

The Glass Houses of Compton and Inglewood, California: Producers of the BIG Bottles

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Generally, the production of five-gallon water jugs has been overlooked in the bulk of glass house studies. Historically, the concentration of West Coast large ware manufacture was centered in the Los Angeles area of Southern California in the 1920s, clustering around four chains of glass houses. This study concentrates on two of those chains, all located at factories in Compton and Huntington Park, California (especially the former).

Overview

The Arrowhead Springs Co. began bottling its water for sale in 1905, but we have not discovered when it began offering five-gallon water bottles. At some point prior to 1920, the Illinois-Pacific Glass Co. made the large bottles for Arrowhead. When the Illinois-Pacific plant and warehouse at San Francisco burned on May 23, 1920, Arrowhead turned to William McLaughlin to provide the larger ware. Although Illinois-Pacific almost certainly returned to the manufacture of the water bottles, by 1922, the idea of five-gallon jugs of bottled water in dispensers at business and even in homes had caught on, and the market greatly expanded.



Figure 1 – Water cooler (eBay)

From 1922 to the 1950s, the glass water bottles remained popular. The major shift in the 1950s was probably to plastic bottles – a much lighter weight for upending into the dispensers (Figure 1). Four chains of glass firms produced virtually all of the five-gallon glass water jugs used on the West Coast and in the West in general – all located in the Los Angeles area:

1. Illinois-Pacific Glass Co./Illinois-Pacific Glass Corp./Illinois-Pacific Coast Co. (Los Angeles)
2. McLaughlin Glass Co./Glass Product Division of Arrowhead Puritas (Los Angeles/Gardena)
3. Federal Glass Co./Monarch Glass Co./W.J. McLaughlin Co./McDonald Glass Co./Davis Glass Co. (Compton)
4. Midway Glass Mfg. Co./Beaver Glass Mfg. Co./Compton Glass Mfg. Co. (Compton)

The Illinois-Pacific Chain

The largest factory – Illinois-Pacific – only made the large ware as a sideline. Although we have not discovered documentary evidence, the Illinois-Pacific Glass Co. probably began making five-gallon water bottles in the early 20th century for the Arrowhead Water Co. Currently, we do not know whether the larger ware was made at the Los Angeles plant, the one at San Francisco, or both. The final firm in the chain – the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. – produced numerous large water bottles, although we do not have examples of the three firms in between: the Illinois-Pacific Glass Corp., the Illinois-Pacific Coast Co., and the Owens-Illinois-Pacific Coast Co. Hopefully, future research will open up a chronology of these bottles.

The McLaughlin Chain

When William McLaughlin withdrew from the Southen Glass Works, he opened a glass plant at Los Angeles (in his garage) in January of 1920, manufacturing the large glass water jugs. Eventually, he moved his operation to Gardena, a Los Angeles suburb, and remained in business until 1956, when he sold the plant to the Arrowhead Puritas Water Co. Arrowhead Puritas created the Glass Products Division to make its own bottles for the next several decades. See the section on McLaughlin for details about that company's operations.

The Midway/Beaver/Compton Chain

The Midway Glass Mfg. Co. opened in April of 1922, producing the large water bottles exclusively – with Henry E. Charrey as president. When the Federal Glass Co. took over the plant in late 1923, Charrey also was involved in that firm (see next chain). The Beaver Glass Mfg. Co. purchased the plant in 1924. The next year, the newly formed Compton Glass Mfg. Co. acquired the plant, but that firm also succumbed the following year, replaced by the W.J. Latchford Co. (see next change).

The connection in this chain centered on Henry E. Charrey as well as manufacturer's marks. The *Los Angeles Times* of June 13, 1924, described Charrey as a "contractor and builder and Director in the Eastman-Kodak Company of St. Paul and Director and President of the Midway Glass Company." He was president of Midway in 1922, and the *Long Beach Daily Telegram* for December 10 of that year reported that Charrey was "the only one of the former

officials of the Midway Glass Works who will be a part of the new force [i.e. the Federal Glass Co.].” When the Beaver Glass Mfg. Co. gained control of the plant in 1924, Charry was the vice president and general manager. Finally, Charrey and George B. Caldwell were sole owners of the Compton Glass Mfg. Co. in late 1925. Although we have not found a basemark for Midway, both Beaver and Compton Glass used four-leaf clover logos.

