

Colorado Glass Works Co.

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with Contributions from Melanie Keerins

As early as 1875, people in the Denver and Golden areas recognized that the region had the raw materials and demand to support a glass industry (*Colorado Transcript* 1875). Eastern industrialists were also aware of the situation, and there were reports that they were scouting locations with the intent to establish a glass works by mid 1876 (*Colorado Transcript* 1876). This scouting apparently involved collection of raw materials that were sent back east for analysis and testing. By 1883, such reports had become a regular item within local news without any physical actions ever being taken. A most interesting piece appeared in the January 31 edition of the *Colorado Transcript* in which a Pittsburgh glass man, J.L. Cline, best laid out the need and advantages of establishing a glass works in the region:

First – The quantity of manufactured glass now required to supply the Denver market per annum is nearly or quite equal to the product of an eight-pot furnace.

Second – The raw material of good quality is found in inexhaustible supply, within ten miles of Denver – a larger and better variety than is known to exist in any other district of the United States. It is found in the property known as Burdsall's Soda Lake tract. There is found on this 200 acres of land: A limestone ridge of No.1 lime. A sandstone ridge of a finer and better quality of sand than any now used at any glass works in other states. A soda lake whose waters I have evaporated and find it yields from 15 to 20 per cent. Better test than any imported soda now being used in the manufacture of glass throughout the country.

Sometime in late 1886, plans for a glass works in Golden were finally being realized. The result was the Golden Glass Works, a plant that only remained in business during the year 1887. Like a phoenix, the Colorado Glass Works Co. arose in place of the original firm and made a variety of bottles for Denver and other Colorado bottlers for the rest of 1887 and 1888, when labor disputes caused the closure of the plant.

Company Histories

Golden Glass Works, Golden, Colorado (1887)

By November 1887, all the details for the creation of the Golden Glass Works factory had been arranged. Adolph Coors, Joachim Binder and James R. Ward, formed the operating firm of Coors, Binder & Ward to finance the new plant. The factory was to be opened at Wall and Ford Streets by Joseph Slimm a glassblower with 41 years of experience. Slimm had previously worked for A.& D.H. Chambers at Pittsburgh and had been the superintendent at the A.J. Mansfield glass works in Lockport, New York and the Chase Valley Glass Co. No. 2 in Wisconsin (Gardner manuscript; Mass 2014; Miller 2007:2).

According to an interview in the January 5, 1887, *Colorado Transcript*, Slimm selected Golden for his factory because all of the heavy materials needed in glass production were within one-half mile of the factory. The region had coal mines in the hills just behind the factory, fireclay to build and maintain the furnace nearby, as well as deposits with abundant sand and lime. Slimm noted that this situation was unique in the United States.

The factory was to be located on the land formerly occupied by the Golden pottery works. The company would be housed in a building measuring 88 feet square, built with the most current technology available. Initially, the plant would have a five-pot furnace and employ some 10-14 glass blowers with more than 50 additional hands. The initial production was to have included glass bottles of all types, sizes, and colors, including prescription, bottles, carboys, fruit jars, pickle jars, chow-chow jars, and beer bottles (Clint 1976:39). The glass-blowers were all hand-picked by Slimm from glass concerns in the eastern half of the country and were expected to make from \$5 to \$6 a day. As highly skilled and experienced professionals, glass blowers were paid well in 1887.

Workers broke ground for the project on December 18, 1886, and the factory was to be completed and ready for operation – in just two months – by February 1887, as thirteen glass blowers arrived from the east the last week in January (*Colorado Transcript* 2/2/1887; *Silver World* 12/18/1886). However, a news piece from the February 9 *Transcript* noted that the furnace had not yet been completed due to an illness which prevented Mr. Slimm from

supervising the work. The works were expected to be in full blast within two weeks. While there may have been some trials beforehand, the official opening of the glass works was on March 8, 1887. Slimm apparently was a stickler for details and wanted everything to be correct before firing up the furnace and commencing production. A newsman who spent the day witnessing the opening affairs commented on how smoothly the operation began and continued throughout the day as if the factory had been running for years. The reporter also noted that Slimm pronounced the wares being produced as the best he had ever seen and credited the fine materials available locally (*Colorado Transcript* 4/9/1887).

