member of the Western Fruit Jar Combine, purchased the plant in February 1896 and began dismantling the factory and shipping the machinery to Muncie, Indiana. E.L. Roberts & Co. bought the defunct plant in December of 1898 and rebuilt it as a 12-pot window-glass factory, renaming the firm the William L. Sharpe Co. The plant closed permanently in April of 1900 (*Indianapolis Journal* 2/28/1896; *Indianapolis News* 4/26/1900).

Containers and Marks

Although this short-lived glass house made Mason fruit jars during its less than three years in production, we have been unable to determine the specific type of Mason jars it produced. It is virtually certain that the firm did *not* emboss its name or initials on any products. Fruit jars embossed with “PEERLESS” were patented in 1863 and were probably produced about that time. See the Other P section for more information.

Peerless Glass Co., Long Island, New York (1920-1933)

The Bottler’s & Manufacturer’s Supply Co. opened in Long Island, New York, in 1900 (see Other B section). The plant made “flint proprietary medicines and packers” glass. In late 1919 or early 1920, the operation became the Peerless Glass Co. The *Thomas Registers* first listed the company in 1920 generically in the bottle and fruit jar categories. John Ohmeis was the president, with F. Meng as vice president, R.E. Shoder as secretary, Albert Ludorff as treasurer and J.S. Moore as factory manager. In December of 1921, the factory suffered considerable damage from a fire. Peerless obviously rebuilt and installed Miller feeders – turning semiautomatic machines into fully automatic ones – in late May or early June of 1922 (*Canning Age* 1920:18; *Glass Worker* 1922:8; *New York Daily Tribune* 12/21/1921; Thomas Publishing Co. 1920:827, 4615; 1921:781, 4572; Toulouse 1971:418).

Peerless made “flint prescriptions and green beers, minerals [and] food containers” at two continuous tanks with 20 rings in 1927. In 1933, the listing changed to “milk jars only.” The following year, the plant was listed as “Now Thatcher Mfg. Co.” (*American Glass Review* 1927a:143; 1933:70; 1934:98).

In *Adeline Smith v. Peerless Glass Co.* (June 1, 1932), “the plaintiff, a waitress or clerk at her father’s wayside soda and cigar stand, lost the sight of one eye by the explosion of a soda water bottle” produced by the Peerless Glass Co. and filled by the Minck Bros. Co. The court determined that the bottle was defective and passed judgement against Peerless (Casetext 2018). According to the Town of Butler (n.d.), “the Peerless Glass Company could not demonstrate that the accident was not the fault of its bottles and was forced into bankruptcy.” The *Omaha World-Herald* reported on November 16, 1934, that the Thatcher Mfg. Co. had “purchased the assets of Peerless Glass company for a million dollars cash, which it paid without resort to borrowing.”

Containers and Marks

PEERLESS (1860-1870s [jars]; 1920-1935 [bottles])

This mark appeared in two contexts: 1) jars from around the 1860s; and 2) possibly other bottles from the 1920-1935 period. For more information on the 1890s jars, see the Other P section.

Toulouse (1971:418) noted that the Peerless Glass Co. used this mark on its products from 1920 to 1935. He said that the mark *may* appear on milk bottles, although that was “unconfirmed.” However, Peerless certainly made bottles during the 1920-1933 period. Giarde (1980:103-104) added that the main connection with milk bottle production is that the Thatcher Mfg. Co. purchased the plant in 1932, although that does not guarantee that Peerless used any mark on them.

The connection with milk bottles seems tenuous. Neither the Giarde nor the Bottle Research Group has discovered a milk bottle embossed Peerless – except those used by Peerless Dairy. Similarly, von Mechow (2018) made no mention of a Peerless embossing on his very thorough beer and soda bottle web site – and we have not found any examples. Toulouse may have made his discussion based on a misunderstanding. Much of his information came from collectors via the U.S. Mail – a very slow and cumbersome process. Unless an example surfaces, this mark is almost certainly bogus.

PGC

Milk Bottles

According to Giarde (1980:104-105), “This mark has been identified on milk bottles but the company using this designation remains uncertain. While the ‘G’ probably refers to glass and the ‘C’ to company or corporation, the P may refer to any one of more than a dozen companies.” Giarde concluded that “its inclusion on a Borden bottle makes it a company in business in the 1920’s and/or later. The style of bottle and type (sour cream jar) place the company in existence around 1930. A very likely candidate for the mark is Peerless Glass Company.”

