

## **J. H. Brough & Co. “Swan Brand” Salt**

Mandie Carter, 2020

This paper synthesizes research on proprietary glass jars branded, “J.H. Brough & Co. Liverpool” to assist archaeologists in the analysis and documentation of these artifacts. J.H. Brough & Co. was a family owned-business, operating between 1870 – 1947 selling salt, coal, whiting powder, and bath bricks. Comparison of similarly branded containers documented online shows the company distributed salt in Canada, Australia, Argentina, and the United States in wide mouthed, square and round jars capped with a lid. In the U.S., J.H. Brough & Co. salt was marketed to creameries by dairy supply merchants, Norton, Teller & Roden of San Francisco. Excavations performed by San Diego City College students between 2016 – 2018 at Los Peñasquitos Ranch House in San Diego, California, yielded multiple fragments of a square glass jar embossed, J.H. Brough & Co. / Liverpool // T[R]AD[E] / [figure of a swan] / MARK. Only three other jars listed online were recovered in an archaeological context from excavations in the Saint Roch area of Quebec; most jars listed online were for sale in the antiques trade and had limited provenience information.

### **Introduction & Site History**

Los Peñasquitos Ranch House is built on a Mexican land grant conveyed to Commandant Francisco Maria Ruiz, in 1823 (Christenson 2016a:61). In 1859, Ruiz’s great-grandnephew split ownership of the canyon with his son in law George Alonzo Johnson, a Colorado River ferry boat captain who later lost the property due to financial setbacks. (Christenson 2016a:66).

In the 1880s San Diego experienced a real estate boom and Jacob Shell Taylor, an Arizona real estate tycoon and cattleman, purchased the ranch with the intent to sell off parcels (Christenson 2016a:68). The property was owned by two commercial investors before being sold to a San Diego-based real estate investor, cattle rancher, and grocery merchant named Adolf Levi in 1903. (Christenson 2016a:76; Pacific Rural Press 1899:391; Harrison 2011; Rechcigl 2017:181). Levi and his family, local merchants Wangenheim, Steiner, Klauber & Co., had a long-term business relationship with the ranch and its many owners prior to Adolph’s ownership (Freeman 1960; Klauber, Levi & Co. 1879 & 1889).

The Mohnike family bought the ranch from Adolph Levi in 1910, and they lived there until 1913 (Christenson 2016a:76,77). Mrs. Mohnike-Heisig who lived

on the ranch as a young girl provided archaeologists with firsthand accounts of her experience tending to livestock and making butter as part of her chores (Christenson 2016b:113,114).

After the Mohnike's tenure, the ranch belonged to several private owners including George Sawday and Oliver Sexson who grazed cattle across San Diego and used the adobe as a bunkhouse (Christenson 2016a:79). In response to excessive development of the surrounding area the historic property was sold to the City of San Diego in 1974 and archaeological excavations began in the 1980s (Hector 2016:22).

In 2018 an assemblage of historic glass was analyzed from the 2016 – 2018 San Diego City College student excavations south of the adobe. Since fragments of this jar are still being excavated, the focus of this paper is to synthesize the information currently available about the J.H. Brough & Co's company history and glass jar distribution.

### **J. H. Brough & Co.; 1870 – 1947 – Company History**

John Henry Brough was born in 1833 in Sculcoates, England, and by age 17 he was working as a shipping-broker clerk (England Select Births and Christenings 2014; Census Returns of England and Wales 1851). In 1860 Brough partnered with a man named Henry Pilcher, and for the next nine years the pair worked as forwarding agents (Gore's Directory of Liverpool 1860). On January 11, 1870, Brough and Pilcher parted ways and Brough branded his independent venture, J.H. Brough & Co. (London Gazette 1870: 242). J.H. Brough & Co. was not a specialized company; instead, they focused on the distribution and processing of a variety of raw-earth materials.

