

## **The West Coast Co-Operative Glass Co.**

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The Co-operative Glass Co. of Los Angeles was small and relatively short lived. Although the firm was listed as making other containers, we have only discovered its logos on milk bottles. The firm incorporated in 1920 and produced colorless bottles from 1923 to at least 1930. Despite the short life span of the firm, the factory produced a series of milk bottle with distinctive manufacturer's marks.

### **History**

#### **Co-operative Glass Co., Los Angeles, California (1923-ca. 1930)**

William C. Blank, former manager of the San Francisco plant of the Illinois-Pacific Glass Co., founded the Co-operative Glass Co. in Los Angeles and incorporated the firm in 1920 with a capital of \$500,000 to make "flint glass in the shape of bottles of all kinds, preserving jars, druggists glassware, etc." Most of the plant's workers were also paid members of the corporation, making it a true cooperative (*Los Angeles Times* 1921a). The factory opening was predicted for August 1921. The *American Bottler* (1920:79) added that the incorporators, along with Blank, were M.L. Haines, M. Andreani, W. Trevor, and George S. Reeves. Estimated cost for the plant was \$100,000, which included a 250-ton continuous tank and six semiautomatic machines.

The railroad (probably Union Pacific) granted Co-operative Glass a franchise (right-of-way) for a "spur track on Daly Street between Mission Road and Narva Street" on February 16, 1921 (Wirsching 1921:130). The *Times* for April 24, 1921 (1921b), added:

The first factory [will make] all-flint bottles and jars for the milk, beverage, preserve, food and general drug industries, which in Southern California alone are able to take this entire output. Enough orders have already been placed to keep the factory running for six months.

In this case, the term “first factory” means the first continuous tank – suggesting that the owners planned another one. “Factory” and “tank” were often used interchangeably in glass journals. The use of terminology was much more relaxed than in more current publications.

The original estimates for factory completion were overly optimistic. The plant was not completed until June of 1923. All bottles were machine made in sizes ranging from ½ ounce to one gallon. Glass colors included in “flint, green and amber” (*Los Angeles Times* 1923). Stock sold for \$100 per share, and Blank bragged that the factory was the “third largest glass manufacturing plant west of the Mississippi” (*Los Angeles Times* 1922).

This Cooperative Glass Co. was listed as making “glass bottles, jars, containers” in 1924 (California Development Assoc. 1924:172), but had become “Co-Operative” in 1927, when the firm made “flint prescriptions, beverages, proprietary, liquors, flasks, packers, preservers, [and] milk jars,” all by machine at one continuous tank with six rings. The listing continued to be the same until at least 1930 but was no longer in the 1932 edition (*American Glass Review* 1927a:132; 1930:87). The business may have been a victim of the Stock Market Crash of 1929.

## Containers and Marks

### C-O G Co and Similar Marks (1923-ca. 1930)

When the Bottle Research Group examined the 120-box California State Park milk bottle collection at Sacramento in 2006, we discovered four interesting heelmarks on machine-made, embossed milk bottles:

C–OGCO 9 (Figure 1)

C–OGCO 11

CO:GCO 1

CO.GCo 2

Co with the “o” surrounded by the “C” 1 (Figure 2)

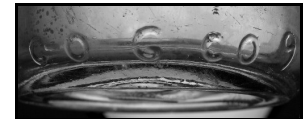


Figure 1 – C–OGCO 9 logo  
(California Parks collection)

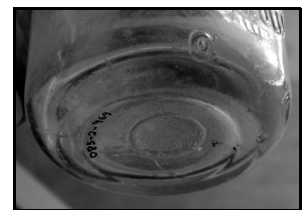


Figure 2 – Co 1 logo  
(California Parks collection)

Also in the collection was a milk bottle embossed “CGCO 6” in the identical position on the heel roll (Figure 3). This may have been made by the same company. All of these bottles were used by southern California dairies. Giarde (1980:28-29) believed the CGCo mark on milk bottles may have belonged to the Coshocton Glass Co. between 1907 and 1915, although he called Coshocton’s connection to milk bottles “tenuous.” We, too, have found no evidence that Coshocton made milk bottles. See the file for the Cohansey Glass Co. for a discussion of the “CGCo” logos.