Schadlich (ca. 1990), however, noted that the Pennsylvania Glass Co. used a “P.G.C.8” mark on milk bottles. We have found only a single reference to milk bottle production by Pennsylvania Glass, and that was in the secondary literature. We could find no evidence of milk bottle manufacture in any of the primary sources. Schadlich did not find any documentary or empirical evidence linking Pennsylvania Glass with Massachusetts seals (his specialty area).

Beginning January 1, 1910, New York required “the name or initials and a designating number” to be embossed on the milk bottles by any glass manufacturer wishing to sell dairy containers within the state (*Orange County Times-Press* 1910). This is the earliest use of the milk bottle manufacturer numbering code that we have found. Other states quickly adopted the code, leading to multiple users for some numbers and multiple numeric codes for some factories. By at least 1920, the dust had settled, and the codes had become for all practical purposes, a national identification.

The multiple codes are important in this case because we have empirical evidence for the use of the number “8” in conjunction with the P.G.C. mark. Schadlich ascribed the initials to the Pennsylvania Glass Co., but we do not know what state issued the number. By at least 1916, No. 8 had been assigned to the Woodbury Glass Co., Winchester, Indiana, by the state of Wisconsin (*Stevens Point Journal* 1916).

Assuming that Giarde’s date for the use of the initials on milk bottles – ca. 1930 – is correct, the only glass house with the proper initials (at least that we have found) is the Peerless Glass Co. The firm began producing milk bottles probably in late 1932 or early 1933 – shortly

before the sale of the company to the Thatcher Mfg. Co. This fits with all the available data concerning the mark. At least one collector reported the PGC logo on a milk bottle to Giarde, so such a bottle probably exists – although milk bottles with the mark are certainly scarce or rare – so much so that we have been unable to locate an example as of this writing. This would fit with a glass house that ceased operations within a year or less of its initial milk bottle production. The short manufacturing duration would also explain the lack of documentation concerning the number 8.

Soda Bottles

Fisher & Weinhardt (2011) listed 20 machine-made, Long Island soda bottles embossed “PGC” on front or reverse heels. Many of these included one- or two-digit numbers – ranging from 1-15 – following the marks. Although two of the bottlers were listed as being in business prior to 1920, the vast majority were operating between 1920 and the 1930s. The authors suggested either the Peerless Glass Co. (Long Island) and Portland Glass Co. (Greenford, England) as users of the mark. They noted that “many Long Island bottles feature this mark, but the provenience of individual examples is unclear. The location of the Peerless Glass Co. would appear to make it the most likely candidate; its mark, however, was **PEER-LESS.**” They concluded that

Portland Glass Co. used **PGC** during the dates given, and the larger part of its production, primarily beer bottles, were intended for North American markets. The numerous Long Island bottles featuring this mark are all crown cap-types in a variety of styles. This company would thus appear to be the better candidate.

This is probably a misunderstanding of British bottle styles and/or a misreading of Toulouse (1971:421), when he reported that “the bulk of Portland’s business was in beer bottles, many of which were used for *products* coming to the United States [our emphasis]. They also made bottles to be shipped to Canada for Canadian filling.” Several things here are important. First, bottles made by the British firm were a sort of olive green in color – a hue *very* distinctive to British containers. Fisher & Weinhardt made no reference to this unusual color.

Second, Portland’s beer bottles were used for *products* coming to the U.S. – i.e., *filled* bottles, not ones to be used by American bottlers. Finally, of the 20 bottles with PGC logos

reported by Fisher & Weinhardt, only one was used by a brewery. Portland was a manufacturer of beer and whiskey bottles. We have found no record of soda or mineral water production. See the section on the Portland Glass Co. (Scotland) for more information.

The Peerless Glass Co. was located in an ideal spot to produce all these Long Island soda bottles – one of the specialties of the glass house. The fact that the PGC mark was not previously tied to the Peerless Glass Co. *only* means that no one made the connection before. Fisher & Weinhardt relied heavily on reports by others – especially Toulouse (an understandable dependence). We maintain that available evidence strongly suggests that the Peerless Glass Co. was the user of the PGC mark.