### **Bath Bricks**

In 1877 the company distributed bath bricks, which were compressed blocks of fine-grained sediment dredged from the River Parrett in southwest England (Savage 2012). As the predecessor to soaps like Lava or Ajax, bath

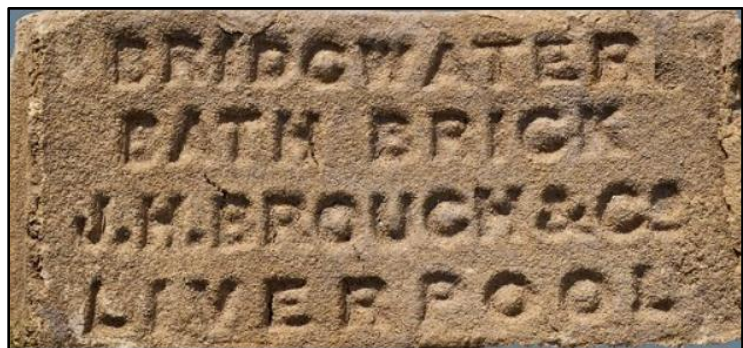


Figure 1: Stamped J.H. Brough & Co. bath brick. Photo Credit: John Biggs (Sallery 2019).

bricks were an effective cleaning tool for much of the 19th century and became a standard military ration in WWI soldiers' packs (Evans 2008). J.H. Brough & Co.'s stamped bath bricks, shown in Figure 1, have been advertised for sale by Bright Brothers & Co. in Brisbane Australia in 1879, and physically discovered in India (Brisbane Courier 1879a:2; Brisbane Courier 1879b:4; Aruniyengar 2009).

## Whiting Powder

In 1894 J.H. Brough & Co. was listed as whiting manufacturers, processing chalk powder for applications in silver polishing and stained glass (Kelly's Directory of Liverpool & Birkenhead 1894; Ardec 2018).

## Coal

In 1892 – 1893, salt prices plummeted in England, and Brough and his son, Henry Lupton Brough appeared to move into the coal industry (Fells 1901). In 1894 J.H. Brough & Co. was listed as coal merchants in an Essex, England business directory (Kelly's Directory of Essex 1894).

## International Shipping

By 1879, Brough's business was fully international, and glass jars of Brough salt were advertised for sale by Bright Brothers & Co in Brisbane, Australia (Brisbane Courier 1879b:4). At the same time, the logo and name were mentioned in a U.S. publication about the foreign salt trade, shown in Figure 2 (Department of Commerce 1912).



Figure 2: US Department of Commerce document on foreign salt trade (Department of Commerce 1912).

## Interesting Occurrences

In 1900, the company was fined 300£ for working minors after legal hours (Chief Inspector 1901:642). As J.H. Brough aged he became more vocal, offering his expertise on sources of caustic potash in the Indian chemical trade, and railing against U.S. tariffs that made salt trade impossible in 1907 (Tariff Commission 1907:273; Commercial Products of India 1908:48).

## Dissolution

In 1910, J.H. Brough died, and the company continued under the direction of his son, Henry Lupton Brough, evidenced by continued salt distribution in 1912 and bath brick advertising continuing into 1938 (Commercial Directory 1877:196; Department of Commerce 1912: 82; Index of Wills and Administrations 1910). In 1947, J.H. Brough & Co. officially dissolved, and its assets were liquidated (Brough 2018a).

## Los Peñasquitos Jar Description and Site Distribution



Figure 3: Reassembled jar embossed “J.H. Brough & Co. Liverpool” from CA-SDI-8125 Los Peñasquitos Ranch House San Diego City College excavations.

As of September 2019, more than 30 pieces of the square proprietary glass jar were excavated south of the adobe by San Diego City College students in four, highly bioturbated units during the 2016, 2017, and 2018 field seasons.

One side of the heavily patinated aqua colored jar is embossed vertically: J.H. BROUGH & Co./LIVERPOOL, shown in Figure 3. The opposite side of the jar is embossed horizontally with: T[R]AD[E] / [image of a swan] / MARK (Figure 4). The jar is mouth blown, presenting uneven thickness, bubbles, and bilateral side seams terminating at a beveled edge on the heel.



The jar's base has excess glass inside the container, no visible seam, and a round indentation on the posterior surface consistent with a cup bottom mold (Toulouse 1969: 583). These features and the company history indicate an estimated date range of 1870–1910. The jar's finish has not been recovered but examples from other sites show it was wide mouthed with an applied finish.

### Other Jar Examples

#### Large Square Jars

Only two J.H. Brough & Co. square jars have been pictured online. The first, shown in Figure 5, was listed

in 2015 on the Australian auction site, ABCR Auctions and is believed to have



come from an unspecified historic site in Melbourne, Australia (Bruce 2019). In 1879, Brough's merchandise was being sold by wholesalers, Greig and Murray to local merchants in Melbourne (The Argus 1880:2)

David Bruce, a representative of ABCR Auctions, says he has encountered "less than a handful" of J.H. Brough & Co. square jars in his career, stating he has noticed that J.H. Brough's square jars are usually associated with older historical sites and come to auction far less frequently than the smaller jars (Bruce 2019).

