

# The John Agnew Companies

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with Contributions by Jay Hawkins

When John Agnew decided to stop just being another glass blower and joined with the Chambers brothers in 1843, he set into motion a series of glass houses that would remain in business for more than half a century. Although he split with the Chambers less than a decade later, he continued on with various partnerships and was eventually succeeded by some of his children. Although the company produced window glass and various bottle types at different points in its history, some of the operating firms embossed their names on the bases of wax-sealer fruit jars.

## Histories

### Chambers, Agnew & Co., Pittsburgh (ca. 1843-1850)

In November of 1833, at the age of 14, John Agnew was apprenticed to William McCully, where he learned the glass trade (McKearin & McKearin 1941:604). In 1845, Agnew married Mary Ann Chambers (possibly Mary N.), a sister of Alexander and D.H. Chambers, and went into business with his brothers-in-law (Figures 1 & 2).

Although sources disagree about both the opening and separation dates

(see section on A.&D.H. Chambers for full discussion), John Agnew and the Chambers brothers began their business ca. 1843. The firm was certainly in business by August 15, 1844.

Two days after that date, the *Pittsburgh Daily Post* published a list of persons and businesses that had mail awaiting them at the post office. Chambers and Agnew was on that list. At a later date, the Chambers brothers started another glass house to make window glass (*National Glass Budget* 1909:11). An 1847 ad showed the window glass unit in place by that date (Figure 3).



Figure 2 – Mary Agnew  
(Carrick-Overbrook  
Historical Society)

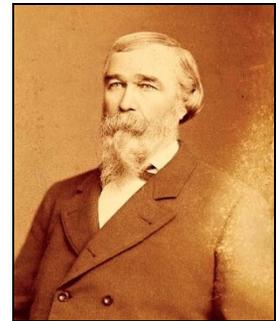


Figure 1 – John Agnew  
(Carrick-Overbrook  
Historical Society)

Although other researchers have placed the date of the Chambers brothers and Adnew breakup at dates ranging from 1847 to 1852 (see below), the *Pittsburgh Gazette* ran an announcement for six months beginning on July 13, 1850, stating that “the partnership heretofore existing between the subscribers under the firm of Chambers, Agnew & Co., Glass Manufacturers, was dissolved by mutual consent, on the first day of July, instant [i.e., 1850].” Agnew continued making bottles at the old works, while the Chambers brothers kept the window glass factory.

### John Agnew & Co., Pittsburgh (1850-1868)

Although such researchers as Creswick (1987:278), Toulouse (1971:33), McKearin and McKearin (1941:604), and Hawkins (2009:15) placed the opening of John Agnew & Co. from 1847 to 1854, he almost certainly continued in business under that title after the breakup between the Chambers brothers and Agnew on July 1, 1850 (see the section above). According to both McKearin and McKearin (1941:604) and Creswick (1987:4, 278), the Agnew firm concentrated on making “druggists’ green glass and flint glassware” in two separate factories. The information probably originated from Everts & Co. (1876).

Although we have not currently discovered the date, Agnew built a new plant about four years after the dissolution of Chambers, Agnew & Co., leasing the old one to E. Wormser & Co. ca. 1854. Along with other researchers, we had assumed that Wormser built his first factory, but an article in the *Pittsburgh Daily Post* on July 24, 1858, noted that Agnew actually owned the plant, leasing it to Wormser for the past “two or three years.” On July 22, the “glass house on the corner of Carson and Butler streets” burned to the ground at a loss of “about \$6,000—of which Mr. Agnew loses about \$3,000, and Wormser & Co. the same amount.”

The *Pennsylvania Gazette* commented on the same day that Agnew had “leased [the factory] to Wormser & Co. for \$800 per annum some years ago” and that “previous to retiring from the business, Mr. Agnew had repaired the buildings, furnaces, &c. at an expenditure of about \$1100.” The *Gazette* named the location as “Carson and Etna streets, Ninth Ward, extending back to the Allegheny River.” The factory that had burned was certainly the old plant

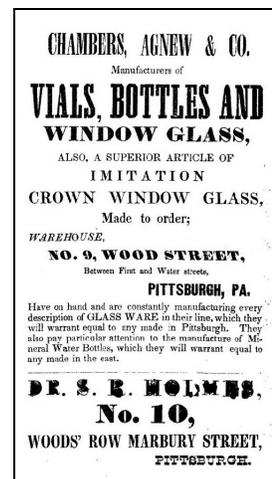


Figure 3 – Chambers & Agnew ad (1847 city directory)

originally built by Chambers, Agnew & Co., noted in the 1847 Pittsburgh Directory as being on “Carson be [below] Penn.”

Although Creswick (1987:4, 278) noted that Agnew’s son joined the firm in 1870, evidence from Hawkins (2009:16) indicated an entirely different company in operation beginning in 1868.

## Containers and Marks

### A&Co (1850-1868)

Knittle (1927:441), Toulouse (1971:33), Jones (1966:15), McKearin and Wilson (1987:646, 650-651), Griffenhagen and Bogard (1999:212), as the user of the logo on flasks. Evidence suggests that they were correct. Farnsworth & Walthall (2011:57, 381-386) discussed Bennett Pieters & Co. and illustrated the firm’s Red Jacket Bitters with the “A&Co” logo on the bases. They attributed the mark on the bitters bottles to Adams & Co. See the Agnew & Co. file for a more complete discussion. It is unlikely that John Agnew & Co. used the A&Co logo (see Discussion and Conclusions section).