PGCo

David Whitten provided a prescription bottle embossed “P.G.Co.” on the base but with no other markings (Figures 2 & 3). This *could* be another logo used sparsely by the Peerless Glass Co. However, that identification is tentative. Whitten (2018) added that “the mark ‘P.G.Co’ is illustrated, in a circular orientation on the



Figure 3 – PGCo base (David Whitten)

‘northwest’ corner (10:00 to 12:00 position) of bottle bases, in a catalog page from an Owens-Illinois Glass Company bottle catalog/circular, undated but evidently from the early 1930s.”

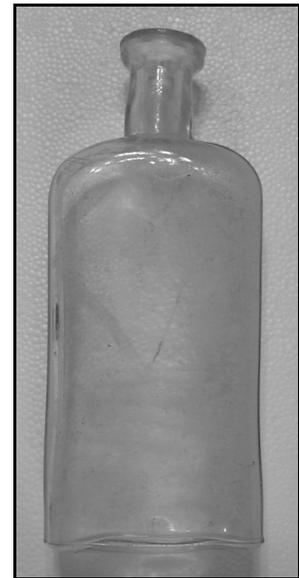


Figure 2 – PGCo bottle (David Whitten)

Discussion and Conclusions

Aside from the Toulouse contention that the Peerless Glass Co. used the word “PEERLESS” on its products, there have been few speculations about any manufacturer’s marks for the firm – with the notable exception of Giarde’s inspired contention that Peerless was probably the plant that embossed “PGC” on a few milk bottle bases.

Our study suggests that Giarde was correct – the Peerless Glass Co. of Long Island was the probable user of “PGC” on milk bottle bases. It is also virtually certain that the same glass house embossed “PGC” on the bases of a number of soda bottles used by Long Island bottlers (and probably others) during the 1920s and early 1930s.

None of these should be confused with the green and amber beer and whiskey bottles produced by the Portland Glass Co. – a Scottish glass house (see that section for more information). The typical green glass produced on the British isles has a very different hue from that of American-made containers.

Our suggestion of the possible use of “PGCo” by Peerless is tentative and should be approached with caution. It is only based on a single bottle with the logo and the fact that Peerless produced prescription bottles. A single druggist may have requested the initials, or they could even be “PCCo” – totally unrelated to a glass maker.

Acknowledgments

Our gratitude to Wanda Wakkinen for proofreading these works.

Sources

American Glass Review

1927 “Glass Factory Yearbook and Directory.” *American Glass Review*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

1933 “Glass Factory Yearbook and Directory.” *American Glass Review*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

1934 “Glass Factory Yearbook and Directory.” *American Glass Review*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Includes reprint of the *Glass Trade Directory for 1904*. Commoner Publishing Co., Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Canning Age

1920 "Convention Attendance Thoroughly Representative." *Canning Age* 1(11):17-18.
[December]

Casetext

2018 "Smith v. Peerless Glass Co." <https://casetext.com/case/smith-v-peerless-glass-co>

Fisher, George William and Donald H. Weinhardt

2011 *A Historical Guide to Long Island Soda, Beer & Mineral Water Bottles & Bottling Companies, 1840-1970*. 4th ed. Myshkin Press, Long Island, New York.

Giarde, Jeffery L.

1980 *Glass Milk Bottles: Their Makers and Marks*. Time Travelers Press, Bryn Mawr, California.

Glass Worker

1922 "Trade Notes." *Glass Worker* 41(36):7-8. [June 3]

Roller, Dick

1997 "Converse, IN Historical Notes." Dick Roller file.

Thomas Publishing Co.

1920 *Thomas Register of American Manufacturers and First Hands in All Lines*. Thomas Publishing Co., New York.

1921 *Thomas Register of American Manufacturers and First Hands in All Lines*. Thomas Publishing Co., New York.

Schadlich, Louis

ca. 1990 "Milk Bottles Marked by Manufacturers and Jobbers." Unpublished manuscript.

Toulouse, Julian Harrison

1971 *Bottle Makers and Their Marks*. Thomas Nelson, New York.

Town of Butler

n.d. "Preston Park: Description, History & Significance."

http://butlertwp.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/NRHP_-_Description_History__Significance_of_Preston_Park.pdf

Von Mechow, Tod

2018 "Soda & Beer Bottles of North America: Bottle Attributes - Beer & Soda Bottle Manufacturers." <http://www.sodasandbeers.com/SABBottleClosures.htm>

Whitten, David

2018 "Glass Manufacturers' Marks on Bottles & Other Glassware."

<http://www.glassbottlemarks.com/bottlemarks/>

Last updated 10/16/2018