The Federal/Latchford/McDonald Chain

The Federal Glass Co. leased the former Midway plant for two years beginning in December of 1922, starting production of large water bottles in February of the following year. In June of 1924, Elmer Beavers, of the Beaver Glass Mfg. Co., purchased the plant. The Compton Glass Mfg. Co. succeeded Beaver Glass, remaining at the Alameda & Laurel location. See above for the connection between the Midway, Beaver, and Compton firms.

The Latchford Glass Co. acquired the Compton Glass factory in June of 1926, naming it Plant No. 2 and continuing to make 5-gallon water jugs. When William Latchford died in 1939, John Marble gained control of the corporation, ending the manufacture of the water bottles. Alex McDonald bought the plant in 1940, creating the McDonald Glass Co., again concentrating on large ware. When McDonald died in 1943, Frank McDonald took control, selling the firm to Joe Davis (son-in-law of Alex McDonald – married to daughter Betty) ca. 1948. Davis continued to produce water bottles until he closed the business ca. 1959.

The sequence hinged on the actions of William J. Latchford and his family. On October 16, 1918, Latchford, William McLaughlin, and John McK. Marble (Latchford’s step-son) incorporated the Southern Glass Co. at Vernon, California (a suburb of Los Angeles about ten miles north of Compton). In late 1919, McLaughlin left the firm over a disagreement with Marble, starting his own glass factory, making 5-gallon water bottles (see above).

About 1924, Latchford and Marble opened the Monarch Glass Co. at Los Angeles (four miles north of Compton) to make the large water jugs. Major contention arose with the the other officers at Southern Glass about Latchford’s involvement at the new factory, and Latchford withdrew from Southern in August of 1925 to found the W.J. Latchford Co., taking over the Monarch plant. When Latchford died in 1939, John Marble formed the Latchford-Marble Glass Co. For more information about Latchford see the sections on that firm and Southern Glass Co.

Alex McDonald acquired the old Compton Glass factory and reinstated the water bottle production in 1940. Upon McDonald's death in 1949, Joe Davis took over, creating the Davis Glass Co. Davis, however, folded in 1954.

Histories

This study concentrates on the last two chains described above, all at Compton, California. Our study begins with the Midway/Beaver/Compton chain, followed by Federal/Monarch/Latchford/McDonald/Davis – (except Monarch) all at Compton.

Midway and the Other Big-Bottle Blowers of Compton

During a five-year period – 1922-1927 – no less than four firms occupied the same glass factory at Compton, California – all making five-gallon water jugs (Figure 2). Even though the final firm sold the property to a lumber company, the new owner apparently left the buildings standing. Ca. 1940, Alexander McDonald bought the plant and apparently reconditioned it to continue the production of five-gallon jugs. By 1949, the Davis Glass Co. had acquired the factory and continued to manufacture the larger ware until 1954. None of these should be confused with the Federal Glass Co. factory.



Figure 2 – Five-gallon water bottle (eBay)

Midway Glass Co., Compton, California (1922-1922)

Although we have not discovered when the firm was initiated or when it began construction of its factory, the *Long Beach Telegram* for February 23, 1923, noted that Midway Glass “began operations a year ago in November.” The *Long Beach Press* reported on March 25, 1922, that “the Midway Glass Company will start running next Monday morning” – although the plant did not begin actual production until May 3 at a 30-ton tank with four rings. The factory manager was William Seeley, and the Glass Bottle Blowers’ Assoc. called it Shop No. 58, obviously a union plant (*Bottle Maker* 1922:17).