By a week later, the factory had become a popular spot to visit and was steadily producing bottles with large shipments of soda and beer bottles sent to customers (*Colorado Transcript* 3/16/1887). While it is unclear who all the customers were, one of the largest appears to have been the Manitou Mineral Water, Bath & Park Co. – bottling the soda water from springs in Manitou Colorado (*Colorado Transcript* 3/16/1887, 5/19/1887). Such bottles would need to be sturdy due to the pressures created by the natural carbonation in the water – and the Golden Glass Works quickly gained a reputation for strong bottles.

Typical of glass works of the time, the blowers would take a summer vacation that was two months in length (usually July and August), likely because work near the furnace during these months would be unbearable. It seems that the blowers at the Golden Glass Works followed the same schedule because the *Transcript* for August 17, 1887, announced their expected return and beginning of the production season in early September.

However, before the factory was restarted, the works were incorporated, although Slimm was apparently no longer associated with it. It is unclear if Slimm lost the works due to debt or sold it possibly due to health issues. Regardless, the factory was incorporated on August 9, 1887, as the Colorado Glass Works Co.

Containers and Marks

Although only manufacturing bottles for four months, the firm apparently produced a variety of bottle types in various colors – “amber, green, and light teal” according to Gardner (n.d.). With the exception of one bottle, the Golden Glass Works does not appear to have placed a maker’s mark on its products. Clint (1978:40) suggested that possible bottles produced by this

company may be identified using certain criteria, but there is no certain method for irrefutable identification. It does seem likely that unmarked bottles for customers of the Colorado Glass Works Co. could date from 1887 based on bottle characteristics and shared similar formats – especially the rich, green colors and possibly the olive hues produced by the later company – could have been made by the Golden Glass Works.

Gardiner (n.d.) provided a list of Golden Glass Works customers that included, not surprisingly, Coors beer (since Adolph Coors was one of the main backers). Soda bottlers included Buena Vista Soda, Crested Butte Bottling Works, and Moxie Nerve Food. The first two were Colorado bottlers, but Moxie was produced in New England, although the drink also must have been bottled in Colorado. Manitou Springs Water (mentioned above) was an important customer – 100,00 bottles in May of 1887 – and we discuss Clarke & Walker of Denver below. It is clear from newspaper reports (e.g., *Colorado Transcript*, 3/9/1887), that the major output of the plant consisted of beer, soda, and mineral water bottles, although Kurer's Best (placing an order in July) was a vinegar operation in Denver.

The *Rocky Mountain News* summed it up nicely on March 18, 1887: "It is now an every-day occurrence in the foot-hills manufacturing center to drink Golden beer from a Golden bottle in a Golden glass." Like many short snippets, this one begs an important question. Golden beer was Coors, of course, and the Golden bottle was made by the Golden Glass Works. But, where did the Golden glass come from? Aside from this sentence, there is no mention anywhere in our source material that the glass factory produced drinking vessels. Tumblers – the industry term for a typical water glass – were pressed ware, and stemmed glasses (goblets) were an art of their own. However, the blowers at Golden may have made simple glasses by blowing glass into a beer bottle mold then applying a wet string around the body below the shoulder to break the glass cleanly off the blowpipe (a process called "wetting") then briefly placing the rough end into the furnace to neaten the broken glass. The result? A "Golden glass." Fragments of a broken drinking vessel would look just like a beer bottle unless one found a rim piece.

G° / G G C° (1887-1889)

Clint (1976:120) is the only source that recorded this very strange mark (Figure 1). The slash (/) is an actual part of the mark rather than an indicator for the beginning of a

new line. He noted that it was “perhaps a backward attempt at Golden Glass Works. The bottle was a quart liquor bottle with an applied, two-part finish made for a Denver liquor house. There were apparently two variations of the bottle that had the same shape, color, and customer embossing on the sides. One variation was embossed “G°/G G C°” across the base, while the other had nothing on the base, and the base seams were different from each other. The bottle with the unembossed base had “COLO. G.W.” embossed on the back heel, but Clint was unclear about whether that was also true of the bottle with basal embossing. If both variations had the heel mark, it would be clear that the “G°/G G C°” mark was that of the Golden Glass Works.