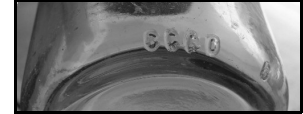


Figure 3 – CGCO 6 logo  
(California Parks collection)

Giarde (1980:24-25) also found the C–OGCO mark and noted:

This mark remains a complete mystery to this writer. It was confirmed on a single round embossed half pint which might be a Southern California milk bottle but even this is inconclusive. The bottle itself was probably made between 1916 and 1926. It also has a few minor bubbles in the glass.

The combination of “C” and “O” with a dash between them is puzzling. Rather than representing two words that follow in normal progression (e.g. Cleveland, Ohio) the dash suggests connection of two words that generally don’t fit together (as two persons’ last names or two state names). The bottom line is that I could not find a single clue concerning the identity of this milk bottle maker.

With the information available in 1980, Giarde made a pretty good analysis.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

There is nothing in the sources to explain the name “Cooperative” – a term generally used to mean that the firm was owned by glass blowers and/or workers. It is probable that the others named with Blank were all glass workers. The company was, indeed, cooperative.

Because bottles embossed with “C-OGCO,” “CO:GCO,” and “CO.GCo” have been found in a California collection on milk bottles from California dairies – as have “Co” (with a tiny “o” inside the “C”) and “CGCo,” – these were all probably made by the Cooperative Glass

Co. of Los Angeles. The bases of all the bottles had ejection scars from press-and-blow machines, and all were essentially the same size. Although the sizes of scars can vary even on the same machine, all of these – including the bottles marked “Co” and “CGCo” – appear to have been made on similar machines, although most press-and-blow machines have very similar scars.<sup>1</sup>

The plant was producing from 1923 to ca. 1930, within the probable period when all the bottles with these marks were made. The company was variously listed as “Cooperative” and “Co-operative” – thus providing a basis for both hyphenated and non-hyphenated “CO” marks. Although the firm was listed as making other bottle types, we have not seen any of these marks on other containers. Various state laws, however, required logos on milk bottles earlier than on other container types.

In addition, we know of no other glass houses from California, Nevada, or Arizona with C.O.O.G.Co. initials. Further, the only firms that we have found with Cooperative Glass Co. names were not manufacturers of milk bottles. Of the firms with C.G.Co. initials, most did not manufacture milk bottles. Although the Cohansey Glass Co. made “milk jars,” these were *fruit* jars used to hold milk, not what became later known as milk bottles – the style discussed in this study. The same is true of the Crystal Glass Co. of Pittsburgh. The Cumberland Glass Co. was listed as making milk bottles in 1905, but we found no other confirmation, although the firm make “mustard milks” – containers for mustard in milk bottle shapes – in 1911. Both distance and paucity of milk bottle production make Cumberland – as well as other Eastern glass houses – an unlikely probability. See the sections on these companies for more information.

It may seem odd that a factory only in business for a short time used so many logos. However, three of these five logos used the initials “COOGCO” followed by a single- or double-digit number between 1 and 11. The major difference was in punctuation, and that was almost certainly a variation caused by individual mold makers rather than these being actual variations. The bottle embossed “CGCO 6” had the letters closer together than the others, but it had the “6” spaced farther away – in the same position as the “COOGCO” bottles. The “Co” logo (with the

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<sup>1</sup> One of these bottles was what collectors call a “maverick” – a bottle with no city or state designation. However, the collection was of California milk bottles, so this one probably was, too. This bottle was embossed “C-OGCO.”

“o” inside the “C”) was also followed by the numeral “1” – equally offset to the right. The preponderance of evidence – coupled with a lack of any other likely explanations – therefore suggests that all of these bottles were made by the Cooperative Glass Co. of Los Angeles.

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