According to the 1922 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, the plant was located on a new thoroughfare that was labeled “to be Pomegranate St. – although the road actually became Alameda Blvd. (Figure 3). Henry E. Charrey, the actual owner of the property, was the president of the new corporation. On February 23, 1923, the *Long Beach Daily Telegram* claimed that Midway Glass had been idle for three months, so production had stopped by December of 1922, after less than a month in operation.

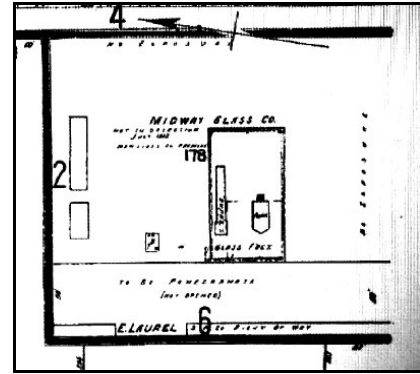


Figure 3 – Midway – 1922 Sanborn map

The *Long Beach Press* noted on December 7, 1922, that “the Southern Glass Co. of Los Angeles has leased the plant formerly operated by the Midland [*sic* – Midway] Glass Co. of Compton.” The new lessee was actually the Federal Glass Co., a short-lived subsidiary of Southern Glass. On December 10, 1922, the *Telegram* predicted that the Federal Glass Co. would be signing a lease on the plant, creating a second factory for Southern Glass – and Federal actually did move into the location early the next year.

Containers and Marks

Although the Midway Glass Co. made five-gallon water jugs (like its descendants), we have not discovered any of these giant bottles with a logo that can be assigned to Midway. Although a five-gallon jug used by the Arrowhead Water Co. carried the letter “M” in a shield embossed on its base – with a “25” (1925) date code – that logo almost certainly belonged to the Monarch Glass Co., a competitor four miles to the north. Midway’s mark – if it used one – may have incorporated the clover motif used by the following glass houses or may have been something different. However, the plant was only in production for less than a month, so the chances of any surviving bottles are slim.

Beaver Glass Mfg. Co., Compton, California (1924-1925)

Elmer Beavers incorporated the Beaver Glass Mfg. Co. as a Delaware corporation in April of 1924 with capital of \$500,000. Beavers was the vice president of the Beaver Seal Jar Cap Co., a firm that operated a large plant at Norristown, Pennsylvania, making the caps and paraphernalia to fit the Triple-Seal Mason Jars. Elmer Beavers and William A. Webber filed for

a patent for a “Lining for Jar Caps and Method of Sealing Jars” on June 30, 1919, and received Patent No. 1,382,051 almost two years later, on June 21, 1921 (Figure 4). The patent was for a new paraffin lining, eliminating the use of rubber gaskets. The pair assigned the patent to the Sani-Tite Cap Co. of Boston, Massachusetts. The Sani-Tite Cap Co. incorporated in April of 1920 with a capital of \$100,000 and had Elmer Beavers, Grant G. Skinner, William A. Webber, Frank L. Shea, and William J. Miller as incorporators. Webber, of course, was the co-inventor of the cap.

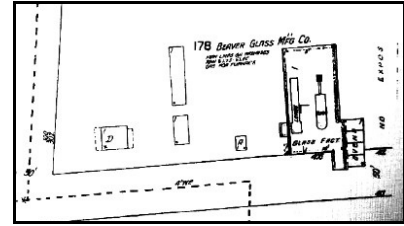


Figure 4 – Beaver – 1925 Sanborn map

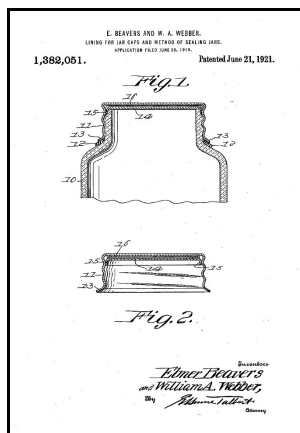


Figure 5 – Beavers & Webber 1919 Patent

On October 29, 1920, eight months before the receipt of the Beavers & Webber Patent, Beavers applied on his own for a design patent for a “Fruit Jar Cap” and received Patent No. D63,551 on December 18, 1923 – more than three years after the application (Figure 6). Beavers assigned this patent to the Beaver Seal Jar Cap Co. of Norristown, Pennsylvania. The cap, of course, was designed to fit the seal created by the Beavers & Webber 1921 patent and was