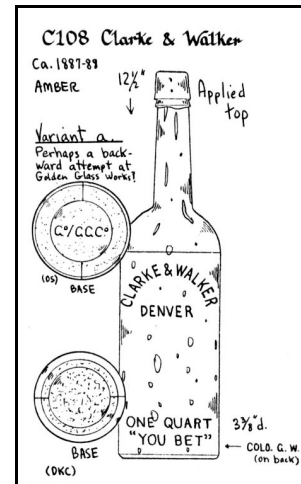


Figure 1 – Odd basemark
(Clint 1976:120)

Both bottles were made for the same liquor dealer – Clarke & Walker – which creates a strong association with the Golden glass Works. According to Gardiner (n.d.), Golden Glass produced bottles for Clarke & Walker, strengthening the identification. However, this raises the question of why the company appears to have only placed a mark on a single mold. Perhaps this was the last mold ordered by the company before incorporation, and the company decided to start marking its products. If so, the odd “G°/G” part of the mark may have been an engraver’s mistake. The instructions to the mold maker may have been to mark the base “G°G C°” or “G G C°” to stand for the Golden Glass Co., but the instructions were misunderstood and reproduced as listed on the instructions

A more likely explanation was that this was probably a garbled C.C.G.Co. logo from the Colorado City Glass Co. The letters make sense as “C°/C G C°” – the exact initials of the Colorado City Glass Co., rather than “G°/G G C°” – initials that mean nothing. Even an experienced bottle researcher may mistake a “C” for a “G” – or vice versa. In addition, the slash (/) makes it virtually certain that there is one engraver’s error on the mark; Garbled letters may be another. Both glass houses made bottles for Denver firms. When the Golden firm ceased operations in 1888, Clarke & Walker logically would have purchased bottles from the only other local producer – Colorado City Glass Co.

Colorado Glass Works Co., Golden, Colorado (1887-1888)

The articles of incorporation of the Colorado Glass Works Co. listed twelve prominent local Colorado businessmen as directors, but it seems likely that Adolph Coors was the primary investor behind the corporation; the board elected him as the president and treasurer of the company with Joachim Binder as vice president and F.W. Thies as secretary and manager. The *Rocky Mountain News* reported the incorporation on August 11, 1887, noting a capital of \$50,000. One might expect that one of the main reasons that Coors was involved was to secure a source of bottles for his brewery. If this were the case, then these bottles must not have borne the maker's mark of the company as there are no known bottles attributed to Coors with either the Golden Glass Works or Colorado Glass Works Co. marks (Clint 1976, Prebble 1987).

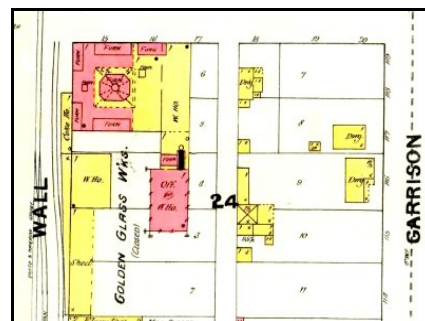


Figure 2 – Colorado Glass Works (Sanborn map, 1890)

It is unclear if the company continued as before or if the new management recruited new blowers and instituted new policies. However, the factory underwent improvements during the summer break that may have been the result of the change in ownership (Figures 2 & 3). These improvements took longer than expected and delayed restarting the furnace until September 14, and work commenced the following Monday (*Colorado Transcript* 8/31/1887; 9/14/1887; 9/21/1887).