### Agnews & Wilcox, Pittsburgh (1868-1872)

John Agnew, his son, John C. Agnew, and Lemuel Wilcox operated the firm of Agnews & Wilcox outside the City of Pittsburgh at Carrick Borough. Agnew had built the factory in 1854 and operated it alone until his son and Wilcox joined him in 1868. The plant produced vials, bottles, and green glassware, particularly soda bottles and coffin-shaped flasks (Hawkins 2009:20-21).

A December 9, 1868, ad in the *Pittsburgh Daily Commercial* affirmed “Agnews & Wilcox, 13 Wood St. / Manufacturers [sic] of Vials, Bottles & Green Glassware” (Figure 4). The Wood St. address was the warehouse at Pittsburgh. On March 26, 1872, the *Pittsburgh Weekly Gazette* reported the “Dissolution.—the Co-Parttership [sic]



Figure 4 – Agnews & Wilcox ad (*Pittsburgh Daily Commercial* 12/9/1868)

heretofore existing between John Agnew, L. Wilcox and I.C. Agnew [*sic* – J.C. Agnew], under the firm name of Agnews & Wilcox, has been dissolved by agreement” on March 20, 1872. With the defection of Wilcox, the firm was renamed John Agnew & Son. Obviously, both newspapers needed proofreaders.

## Containers and Marks

### A&W (1868-1872)



Figure 6 – Closeup of A&W heelmark (Courtesy of Jay Hawkins)

Agnews & Wilcox used the A&W logo from 1868 to 1872. The mark is found embossed on the bases or heels of various bottle types including round medicines, coffin flasks (Figures 5 & 6), and blob-top soda bottles (Hawkins 2009:20-21). One round medicine bottle was made with a “key mold” base that left a half-circle mark (Figure 7). That type of mold was only used during the 1868-1872 period (Lindsey 2021) – validating the Agnews & Wilcox identification.

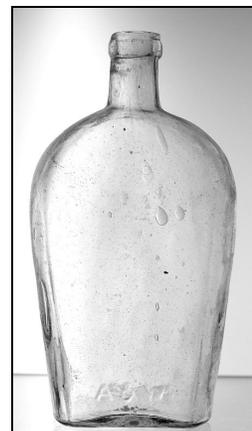


Figure 5 – Coffin flask with A&W heelmark (Courtesy of Jay Hawkins)

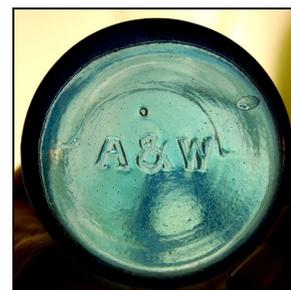


Figure 7 – A&W basemark on round medicine with key base (Hawkins 2009:20)

### John Agnew & Son, Pittsburgh (1872-ca. 1877)

Once again, past researchers had discrepancies on the transition dates, but the information in the previous section clearly shows that Wilcox had left the organization on March 20, 1872, leaving John Agnew and his son, John C. Agnew, to run the operation. Hawkins (2009:16-17) noted that the operation had become Agnew & Co. by 1878. Agnew & Son was listed in the directory until 1877. Hawkins also noted that the firm was known as either Agnew & Son or J. Agnew & Son during this period. The plant operated two furnaces with 11 pots in 1876.

About the time of the next reorganization, the Agnew family apparently had some kind of a split, with Charles N. Agnew replacing John C. This factory, dating back to ca. 1854, was

built at the rear of the house occupied by John Agnew, later the residence of John C. Agnew, the senior Agnew's son. An article in the *Pittsburgh Press* for September 23, 1900, discussed the

“erection of a large glass factory in 1860 [actually ca. 1854] by John Agnew of Chambers & Agnew. Two furnaces were built and green glass and prescription ware were made. For 20 years, the factory was in operation, giving employment to no less than 100 hands. The factory stood at the rear of the present residence of John Agnew, Jr., on the road to Concord Church. To-day a huge pile of bricks is all that is left of the old bottle works.”

The “1860” erection almost certainly referred to the plant built ca. 1854, and “20 years” later would have been 1880. Since 1880 is very close to 1877, that was almost certainly the year that the family abandoned the old factory



Figure 9 – Workers at the Agnew plant (Historic Pittsburgh)

– which they would not have done if they had not constructed a new one.

A drawing in an 1876 history showed the

location of the plant (Figure 8), and the Historic Pittsburgh website provided a photo that may have come from this period (Figure 9).



Figure 8 – John Agnew factory (Everts & Co. 1876)

## Containers and Marks

Knittle (1927:348) stated that

the Agnew clear-white and golden-amber perfume, bitters, patent-medicine, and similar bottles were of exceptionally good metal and design. Among the well-known patent-medicine containers of this make are the “Indian Queen” and “Ear of Corn,” each three quarters of a quart in capacity and golden amber in color.

As usual, Knittle did not enlighten us with her reasons for assigning these two bottles to the Agnews. Ring 1980:263; 340-341) showed no manufacturer’s mark for Indian Queen Bitters or on the National Bitters (ear-of-corn) bottle, although she did illustrate a triangular National Bitters bottle (*not* ear-of-corn) embossed with “A.C.” on the shoulder. If Agnew actually did make the two bitters bottles, the firm almost certainly did *not* use a logo on the containers.