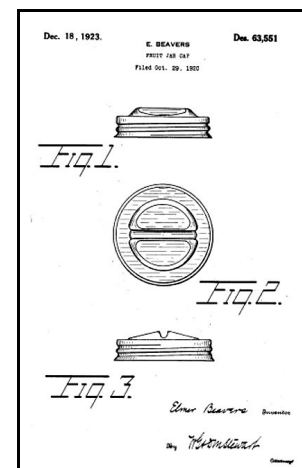


Figure 6 – Beavers 1923 Patent

slotted to take a wrench (supplied with the caps in actual practice) for easy opening (Figure 6). On June 12, 1924, the *Los Angeles Times* noted that

The principle of the new top is embodied in a paraffin fiber disc, which takes the place of the usual rubber ring. The heat of the contents effectively seals the cap onto the jar when it is screwed down, and keeps them in perfect condition. A small square length of metal rod is fitted into the groove on each cap and a slight twist, due to the leverage employed, opens the most stubborn jar with ease and safety, according to the inventor.

The article also included the company claim that the new cap “eliminates the bad features of the old-fashioned jars, involving the fitting of rubber bands, the soaking in hot water to remove them, the burned hands and oozing contents.”

On July 3, 1924, the *Madera Tribune* reported that Elmer Beavers was negotiating to buy the Federal Glass Co. plant (Roller n.d.). Although we have found no documentation, the sale was probably complete by the end of the month. The Beaver Glass Mfg. Co. incorporated in April of 1924 with a capital of \$500,000. The former Midway Glass Co. factory had a 30-ton continuous tank (*Glass Industry* 1924).

The plant made five-gallon bottles and at least intended to produce Triple Seal Mason Jars – the latter almost certainly for the Beaver Seal lid. Beavers was the president of the firm with H.E. Charrey as vice president and plant manager, E.E. Fitch as secretary, and E.V. Goodwin as treasurer (Roller n.d.). Charrey, the actual owner of the factory, had been the president of the Midway Glass Co., and an officer of the Federal Glass Co., both predecessors to the Beaver operation. By October of 1925, however, the factory was still only producing the large water bottles (*Los Angeles Times* 10/25/1925). The Beaver Glass Co. appeared on the 1925 Sanborn Fire Insurance map (Figure 7).



Figure 7 – Beaver lid (eBay)

At some point in 1925, the company folded, and Elmer Beavers disappeared from Compton. The last newspaper report we have found for the firm was a note in the *Los Angeles Times* for May 3, 1925, that “the Beaver’s Glass Company began work last week with orders already booked for a nine months’ production period.” Roller (n.d.) included a piece from the *Glass Industry* in June with no additional information. Despite the cheery tone of the May blurb, Beaver probably closed within the next several weeks – after being in business for just ten short months.

It seems likely that the entire Beavers enterprise crumbled at this point or soon thereafter. The last evidence we found for the caps was an ad in the *Long Beach Press-Telegram* that featured the caps as a minor part of a larger advertisement on August 7, 1927. Whether this indicates that the firm remained in business that late or if it just represents old stock still unsold is currently unknown.

Containers and Marks

BGMC in a Four-Leaf Clover (1924-1925)

Peter Utas discovered a five-gallon Hollywood Mineral Water bottle with “BGMC” in a four-leaf clover embossed on the base (Figure 8). These could only be the initials of the Beaver Glass Mfg. Co., confirmed by a date code of “25” (1925) in the center of the clover. The logo could only have been used in 1924 and 1925.



Figure 8 – BGMC Clover (Peter Utas)

Although the Norristown plant produced the Triple-Seal Cap, we have been unable to find a single example of a Triple-Seal Jar. It is virtually certain that the Compton factory never manufactured a single Mason jar during its very short life span, making only five-gallon water bottles.