Figure 3 – Colorado Glass Works (Melainie Keerins)

The new season started with twenty blowers (*Colorado Transcript* 9/21/1887). The *Rocky Mountain News* reported on October 7, 1887, that the factory had been “greatly enlarged and improved during the months of July and August” with “three new ovens” and improvements on the old ones. Along with bottles (the only products previously made), the

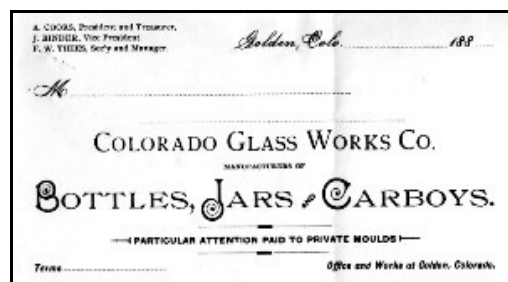


Figure 4 – Colorado Glass Works billhead (Melainie Keerins)

plant now included “jugs, dishes, roll glass, etc.” (Figure 4). The newspapers were virtually silent about the glass works for the remainder of 1887 and most of 1888.

By December, the plant was extremely busy filling orders from companies in Colorado and out of state (*Colorado Transcript* 12/19/1888). However, all was not well within the ranks of the blowers, and the company ceased operation during the final week of December. The problem seems to have been a dispute between the glass blowers involving some union policy. As presented in the December 26, 1888, issue of the *Colorado Transcript*, the dispute was regrettable but seemed to be solvable:

The suspension of work in the Golden Glass works announced on Wednesday was a surprise to everybody. The Glass Works company unable to have their employees agree among themselves as to some matters between the members of their assembly and their chief magistrate in Ohio, were most reluctantly compelled to suspend work at present, with the full and declared intention of resuming work in a few weeks, when the labor question can be set to rest. Orders on their books will be delayed for a while.

The minor labor issue apparently was not so minor; the closure continued into March precipitating reports in papers that the works would be moved to another city. The local paper sought to reassure the citizens of Golden that this would not occur and reported receiving assurances that the works would not move and only remained closed due to the labor issue (*Colorado Transcript* 3/6/1888).

The company did not move but neither did it reopen. While it is unclear at this time, the labor issue that led to the end of the firm must have involved the company management, the blowers, and the union. The company owners were apparently quite willing to close the factory, if the labor terms were not acceptable to them. As Coors was not dependent on the Golden factory for bottles, the closing did not affect his main enterprise, the brewery.

It is unclear what happened to the company assets. It is certain that the Colorado City Glass Co. began operation in 1889 and made bottles for some former Golden Glass Works customers that are similar to those made by Golden Glass Works. This might suggest that some of the molds and equipment from the Golden factory ended up in Colorado City.

Wikipedia (2014) added that the firm incorporated in 1888 (probably a reorganization) as Coors, Binder & Co. prior to the strike. John Herold leased the idle factory in 1910 as the Herold China & Pottery Co. and made tableware and ovenware until the Coors company acquired the firm in 1914.

Containers and Marks

If the sample of bottles and fragments found in the glass works bottle dump by Melanie Keerins (archivist and historian for the Adolph Coors Co.) were representative, many of the beer bottles were an olive green color, reminiscent of European glass (Figure 5). Of course, some were amber, and others were a striking shade of grass or apple green – although some online examples ranged from aqua to a light blue, possibly Gardiner’s light teal color (see colors of the Golden Glass Co. above). It seems likely that most of the customers from the Golden Glass Works of 1887 continued with the Colorado Glass Works Co. Along with bottles, the blowers made “whimseys” for visitors. Specifically, the *Castle Rock Journal* for September 28, 1887, explained that “visitors to the Golden glassworks are presented with glass canes as souvenirs” (Figure 6).



Figure 5 – Glass dump (Melainie Keerins)



Figure 6 – Glass cane (Melainie Keerins)

COLO. G.W. (1887-1888)

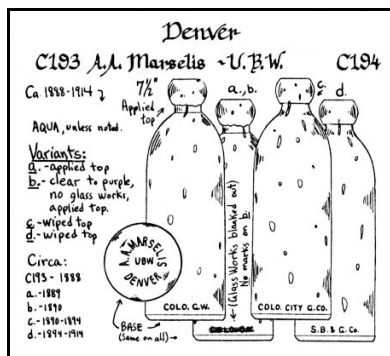


Figure 8 – COLO. G.W. Hutchinson bottle (Clint 1976:137)