A (poss. 1872-1893)

Toulouse (1971:21-22) cited an “A” mark as being used by John Agnew & Son from 1854 to 1866. He stated, “Although the letter ‘A’ alone has been identified with Adams & Co. by Knittle, there is a groove-ring wax sealer identical with one marked in full ‘John Agnew & Son,’ with only the letter ‘A’ on the bottom” (Figure 10) The jar was also listed in his earlier book (Toulouse 1969:15-16). Creswick (1987:1) showed this mark on a grooved-ring wax-sealer fruit jar but made no attribution to a manufacturer (Figure 11).

Hawkins (2009:17, 19-20) agreed with Toulouse and included a photograph of a fruit jar base embossed with both “JOHN AGNEW & SON” and an “A” in the center. He also showed a photo of an “A” on a rectangular medicine bottle (Figure 12). Although the fruit jar base was certainly made by John Agnew & Son, the “A” mark on the medicine

bottle could have been used by any manufacturer of such items with an “A” in the firm name – including Adams & Co. or Agnew & Co. – or the “A” could even have been mold code.

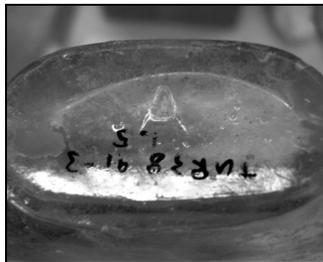


Figure 13 – “A” on a pumpkinseed flask (Tucson Urban Renewal collection)

A collection from the Tucson Urban Renewal project, included a colorless, pumpkinseed flask that was embossed on the base with the letter “A” (Figure 13). The quarter-pint flask was very similar to others that were embossed with A in a circle on their



Figure 10 – John Agnew & Son jar base with “A” in the center (Hawkins 2009:17)

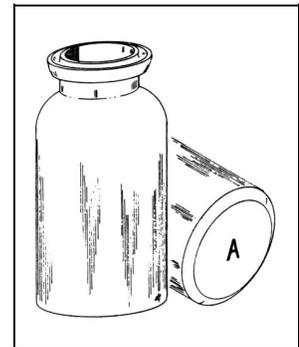


Figure 11 – Wax-sealer jar with “A” in the center (Creswick 1987:1)



Figure 12 – “A” on a medicinal bottle (Hawkins 2009:19)

bases. The Circle-A was likely the logo of the American Glass Works at Richmond, Virginia.<sup>1</sup> The Tucson bottle was *very* similar in color, shape, and even a finial on the lower side of the base. This “A” mark was probably also used by American Glass.

### **AGNEW & SON / PITTSBURGH PA (1872-1876)**

Creswick (1987:4) noted this mark around the outside edge of the base on a grooved-ring wax-sealer fruit jar that she dated ca. 1870-1876. John Agnew & Son actually began in 1872.

### **JOHN AGNEW & SON PITTSBURGH, PA. (1872-1876)**

Toulouse (1971:40) noted a “JOHN AGNEW & Co. Pitts” mark that “appears as a circle on the bottom” of a fruit jar. However, that appears to have been a misprint from his earlier book (Toulouse 1969:15) where he noted the correct mark, JOHN AGNEW & SON PITTSBURGH PA. He noted that the company was in business from 1854 to 1866. Roller (1983:6) included the same mark, also on a grooved-ring wax-sealer jar and dated it as being made in the 1870s. He also noted a variation that included a star on the base.

Hawkins (2009:17) presented a base photo of one jar embossed “JOHN AGNEW & SON (arch) / PITTSBURGH, PA (inverted arch)” with a medium-sized “A” in the center that clearly shows that the resting point for the jar was on the embossing (see Figure 10). Except for the “A,” the embossing was on a Rickett’s-type plate around the circumference of the base, although the ring was not sloped or countersunk into the base like a typical Rickett’s mold.

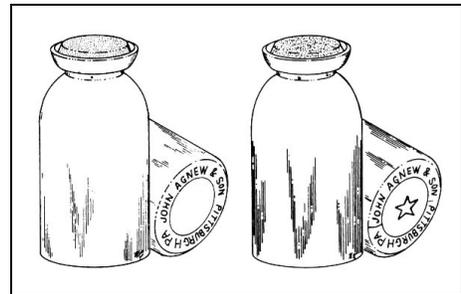


Figure 14 – John Agnew & Son fruit jars (Creswick 1987:4)

Creswick (1987:4) also illustrated the jar in four variations (all on bases), dated ca. 1870-1876 (Figure 14). Leybourne (2001:5) added the jar photographed by Hawkins for a total of five variations:

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<sup>1</sup> More than two decades later, of course, the Circle-A logo was used by the Armstrong Glass Co.

1. AGNEW & SON PITTSBURGH
2. JOHN AGNEW & SON
3. JOHN AGNEW & SON PITTSBURGH PA
4. JOHN AGNEW & SON PITTSBURGH PA (with star in center)
5. JOHN AGNEW & SON PITTSBURGH PA (with “A” in center)

Roller (2011:20) showed examples of variations 1 and 4 in the above list.

### **Agnew & Co., Pittsburgh (1876-1893)**

The firm was first listed as Agnew & Co. in the 1876 city directory, and this name change calls for some speculation. John Agnew, the founder of the glass houses managed the operation with his son, Charles N. Agnew. At this point, we do not know what happened to John C. Agnew, apparently the senior son or when Charles replaced him in management.

The firm had two factories (actually two furnaces) in 1876, making flint bottles and worked a total of 11 pots (*Crockery and Glass Journal* 1876:15). In 1877, the plant was “located in Baldwin township, near the village of Mount Oliver.” The plant made “prescription bottles exclusively, and [had] two furnaces, with eleven pots. One, with six pots, is in operation, employing eighteen blowers, and altogether about seventy men and boys.” (*Crockery and Glass Journal* 1877:20). The plant made “flint glass, vials and bottles” in 1879 at “six large double mouth patent pots” – the equivalent of eight normal pots (*Brick, Pottery, and Glass Journal* 1879:116).