Compton Glass Mfg. Co., Compton, California (1925-1926)

By June of 1925, Elmer Beavers had vanished from Compton, and the Compton Glass Mfg. Co. had taken the place of the Beaver Glass Mfg. Co., probably no later than July. On October 25, 1925, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that the Compton Glass Mfg. Co. had been “forced to add four new immense brick tempering ovens and do general improvement work.” The plant made “Five-gallon water bottles solely, and has been running at its full capacity of nearly 1000 bottles each day.” H.E. Charrey and George B. Caldwell were the sole owners of the company and operated a 30-ton continuous tank. Charrey was the obvious backbone of all three firms, taking a central part in each of them, but he apparently gave up on the glass business in 1926 (see the discussion of the W.J. Latchford Co. for the transition).

On June 6, 1926, the *Times* reported a “merger” of Compton Glass and the W.J. Latchford Co. – actually the purchase of the factory by Latchford as Plant No. 2. Latchford moved his five-gallon bottle production entirely to Compton, concentrating the Huntington Park plant on a larger variety of containers. See the section on Latchford (below) for more information after the sale.

Containers and Marks

Like its predecessor, the Compton Glass Mfg. Co. continued to produce five-gallon water jugs, apparently exclusively.

CGMC in a Four-Leaf Clover (1925-1926)

Another photo from Peter Utas showed a basemark that consisted of a four-leaf clover – almost identical to the one used by the Beaver Glass Mfg. Co. – containing the letters “CGMC” and a date code of “26” (Figure 9). The initials fit, and a similar clover of the predecessor firm and the 1926 date code make the identification rock solid. The Compton clover was slightly taller than the one used by Beaver, and there is no evidence that the mark had been altered from the “BGMC” of the previous company.



Figure 9 – CGMC Clover
(Peter Utas)

The Latchford Family Holdings

Still on Alameda St. but four miles north of the Midway/Beaver/Compton/McDonald/Davis plant, the Latchford family built a new plant, another operation specializing in five-gallon water jugs. That factory became the home of the W.J. Latchford Co., then the firm took over the Compton Glass Mfg. Co. plant, transferring its large ware operation to that location.

Federal Glass Co., Compton, California (1922-1924)

The *Long Beach Daily Telegram* predicted on December 10, 1922, that “the glass factory, operated for a short time under the name of the Midway Glass Works, will be opened in a few days by the Federal Glass company,” adding that “about \$10,000 is being spent to add new machines and other equipment.” The paper noted that Federal had obtained a two-year lease but that “Wm. Charrey [son of Midway’s president, Henry E. Charrey] is the only one of the former officials of the Midway Glass Works who will be a part of the new force.”

On February 23 of the following year, the *Telegram* corrected its earlier report to say that the plant would begin production the next week. The paper added that J.M. Marble (stepson of W.J. Latchford – see below) was the plant manager and that the factory would produce “only demijohns and five gallon capacity and carboys of 12 to 15 gallon size.” Projected daily output was to be “between 300 and 400 bottles.”

By December 20, 1923, H.E. Charrey had replaced Marble as plant manager. Marble had resigned to join Latchford in building a competing factory about four miles north (see Monarch Glass Co. below). By that time, the *Telegram* claimed that “500 of the five gallon demijohns are removed from the big bake ovens every eight hours. Smaller stuff varies in turnout from 500 to 1000 gross being reported at the end of every shift according to the size of bottle made.” In June of 1924, Elmer Beavers, of the Beaver Glass Mfg. Co., purchased the plant. The Beaver Glass period was discussed above.

This Federal Glass Co. was unrelated to the much larger one in Ohio (see the Federal Glass Co. section for more information on that firm). The Compton Federal Glass was a satellite corporation set up by the Southern Glass Co. of Vernon, located a bit to the north of Compton. In all probability, William J. Latchford – still irritated with William McLaughlin for abandoning Southern Glass – engineered the firm to compete with McLaughlin’s five-gallon bottle production. Subsequent actions on the part of Latchford support this idea. See the discussion on Monarch Glass below and the section on the Southern Glass Co. for more details. Also see the section on Arrowhead Water, Part 1, for an overview of five-gallon water bottle production in Southern California.