This mark was embossed on the bases of beer and soda bottles made by the Colorado Glass Works Co. It appeared on only one Colorado Hutchinson soda bottle shown by Oppelt (2005:8, 53, 66). Clint (1976) showed two variations: 1) “COLO. G.W.” embossed at the back heel (Figure 7); and 2) “COLO. (arch) /

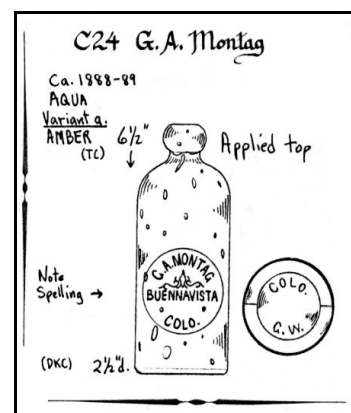


Figure 7 – COLO. G.W. Hutchinson bottle (Clint 1976:105)

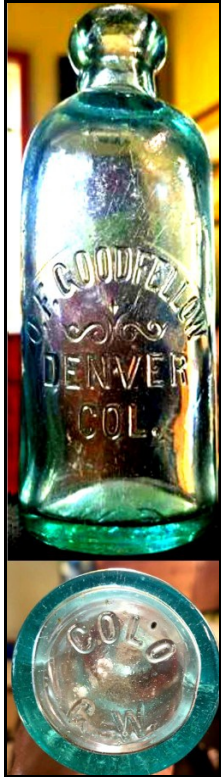


Figure 9 – COLO. G.W. Hutchinson base (eBay)

G.W. (inverted arch)” on the base (Figure 8). He showed five examples of the former, four of which were embossed on Hutchinson bottles; the remaining mark was on a quart whiskey bottle (Figure 9). All had applied finishes. The basal markings were all on Hutchinson bottles, two with applied finishes, and two with tooled tops.



Figure 10 – COLO. G.W. whiskey (eBay)

Hutchbook (Fowler 2014) listed six examples of Hutchinson bottles embossed with the two-part basemark and Colorado bottlers, as well as four examples with the logo on the back heel. Von Mechow (2014) only noted a single bottle from Buena Vista, Colorado, embossed “COLO. (arch) / G.W. (inverted arch)” on the base. The firm also made at least one amber, cylinder whiskey bottle with a brandy finish and “COLO GW” embossed horizontally on the back heel (Figures 10) and two round, wide-mouth bottles, each with a tooled one-part finish and “COLO. (arch) / G.W. (inverted arch)” on the base (Figures 11).



Figure 12 – COLO. G.W. – note apple green color (arch) (Melainie Keerins)

Keerins also provided examples of another variation of the mark – “COLO. G.W.” in an arch (Figure 12). Both examples only consisted of base fragments, one light



Figure 11 – COLO. G.W. packer bottle (eBay)

blue, the other apple green. Since all of the beer bottles we discovered were either amber or olive green in color, these may have been some other bottle type. In addition, we have only seen this mark on these two fragments, so both the logo and the colors may have been significant in identifying food or some other type of bottles.

COLO. G.W. CO. (1887-1888)

According to Oppelt (2005:8), this mark was embossed on the bases of beer and soda bottles made by the Colorado Glass Works Co. Although we had not found an example for our first study, we now have several from glass works dump, thanks to Melanie



Figure 13 – COLO. G.W. CO. bases (Melainie Keerins)

Keerins, embossed “COLO. (arch) / 2 (or 3) / G.W. CO. (inverted arch)” (Figure 13). The “2” had a distinctive serif on its foot, a clear sign that the bottles in the sample all were made from the same mold. Similarly, the “3” was also sufficiently unique to tell that those bottles from the sample also were made from a single mold. Since the molds were used for less than a year, only two molds (probably also a “1” or a mold made with no number) in use is reasonable.

CGW (1887-1888)

This mark is found on the base of a New Mexico Hutchinson soda bottle in the Lynn Loomis collection. Although this mark was not recognized by Clint or Oppelt, it may have been used by the Colorado Glass Works Co. Other bottles are marked CGW that are embossed with the names of East Coast cities. See section on the Clyde Glass Works for more discussion.