About this time, John Agnew (the elder) began looking for a new venue to replace the factory built ca. 1854 at the rear of the house eventually occupied by John C. Agnew. The *Pittsburgh Daily Press* told the story of the new plant on March 12, 1880:

A new glass factory is in the course of erection at Hulton Station, on the Allegheny Valley railroad to be owned and operated by John Agnew & Co., of the South Side. It will be devoted to the manufacture of prescription vials and glass balls for trap-shooting. When it is completed, Mr. Agnew will, it is said, abandon his old factory on the Brownsville road.

Agnew & Co. may have continued operations at the old plant for a short period before completely moving into the new plant and permanently abandoning the old one. The new location was variously called Oakmont, Carrick, Hulton, and Baldwin Township. All referred to the same spot, as it was viewed from the perspective of the reporter. As shown in an 1895 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, the plant was larger than the one behind Agnew's house (Figure 15).

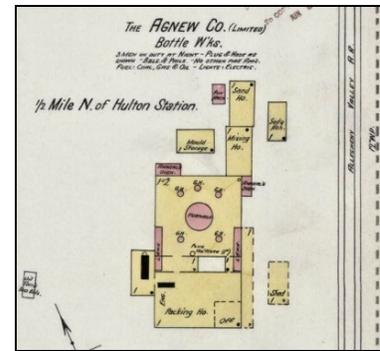


Figure 15 – Agnew & Co. factory (1894 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map)

Initially, the Hulton factory produced prescription vials and glass target balls. Hawkins (2009:14, 18) cited the *Crockery & Glass Journal* that the price of target balls had increased by 25% in March of 1880, making their production hugely profitable. By May, the Agnews manufactured 10,000 target balls per day, hoping to increase that output to 12,000. Hawkins noted that target balls were formed in two-piece cast iron molds, but the bottom soon fell out of that market because of the invention of the much cheaper clay pigeons in 1880. After that, the factory claimed that it made virtually all types of bottles. The plant produced wines, brandies, flasks and prescription bottles in flint glass only by 1884 (*Crockery & Glass Journal* 1884:12; Hawkins 2009:18-19).

Apparently, the title to the factory, company, and land rested in the hands of John Agnew's wife, Mary Ann (or Mary N.).<sup>2</sup> According to a 1905 court report, Mary N. Agnew, died on March 9, willing the ownership of the Oakmont glass factory to three of her children, Mary H. Hunter, Charles N. Agnew, and Letta C. Young. The report noted that the “the business of manufacturing glass [had been] conducted by Mrs. Agnew” – although her husband, John was certainly still a strong part of the management of the business. Shortly after their mother's death, the three children formed a partnership to operate the firm – still under the name Agnew & Co. (*Pittsburgh Legal Journal* 1905:280-282).

On February 24, 1890, the elder John Agnew was assaulted by one of his workers at age 72. Although he was knocked to the ground (two teeth broken) and repeatedly kicked, he

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<sup>2</sup> Even though other sources named Agnew's wife as Mary Ann, the 1905 court report called her Mary N. The use of the initial was probably the result of a mis-hearing by the stenographer.

managed to fire a shot at his assailant, who ran. Seriously hurt, Agnew was confined to his bed for a period and retired from the glass business, leaving Charles N. Agnew and Mary H. Hunter to manage the glass house (*Pittsburgh Dispatch* 2/27/1890). Letta C. Young retained her one-third share, although she was not actively involved in running the operation. Charles and Letta apparently missed their father's direction. The firm was insolvent by November of 1893 (*Pittsburgh Legal Journal* 1905:281-282).

## Containers and Marks

### AGNEW & CO. (1877-1893)

Toulouse (1969:16; 1971:40) illustrated a wax-sealer fruit jar with “AGNEW & CO.’ in a circle” on the base. He dated the jar “circa 1876-82.” Roller (1983:6) also described the jar with the full wording and noted that it was made “c. 1880s-1890s by Agnew & Co. and the Agnew Co., Ltd., Pittsburgh and Hulton, Pa.”

Creswick (1987:3) illustrated a jar embossed “AGNEW & CO (arch) / {number} / PAT APL FOR / 1887 (all horizontal) / PITTSBURG (inverted arch)” on the base and noted four minor variations in wording along with numbers 1-6 and 9 also on the bases (Figure 16). The first three variations spelled PITTSBURG with no “H”, but the final one (accompanied by the “9”) used the PITTSBURGH spelling. She dated the jars “circa 1887.” Creswick’s four variations were all embossed AGNEW & CO (arch) / {number} followed by:

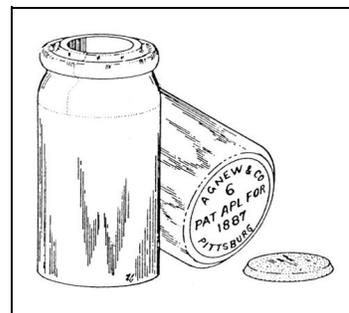


Figure 16 – Agnew & Co. Improved Standard jar (Creswick 1987:3)

1. / PAT APL FOR / 1887 (all horizontal) / PITTSBURG (inverted arch)<sup>3</sup>
2. / PAT<sup>D</sup> APL FOR / 1887 (all horizontal) / PITTSBURG (inverted arch)
3. / PAT APL<sup>D</sup> FOR / 1887 (all horizontal) / PITTSBURG (inverted arch)
4. / PAT APL FOR / 1887 (all horizontal) / PITTSBURGH (inverted arch) [Note “H” in “PITTSBURGH”]

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<sup>3</sup> Some of these variations may have only been misreadings of poorly embossed bases.