Monarch Glass Co., Huntington Park, California (1924-1925)

In 1924, a new corporation, the Monarch Glass Co., was headed by William Latchford, W. Baird Marble, and John McK. Marble. According to the September 28, 1924, edition of the *Los Angeles Times*, the “Monarch Glass Company took a twenty-year lease on two acres on Alameda Boulevard, near Florence. The amount involved is more than \$50,000.” Unlike all the other large-ware plants, the Monarch Glass Co. was located at 7520 S. Alameda St. according to a 1924 glass factory directory. That location was confirmed by the *Times* listing of the plant at Alameda, near Florence. Florence was half a block north of 7520 S. Alameda – about four miles north of the Federal plant. Although the address was later listed as 7507 Roseberry Ave.,

Huntington Park, it became the factory of the W.J. Latchford Co.¹ William Latchford and his relatives used the Monarch factory to make the larger glassware, but the firm only lasted about a year, becoming the W.J. Latchford Co. by October of 1925.

W.J. Latchford Co., Compton, California (1925-1939)

The *Los Angeles Times* edition of June 6, 1926, noted that the W.J. Latchford Co. “merged with the Compton Glass Company’s plant in Compton. The latter plant to be known as Plant No. 2” – for the manufacture of 5-gallon water bottles. In reality, Latchford purchased the Compton factory from Henry Charrey, and Charrey vanished from the glass scene. For more details, see the section the Latchford glass houses.

Latchford had been one of the founders of the Southern Glass Co. at Vernon, California (another Los Angeles suburb), in 1918, but he had a falling out with some of the other stockholders over his involvement in Monarch. Leaving Southern, he reinvested in the Monarch plant, renaming the firm as the W.J. Latchford Co. in 1925. The main factory was located about four miles north of the large-ware plant in Compton, and the Latchford-Marble Glass Co. continued to operate at that location after the death of William Latchford.

The Compton factory continued to produce five-gallon water bottles as well as a general line of containers and jars. When Latchford died on January 15, 1937, W. Baird Marble became president, and the company became the Latchford-Marble Glass Co. in 1939. At that point, the firm stopped making larger ware. For more information about subsequent Latchford glass houses, see the Latchford-Marble section. A 1938 Sanborn map erroneously labeled the plant the “Litchfield” Glass Co. (Figure 10).

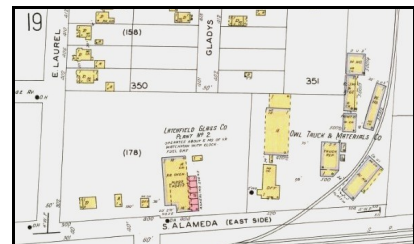


Figure 10 – Latchfield Glass – 1938 Sanborn map

¹ On the 2021 Google map, Roseberry Ave. is a short street about a block south of the 7520 S. Alameda St. address. However, the actual Monarch factory was almost certainly the one that became the W.J. Latchford Co. plant.

Containers and Marks

Since our focus in this study is five-gallon water bottles, we will only address the logos used by this chain of firms on those products. Although the Monarch Glass Co. only produced the larger ware, both Federal and Latchford manufactured larger arrays of products. The logos used on these larger glass jugs by all three factories (and the first one applied by McDonald) were very similar.

F in a Shield (1922-1924)

On its larger ware, the Federal Glass Co. used a logo comprising an “F” in a shield with a two-digit date code below and slightly to the right of the “F” (Figure 11). Our only example had a date code of “23” for 1923, the final year of production. The Compton plant was apparently the only one that produced these larger bottles, so that was the end of the logo’s use on glass products by Federal.