Figure 5: Square J.H. Brough & Co. Jar. (ABCR Auctions 2015).



Figure 4: Reassembled jar embossed with a swan and the word "Mark" from CA-SDI-8125 Los Peñasquitos Ranch House San Diego City College excavations.

The second photo of a square J.H. Brough & Co. jar published online is shown in Figures 6 and 7 and is from the Jean-Paul-L'Allier Garden archeological website (Ville de Québec). Two identical square jars were excavated from the site CeEt-54, known as “The Grande Place” in Quebec’s Saint-Roch neighborhood, a historic shipbuilding port and industrial center (McGain and ARKIS, 1990b:60; Ville de Québec 2018).

Both square jars are recorded as being excavated from a wooden structure believed to be an abandoned latrine built by property owner and carpenter, Joseph Picard in the mid-19th century (McGain and ARKIS 1990a:45). Picard rented out the house to a merchant named John Baptiste Bertrand between 1884–1900 who may have used the decommissioned latrine to dispose of unwanted inventory, evidenced by the presence of perfume jars, medicine vials, and lamp glass (McGain and ARKIS 1990a:53,62; Cloutier 2004:58).

### Small Round Jars

Small sized Brough salt jars are round, ribbed, and referred to as fruit jars. These are more prevalent in the archaeological record and antiques trade and empirical evidence suggests they are often found in younger sites (Bruce 2019). In March 2019, the small sized jar shown in Figure 8 was excavated from a privy



Figure 6: Square J.H. Brough & Co. jar. Jean-Paul-L'Allier Garden Excavation, Quebec. (Villa de Quebec 2018).



Figure 7: Square J.H. Brough & Co. jar. Jean-Paul-L'Allier Garden Excavation, Quebec. (Villa de Quebec 2018).

associated with a German Consulate named Charles Pitl at the historic-period Anderson Site, also located in Quebec (Laval University 2019).

Another small jar listed on the auction site Worthpoint is described as having been personally “dug” by the seller near the beach in Kennebunk, Maine, which is also a historical shipbuilding port, railroad hub, and industry center that experienced an economic shift during the turn of the century (Brown 2019; Butler 1996).

### Glass Lids

Both the small and large jars had glass stopper lids that might have been attached to the finish with a metal spring clamp. As of September 2019, the lid for the Los Peñasquitos jar has not been recovered. A Worthpoint listing for the small



Figure 9: Small round J. H. Brough & Co. Jar with lid (Worthpoint 2008).



Figure 8: Small sized J.H. Brough & Co. jar from the Anderson Site in Quebec.

sized jar shown in Figure 9 notes the glass lid associated with it is embossed “J. KILNER & SONS WAKEFIELD”, which was a glass manufacturer in Yorkshire, England, branding jars with that name configuration between 1857 – 1900 (Worthpoint 2008; Lockhart et al. 2016:157). Unfortunately, it cannot be proven that the lid accompanying this particular jar is original.

However, an example of a larger-sized container lid can be found in Figure 10, which was recently posted on eBay and



described as being nine centimeters wide and embossed “J.H. Brough & Co.” (Mezanene 2019). The seller states the lid was found on Tasmania’s west coast in a refuse site near an old sawmill on the Princess River in the now partially submerged town named Crotty (Mezanene 2019; Campton 2016). Crotty was a gold mining town complete with smelter and railroad that experienced its economic boom and bust in the late 19th century (Campton 2016).



Figure 10: Large J.H. Brough & Co. jar lid via eBay.com (Mezanene 2008).

## Swan Iconography

J.H. Brough & Co. jars appear to have been consistently embossed with a swan figure. The first reference to the salt as “Swan Brand” found online are two Australian trademark registration announcements in 1895, one from Sydney, Australia shown in Figure 11 and the other from Victoria, Australia shown in Figure 12 (New South Wales Government Gazette 1895; Victoria Government Gazette 1895:3284). The next mention is an American advertisement from San Francisco in 1896 shown in Figure 16, and finally in a 1906 book of patents from Argentina shown in Figure 13. (California Dairy Association 1896; Patentes De Invención 1906:470).