Numbers ranged from 1 through 6. A final variation with the “H” spelling of PITTSBURGH included the numeral 9. All versions of the mark were found on grooved- ring wax-sealer fruit jars. There are problems with Creswick’s description that we have attempted to resolve here. Although she did not include any numbers on the first three variations, the number “6” appeared in her drawing of the first variation (listed as #1 above). She also did not include the patent information (PAT APL FOR) in the fourth variation (possibly due to poor embossing).

These numerical mold codes have the potential as a dating source. Lockhart et al. (2011) hypothesized the use of sequential mold codes on export beer bottles. It seems likely that the same type of sequencing appeared on most if not all numbered molds. In this case, there may have been sequential molds from 1 to 9. Many of the bases shown in photos have completely illegible numbers. Those could be numbers 7 and 8.

Dating with mold codes should be applied with caution, however. For example, Agnew may have ordered molds numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4 initially. During slow times, No. 2 may have been used extensively, while the others sat on the shelf. When it wore out, it was replaced by No. 5. Since No. 5 was new, the blowers preferred it and used it as the primary mold until No. 5 wore out, when it was replaced by No. 6. Then business picked up, and all four molds were used again. Now, most jars made with No. 5 were older than most made by No. 2, 3, and 4. Despite this disclaimer, it is very likely that mold No. 9 was used later than mold No. 1.

Roller (1997) quoted the *American Pottery & Glassware Reporter*, June 16, 1887 – almost certainly describing the Patent Applied For jar:

Agnew & Co. . . . have a big demand for their improved standard fruit jar and are working steadily on them. They make the whole jar, including ring, in one piece and this effects [*sic*] a saving of time and labor. The fastening of the cap is a simple and effective device, involving no trouble whatever, and insuring [*sic*] perfect security for the contents. They have applied for a patent on their improvements.

Page 94 of the 1894 catalog of the Agnew Co., Ltd., also offered “Agnew’s Improved Standard Fruit Jar” made of flint glass in quart and half-gallon sizes. The catalog noted that

“this jar is made of the same thickness of glass throughout, and will stand the heating and filling much better than the old style standard jar.” The photo in the catalog is clearly the jar with the 1887 patent application date. Roller (2011:19) illustrated an ad for the same jar from the February 26, 1896, edition of *China, Glass and Lamps*. Roller (1997) also listed continual advertisements for the Improved Standard jar throughout the period. The jar was almost certainly made by the Agnew firm from 1887 to the close of the Hulton plant in 1900.



Figure 17 – Finish of an Agnew & Co. wax-sealer fruit jar (North American Glass)



Figure 18 – Agnew Improved Standard jar (North American Glass)

Roller (2011:19) also explained that the older (1983) edition of the book was in error in stating that the “groove was formed by pressing down on the blowpipe while the glass was still hot.”<sup>4</sup> The 2011 Roller editors noted that “there is every indication the mouth was molded by the mold, as the mold seam continues to the ground lip of the jar” (Figure 17). They further noted that the jar was made in a three-piece mold (dip mold with two hinged side molds to form the shoulder). The horizontal shoulder seam is clearly visible in Figure 18.

Toulouse (1969:16) also found what he thought might be a solution. He noted that “a similar wax sealer [to the Agnew & Co. jar] was patented Sept. 18, 1860.”

Unfortunately, he did not list the patent in his patent section. The only jar-related patent we could find for that date was Patent No. 30,036, issued to R. Hemingray for a “Mold for Glass Jars.” The jar in the drawing is superficially similar to the Agnew jars, but the device was a hinged, two-piece mold with a ring mold to make the finish (Figure 19). Toulouse was in error; this was not related to the Agnew jar.

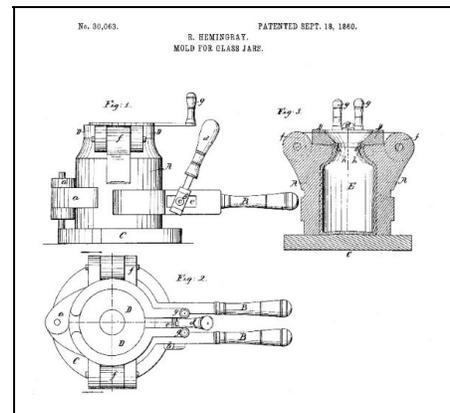


Figure 19 – Hemingray’s 1860 patent

<sup>4</sup> The information originally came from Toulouse (1969:16).

We differ in opinion from the Roller (2011:19) description in one small particular. The patent applied for section of the base is noted as “PAT<sup>D</sup> APL<sup>D</sup> FOR.” The central base embossing (including the patent part) is indistinct in all photos we have seen. However the superscript “<sup>D</sup>” in “APL<sup>D</sup>” is visible in the photos (Figure 20). The “<sup>D</sup>” in “PAT<sup>D</sup>” is not visible, and we consider it unlikely. The “PAT<sup>D</sup>” abbreviation usually indicates the word “PATENTED” – while the word in “PATENT APPLIED FOR” lacks the “ED” making the word past tense. Of course, it is possible that “PAT<sup>D</sup>” was an engraver’s error.