Figure 11 – Shield-F (eBay)

Oddly, the other Federal Glass Co., Columbus, Ohio, also claimed a Shield-F logo. The Ohio Federal Glass received a trademark for the Shield-F on December 6, 1944, claiming a first use of the mark on August 1, 1932. The mark was to be used on “glass tumblers, glass tableware, and glass kitchenware not including glass bottles and jars.” One of the Federal firms made a brass paperweight of the logo – probably the Ohio company (Figure 12).



Figure 12 – Paper weight

M in a Shield (1923-1925)

The Monarch Glass Co. only used a single mark during its only year of operation – a serif “M” in the same type of shield used previously by Federal (Figure 13). Our only example was embossed with an “X 25” in the shield but below the “M” – certainly a date code for 1925. The Monarch emblem was the only one to use a serif letter.



Figure 13 – Shield-M (eBay)

L in a Shield (1925-1940)

Following the same design as both prior glass firms, the W.J. Latchford Co. also used a shield motif, predictably enclosing an “L” (Figure 14). The accompanying codes were centered below the “L” – including double-digit numbers alone, “X” to the left of the number, or “A” to the right. The codes in our sample range from “26” to “40” – with “X” accompanying codes from “26” to “29”; “A” from “31” to “40”; and no letter on “27” and “37” codes.



Figure 14 – Shield-L (eBay)

The numbers were certainly date codes, spanning the years the firm was in business, but we can only guess at the meanings of the letters. One possible explanation is that the bottles with no letters were made at the original Monarch factory, with the “X” bottles produced by the new factory Latchford built at Huntington Park. The later “A” jugs could have been manufactured by the other new plant at Huntington Park that began in 1931 or 1932.

The final date code of “40” indicated 1940, a year after the reorganization that formed the Latchford-Marble Glass Co. It is highly likely that this date code represents the filling of an existing order after the decision to cease production of the larger bottles by Latchford-Marble. Such date codes, a year or two after a firm ceased operations or reorganized, are common and usually reflect either the filling of existing orders by the succeeding company or the use of old molds.

McDonald Glass Co., Compton, California (1940-1948)

Alexander J. McDonald and his brother, John, either built a glass house at Inglewood, California (adjacent to Compton), or took over the IXL Glass Co. already operating in the city. At some point ca. 1929, the brothers closed their Inglewood operation and move north to Seattle, where they incorporated the Northwestern Glass Co. to purchase the factory of the bankrupt Seattle Western Glass Co. Although the operation was successful – taken over by the Indian Head Corp. in 1968 but retaining its individual identity until ca. 1987 – Alex separated from Northwestern in 1940, moving back south to settle at Compton. See the section on Northwestern Glass for more information on that firm.

In 1940, Alex McDonald acquired the former Factory No. 2 of the Latchford-Marble Glass Co. This founding date came from a “40” date code on a water bottle base with McDonald’s logo (see below), although the 1940 census still listed McDonald as a glass manufacturer in Seattle. He likely moved and took over the plant later in the year – after the publication of the directory and census. The 1940 Los Angeles city directory listed Alex McDonald as a glass blower.

The first documentary evidence we have found placed McDonald as the president of the McDonald Glass Co. at Compton by May 4, 1943, when he died at his home (Roller n.d.). In 1946, a Frank McDonald (not a son but probably a relative) was listed with the firm. Although a single source enumerated McDonald Glass in 1951 (*U.S. China and Glass Redbook* 1951:105), Joe Davis almost certainly purchased or inherited the firm in 1948.

Containers and Marks

Like its predecessors, the McDonald Glass Co. produced five-gallon water jugs, apparently exclusively.

Shield with M^c in a D (1940-ca. 1941)

Peter Utas provided a photo of the base of a water bottle embossed with a shield. Inside the shield was a large “D” with a smaller “M^c” inside the “D” above the number “40” (Figure 15). This was our main evidence connecting Alex McDonald with the McDonald



Figure 16 – Shield-D alone (eBay)

Glass Co. at Compton prior to 1943. The logo was very similar to the shield used by the W.J. Latchford Co. from 1939 until Latchford’s death in 1949. Another example – on a Magnetic Spring Water bottle – was identical, although it lacked the “M^c” inside the “D”

(Figure 16) It is possible that the much smaller letters had filled with “dope” (mold lubricant), a common occurrence. McDonald soon abandoned the shield logo, certainly by 1942.