Toulouse (1971:129) attributed this mark to the Campbell Glass Works, West Berkeley, California, from 1884 to 1885. This was almost certainly a guess based on the initials. To date, we have only discovered a single California Hutchinson bottle used by the Enterprise Bottling Works of Sebastopol that was embossed on the base with the CGW logo (Fowler 2014). Harry B. Morris and F.R. Matthews established the Enterprise Bottling Works at Sebastopol, California, in 1908 and remained in business until at least 1917. This bottle could not possibly have been made by the Campbell firm (nor by the Colorado Glass Works Co. – see discussion below). It was apparently made by the Clyde Glass Works – on the other side of the continent!

Hutchbook (Fowler 2014) listed two Colorado Hutchinson bottles with “CGW” embossed on their bases. One bore the name of Ed. S. Hughes of Glenwood Springs, Colorado. Other Hughes Hutchinson bottles were embossed with full, four-digit date codes for 1889, 1892, 1900, 1903, 1909, and 1910. The bottle from 1892 had the “C.C.G.CO.” basemark from the

Colorado City Glass Co. The CGW bottle was the only one with no date and one of only two with a manufacturer's mark. The second was used by "Chas. Lang" of Aspen. The Chas. Lang saloon was listed in 1887 in *Bonfort's Wine and Spirits Circular*. Lang remained in the saloon business until at least 1910.

Wood (1998) noted that another Hutchinson bottle with the "CGW" basemark was used by the Albuquerque Bottling Works in Albuquerque, New Mexico (Figures 14). Wood & Lockhart (2020) updated the study, discovering that the bottler was in business from 1880 to 1888. All three of these businesses fit within the time frame of the Colorado Glass Works Co.

Although this mark was not recognized by Clint or Oppelt, it was likely used by the Golden factory. Bottles from the Colorado Glass Works Co. (1887-1888) may be recognized by the location at or near Colorado, basal position of the logo, and a "normal" "tailed-G" in the mark (see the section on the Clyde Glass Works for a discussion of eastern bottles with the CGW logo used by the Clyde Glass Works).

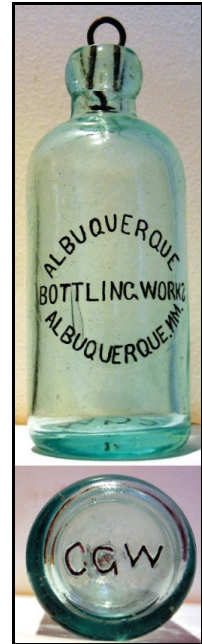


Figure 14 – CGW Albuquerque Bottling Works (Lynn Loomis collection)

CGW Co (1887-1888)



Figure 16 – CGW Co base

One of the authors has a colorless, cylinder whiskey bottle with an applied finish that was embossed "CGW (arch) / Co (inverted arch)" on the base (Figures 15 & 16). Although not mentioned by any of our sources, this logo was certainly used by the Colorado Glass Works Co.

THE DENVER JAR

Although Roller (1982:101) suggested the Colorado Glass Works as a possible maker of the Denver Jar, we believe that the Colorado City Glass Co. is a much better choice. See the discussion in the Colorado City Glass Co. section (A Marked Coincidence: The C.C.G.CO. logo of the Colorado City Glass Co. and the Cream City Glass Co. Part I – Colorado City Glass Co.).



Figure 15 – CGW Co bottle

Discussion and Conclusions

Although the Colorado Glass Works Co. was only in business for a short period, it left an interesting collection of manufacturer's marks to intrigue archaeologists and collectors. Most of the marks associated with this second Golden, Colorado, glass house are pretty obvious due to their initials. However, this revision has revealed a couple of new variations, previously not recorded by collectors (mostly added by Melanie Keerins). The short time in business, coupled with the locality of the bottlers makes the identification of these marks pretty certain. As noted above, the most unusual mark was probably used by the Colorado City Glass Co. instead of Golden Glass Works as attributed by Clint.

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