Figure 20 – Base of an Agnew & Co. Improved Standard jar – note superscript <sup>D</sup> in APL<sup>D</sup> (North American Glass)

The Pittsburg/Pittsburgh spelling is intriguing as is the story behind it. According to Hawkins (personal communication, 2006):

The “h” in Pittsburgh has a great history. Pittsburgh and many other Pennsylvania towns originally had the “h.” On December 23, 1891 the “h” was dropped from all towns by a mandate from the U.S. Board of Geographic Names in order to standardize spellings. After 20 years of work, the people of Pittsburgh were able to get the “h” officially back on July 11, 1911.

However, Hawkins also noted that some early bottles were made without the “h” spelling. He added, “I personally believe that sometimes the ‘h’ was left off to save money.”

### **OK Jar**

The Roller editors (2011:19) also called attention to the similarity between the Agnew jar and the “OK” jar (Figure 21). In our original work, we had attributed the OK jar to the Aetna Glass Works (see the Aetna/Arsenal Glass Works section) due to the three-piece mold and tapered shoulder. Although there are similarities between the OK and jars made by the Aetna Glass Works (notably the Triumph), the important issue centers on whether the mold lines of the OK jars continued over the finishes and to the inside ground rim. A close



Figure 21 – OK jar (North American Glass)

examination of a photo from North American Glass revealed the presence of these seams – clearly relating the jar to the Agnew’s Improved Standard Fruit Jar rather than to the Aetna Glass Works jars (Figure 22).



Figure 22 – Finish of OK jar (North American Glass)

**Agnew & Co., Ltd., Hulton, Pennsylvania (1893-1900)**

After Agnew & Co. became insolvent in November of 1893, the family formed Agnew & Co., Ltd., a limited partnership with \$5,000 capital. An 1894 catalog for the firm (Editors of the Pyne Press 1972:71-101) has survived (Figure 23). The 1905 court report stated that “the property was sold by the sheriff on November 2, 1896, for the sum of \$275 to the defendant” – although the *Pittsburgh Daily Post* (12/16/1904) claimed that John P. Hunter (husband of Mary H. Hunter) bought the factory for that price – which makes better sense, leading to the lawsuit by Letta C. Young against her brother and sister (*Pittsburgh Legal Journal* 1905:282).

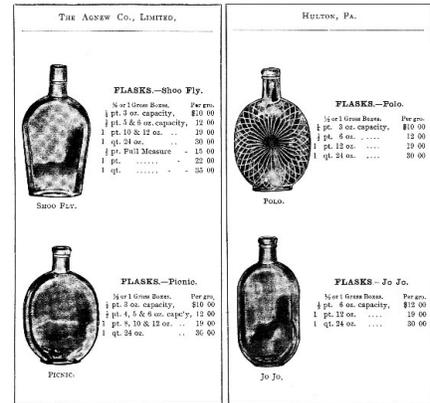


Figure 23 – Sample of flasks from the 1894 Hulton catalog (Pyne Press 1972:75-76)

In addition to being a member of the Agnew family, Hunter had been the attorney for Agnew & Co. He had bought the property then sold the glass house to the Southern Avenue Land Co. in 1897. The Land Co. was incorporated by John C. Agnew, Viola R. Agnew, Frank I. Gossler, O.I. Riddle, Albert N. Hunter, Edmund B. Patterson, and John P. Hunter. This interesting group included brother John C. Agnew (who had been somehow excluded from Agnew & Co. in the reorganization in 1877), John P. Hunter (the accused), and Albert N. Hunter, apparently a relative of John’s.

Apparently, the Southern Avenue Land Co. was able to keep the factory in operation. In 1897, the plant had “one furnace, 11-pots in operation on flint prescriptions, flasks, brandies, beer bottles, milk bottles, pickle ware, etc.” By 1898, the number of pots had increased to 12 (*National Glass Budget* 1897a:4; 1897b:7; 1898:7). Hawkins (2009:19) noted that the factory was sold at auction on June 2, 1900. According to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* for December 12, 1900, Agnew plant was idle from August of 1899 to December of 1900.

The *Pittsburgh Daily Post* announced on November 2, 1901, that I.N. Denoon, R.A. Hileman, J.C. Denoon, W.D. Shipley, and John H. Croskey would present to the governor on November 11 a petition for a corporate charter as the Oakmont Glass Co. The firm purchased the former Agnew & Co. plant and enlarged it from a 12-pot unit to an operation using two continuous tanks. The *Pittsburgh Press* posted on September 18, 1902, that the plant would reopen on September 30. But, the venture was ill fated. The *Press* reported on December 4, 1904, that the Oakmont Glass Co. sold its property through George Bros. to Rueben Miller for \$14,000. Agnew's final factory was no more.

In a rebuttal to the suit by his sister-in-law, John P. Hunter, claimed in the *Pittsburgh Press* on December 24, 1904, that he had "advanced money to keep the business of the heirs, the Oakmont glass factory, intact and was obliged to take over the property himself to prevent losing all he had advanced." He added that

Mrs. Young and her brothers and sisters knew well that the taxes on the Center Ave. property . . . were in arrears and the properties about to be sold, yet she was unable to pay the same, her means being invested in the Oakmont glass works, operated by the Agnew & Co. partnership, which at that time were actually insolvent.

He further alleged that Mrs. Young and Charles M. Agnew signed the deeds, knowing full well what that meant. He summarized that "Mrs. Young's share in the estate was absorbed by her debts, and that he has never given her an accounting for the reason that he never had an estate of hers to account for." Regardless of which side was correct, the factory was sold, and the Agnew family would never carry on the glass business again.