Figure 15 – Shield-Mc in D (Peter Utas)

McD in a Horseshoe (ca. 1942-1948)

Chuck Erickson provided a photo of a five-gallon bottle base embossed with an MD-ligature with a tiny “c” between the legs of “M” all above “42” (possibly “47”) – the logo surrounded by a detailed horseshoe (Figure 17).² The base was on a bottle with a round plate on the face embossed “POLAR (arch) / WATER (horizontal) / NO. HOLLYWOOD, CALIF. (inverted arch)” – read with the bottle inverted in a stand. An identical base from Doug



Figure 17 – McD in a horseshoe – 42? (Chuck Erickson)



Figure 18 – McD in a horseshoe – 42 & 46 (David Hall; Doug Porter)

Porter had a very distinct “42” date code, and one from David Hall only differed in that it had a “46” code (Figure 18). Like the shield mark discussed above, this was undoubtedly the logo of the McDonald Glass Co., used from at least 1942 (possibly a year earlier) until Joe Davis gained control of the firm in 1948.

Davis Glass Co., Compton, California (1948-1954)

At some point during 1948, the name changed to the Davis Glass Co. We have discovered little about the firm, but it was still located at 400 S. Alameda (corner of Laurel). By 1953, Joe Davis (married to Betty McDonald, daughter of Alex) was the president and purchasing agent with August Jakel as vice president. The plant still specialized in the production of mouth-blown five-gallon water bottles and other large sizes. Davis Glass remained listed until 1954, but the 1955 Glass Factory Directory noted the firm as “no report” (Roller n.d.).

Containers and Marks

As noted in the history, the plant specialized in larger bottles.

² The photo of the date code is indistinct. The second number could be a “7” or a “2.”

D Surrounding a Date Code (1948-1954)

We only have a single example of this logo – a “D” lying on its side with “53.” inside (Figure 19). This was likely the only logo used by Davis.



Figure 19 – Lazy D (eBay)

Discussion and Conclusions

Prior to this study, many of the logos used by these glass houses that specialized in five-gallon water bottles were shrouded in mystery – although only a few dedicated water bottle collectors had any particular interest. Because few collectors target these larger containers – for obvious reasons, especially issues with display and storage – we were unable to find many earlier sources. In addition, these large jugs rarely show up in archaeological reports.

In many bottle types, the requirement for logos and date codes were driven by the involved bottlers – e.g., dairy, soda bottlers, and breweries. We have not discovered whether that was the case with water bottles, but it seems likely. However, with only a few glass houses in competition (including William McLaughlin, the Illinois-Pacific Glass Co., and the Owens-Illinois Glass Co.), the use of logos and date codes may have been driven by the manufacturing venue – the glass houses themselves.

The only missing “link” in the study is the absence of any logo or bottle attributable to the Midway Glass Mfg. Co., the earliest of the Laurel & Alameda chain of factories. Being early, the glass house may have used no mark or codes – or, since the firm was only in business for ten months, we just may not have found one yet. Since the succeeding firms, the Beaver Glass Mfg. Co. and the Compton Glass Mfg. Co., respectively used “BGMC” in a four-leaf clover and “CGMC” in the same figure, it would be interesting to discover whether Midway began the string with an “MGMC” in a clover. Only the discovery of bottle with an obvious logo attributable to the firm will address this issue.

The successors to the Federal Glass Co. at Compton also played a follow-the-leader role in the use of logos. Federal began with its F in a shield, followed by Monarch’s Shield-M then Latchford’s Shield-L – and finally the McD in a shield of the McDonald Glass Co. But,

McDonald broke the streak, when it adopted the horseshoe motif, followed by the Davis Glass Co. with its date code in a lazy D logo.

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