Charles Naylor Agnew, son of John Agnew died at 6:00 AM on January 9, 1904 (*Pittsburgh Press* 1/9/1904). According to his obituary (*Pittsburgh Press* 6/26/1905), John Agnew (the elder) died on June 6, 1905, at the age of 86. See Table 1 for a summary of the Agnew firms.

**Table 1 – The Agnew Companies**

| Company                               | Date Range    |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| Chambers & Agnew, Pittsburgh          | ca. 1843-1850 |
| John Agnew & Co., Pittsburgh          | 1850-1868     |
| Agnew & Wilcox, Pittsburgh            | 1868-1872     |
| John Agnew & Son, Pittsburgh          | 1872-1876     |
| Agnew & Co., Pittsburgh               | 1876-1893     |
| Agnew Co., Ltd., Hulton, Pennsylvania | 1893-1897     |
| Southern Avenue Land Co., Hulton      | 1897-1900     |
| Oakmont Glass Co., Hulton             | 1901-1904     |

**Agnew & Brown, Pittsburgh (1880-1883)**

In 1879, Agnew & Brown (Daniel Agnew and Samuel C. Brown) entered the glass business, making target balls at a plant at Twenty-Seventh St. and Smallman Ave. The city directories listed the firm from 1880 to 1883, and their location *may* have been the old Fahnstock & Gladdens vial factory. On April 1, 1879, Daniel Agnew received Patent No. 213,858 for a new furnace design that was used by the plant, assigning half the rights to S.C. Brown. Agnew had applied for the patent on January 22 of that year (Hawkins 2009:14)

On November 19, 1880, the *Pittsburgh Daily Press* bragged that “Agnew & Brown, Twenty-seventh and Smallman streets, are turning out glass balls at the rate of 50,000 per week.” Although the firm made other kinds of target balls, the ones embossed “AGNEW & BROWN / CORNER OF 27<sup>TH</sup> / & SMALLMAN STS. / PITTSBURGH PA.”, included a drawing of a flying pigeon and were made in amber glass (Figure 24).



Figure 24 – Pigeon ball (Norman A. Heckler)

Because of the popularity of clay pigeons, invented in 1880, Agnew & Brown began to expand its product line by the end of 1880, adding flasks and druggists' ware (Hawkins 2009:14). The date for the end of the firm is unclear, but it was probably some time in early 1884. On Friday, August 21, 1885, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* that "Major A.J. Pentecost sold for Henry Reiler, executor of the estate of J. Murry McClung, the Agnew glass-house a Hulton Station for \$12,500 to H.T. Wallace" on August 20. This was *not* the plant of the John Agnew family, so it had to have been the factory of Agnew & Brown.

As a post script, Daniel Agnew was a cousin to the elder John Agnew and was working for Agnew & Co. in 1890. The *Pittsburgh Press* reported on July 19, 1890, that Daniel "was charged with felonious assault by Emil Koch, a blacksmith employed by the firm. Koch swore that Agnew attempted to brain him with a hatchet when he went to the glass house to take away his tools." Agnew claimed that the arresting officers made him drunk on the way to jail, and that he was not allowed to see or send word to his friends." However, "the evidence of several witnesses was strongly against the defendant." The *Pittsburgh Dispatch* (7/15/1890) added that Agnew, who "had a record as a pugilist," fought with Detective Allen, the arresting officer, at the jail, wanting to "show the detective some scientific strokes," but "there were too many for him, and he had to take a prison bunk."

The *Pittsburgh Post* followed up with a report that Agnew was released from the charges. Koch was "wrathy because he was discharged." In response, Agnew brought charges of perjury against Koch (*Pittsburgh Dispatch* 7/19/1890). The Agnew family seems to have had a lively time in Hulton.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

Although the sections on the products made by the Agnew family have changed little since our original study, the history sections are vastly improved. Several of the dates for changes in the firm names were very uncertain in the past, but we have discovered new evidence that makes them more clear. In addition, we have added quite a bit of information about the reasons for the changes and the locations of the factories.

## Agnew's Three Locations

As noted in the text above, the various Agnew firms produced their bottles and jars at only three locations:

1. The factory Agnew inherited from Chambers & Agnew in the 1850 breakup. When he built a new plant ca. 1854, John Agnew leased the old one to E. Wormser & Co., but the building burned to the ground in 1858. The factory was located at the corner of Carson and Butler streets or Etna and Carson streets in the Ninth Ward – along the Allegheny River.
2. The new plant Agnew built ca. 1854. This was illustrated in a ca. 1876 drawing behind Agnew's house with a caption noting that it was in Baldwin Township. The factory was abandoned ca. 1880, when the family built a new one. The *Pittsburgh Press* for September 23, 1900, warned that “to-day a huge pile of bricks is all that is left of the old bottle works.”
3. The factory built by Agnew & Co. ca. 1877-1880, listed as Hulton, Oakmont, Carrick, or Baldwin Township. This was the final one, closing for the last time ca. 1904.

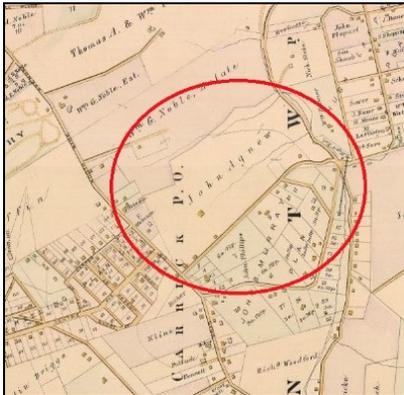


Figure 26 – 1886 map

Although the original plant was in South Pittsburgh, along the Allegheny River, the other two were both on a large tract of land owned by John Agnew. Maps from 1862, 1876, 1886, 1898, and 1890 all showed the same property with Agnew's name on it (Figures 25 & 26). However, the same tract on an 1851 map was marked “J. Chambers,” suggesting that Agnew purchased the land from his brother-in-law.

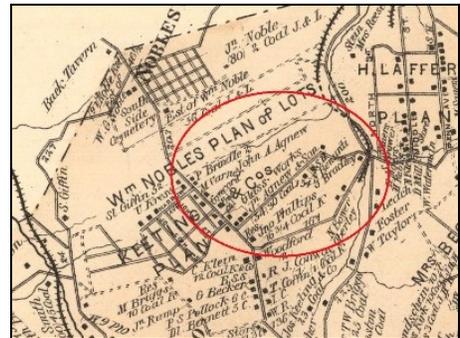


Figure 25 – 1876 map

## Agnew Logos

It is pretty certain that most of the products made in the Agnew family glass houses were not marked with any company identification. With the exception of Agnew & Wilcox, there is no conclusive evidence that any of the Agnew firms used a mark for any containers except wax-sealer fruit jars embossed with the entire company name. The discussion below is in alphabetical order rather than the order listed in the text above.

### A

Although this mark is enigmatic, we have found no attribution for this single letter except to Adams & Co. (1861-1891) or perhaps one of the Agnew companies, probably John Agnew & Son (1872-1876). The mark has only been reported in the literature on grooved-ring, wax-sealer fruit jars (one also embossed JOHN AGNEW & SON), at least one colorless medicinal bottle, and at least one pumpkinseed flask. Of these, one jar was certainly made by an Agnew factory, the flask was *very* likely manufactured by the American Glass Works at Richmond, Virginia (see that section), and the medicinal bottle manufacturer is unknown. The other wax-sealer jars are discussed further in the John Agnew & Son section below. The single “A” is *not* a common mark.

### A&Co

Most sources attribute the “A&Co” mark on flasks to Adams & Co., and that is probably correct. With the exception of coffin flasks made by Agnew & Wilcox, the next flasks known to have been made an Agnew firm was the 1884 listing at the Hulton plant.

Knittle (1927:441), Toulouse (1971:33), and Jones (1966:15) all identified the mark as belonging to Agnew, but the later two just followed Knittle. Toulouse, at least, was cautious. All three researchers, however, were noted for guessing in their attributions of marks (e.g., see Lockhart 2004). Griffenhagen and Bogard (1999:212) just copied the earlier sources. All this suggests that *only* Knittle actually identified Agnew as the user of the A&Co logo.

Although now almost 26 years old, McKearin and Wilson (1987:646. 650-651) remains one of the best sources for information on flasks. It is notable that they did not even consider Agnew & Co. as a possibility. Farnsworth & Walthall (2011:57) also came to the conclusion that Adams & Co. was the user of the mark and certainly placed its use in the 1864 to 1868 period. Adams & Co. had the proper initials, but *John* Adams & Co. did not. While the lack of “John” is not conclusive, it should also not be ignored. We therefore suggest that what little evidence we have leans toward Adams & Co. as the only user of the “A&Co” logo. See also the section on Adams & Co.

#### **A&W (1868-1872)**

The discovery of “A&W” embossed on a few bases and heels is apparently a recent discovery. We have only found the logo in Hawkins (2009:20-21). Since the containers appear to have been made in Pittsburgh, the Hawkins identification of Agnew & Wilcox (1868-1872) is almost certainly correct.

#### **AGNEW & SON and JOHN AGNEW & SON (1872-1878)**

Two later marks are solidly identified. Both “AGNEW & SON” and “JOHN AGNEW & SON” were used on wax-sealer fruit jars sometime during the 1872-1878 period. Since these used the exact firm name, the user is in no doubt. Agnew & Co. also made a very different fruit jar beginning in 1887 (see next entry). It seems odd that the firm would take an almost ten year hiatus from fruit jar production. Assuming that the firm *did* manufacture fruit jars during the period, there are three possible explanations – *all* of which may have been correct at some point during the sequence.

First, Agnew & Co. may have continued to use the AGNEW & SON and JOHN AGNEW & SON molds until they wore out – without changing the name on the base. Second, the firm may have used molds with no company identification. Finally, the wax-sealer jars embossed only with the letter “A” may have been made during all or part of this period. It is highly likely that the plant used the old molds until they wore out, then elected one of the other two options.

## **AGNEW & CO. (1887-1900)**

The wax-sealer jars embossed “AGNEW & CO.” were the most solidly documented marked containers offered by the any of the Agnew firms. The jars were advertised by the Pittsburgh plant in 1887 and continued to be listed by both Pittsburgh and Hulton factories until at least 1896. They were probably made until the plant closed in 1900.

Bases embossed “PAT APP<sup>D</sup> FOR” require some speculation. None of the sources listed a patent for these jars, our search has produced no results, and the Toulouse suggestion was clearly in error. It is highly likely that Agnew applied for a patent and was eventually rejected. The patent process can take years. We have recorded instances where a patent was finally issued almost a decade after the application. It is thus well within the realm of possibility that the Agnew application remained in limbo until at least 1896, and the factory continued the “PAT APP<sup>D</sup> FOR” embossing to discourage other glass houses from copying the jar. As far as we can determine, the patent office kept no records of rejected applications – or none have survived from the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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