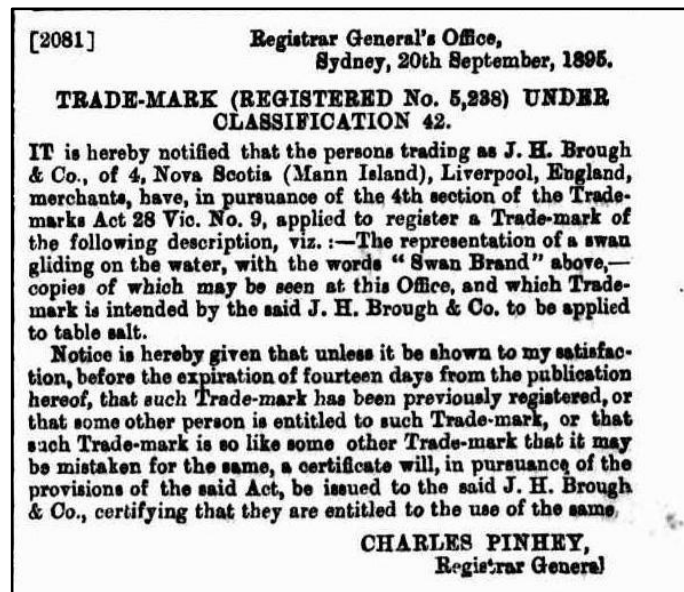


Figure 11: Trademark registration for "Swan Brand" salt (New South Wales Government Gazette 1895).



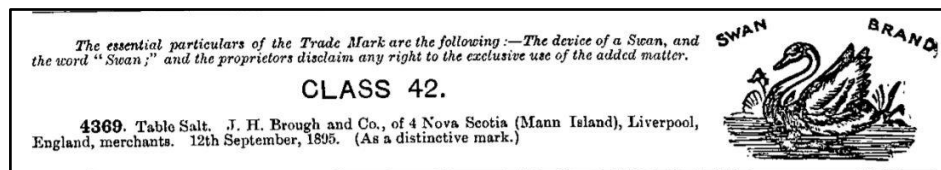


Figure 12: Trademark registration for “Swan Brand” salt.

There are at least two different molds used to emboss the swan icon on glass jars: one shows the bird with a highly textured wing above textured water, and the other presents a smooth featured, rounded bird sitting directly atop the lettering; a side by side comparison of these icons can be found in Figure 14 from a 2017 listing by the Ottawa based Spooner & Sons Auction site (Spooner Auctions 2017). The textured wing swan icon is found on all three of the square vessels, as well as some more crudely made round jars. Moreover, a 2019 post by Instagram account, TransferWareChinaPottery shows J.H. Brough & Co. also distributed salt in stoneware ceramic jars with a transfer print swan logo in a



Figure 14: Comparison of differing swan logos via Spooner Auctions, Ottawa (Spooner Auctions 2017).

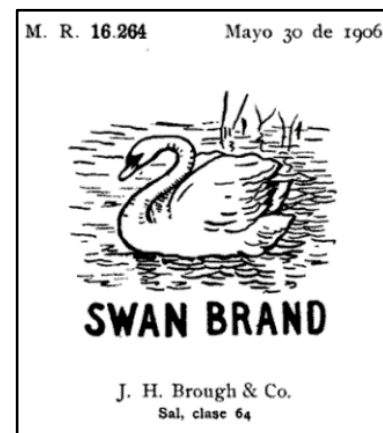


Figure 13: Swan Brand patent illustration, Argentina (Patentes De Invencion 1906).

similar style as those found on the square glass containers (Figure 15) (TransferWareChinaPottery 2019).

An online communication with Mr. Doug Brough, a researcher of the surname Brough, suggests swan iconography may have had personal significance to J.H. Brough since it was incorporated into many Brough family coat of arms (Brough 2018b). Alternatively, it is possible “Swan Brand”



Figure 13: J.H. Brough & Co. stoneware jar with transfer print logo (TransferWareChinaPottery 2019).

takes its name from the Old Swan District near Liverpool where J.H. Brough and his businesses were located (Liverpool Today 2018).

### American Connections – San Francisco

Brough's salt was featured in an 1896 print advertisement in the Third Annual Dairy Convention Proceedings (California Dairy Association 1896:59). Forwarding agents turned dairy supply merchants, Norton, Teller & Roden of San Francisco listed themselves as the "sole proprietor for

J.H. Brough & Co's "Swan Brand" Fine Liverpool Salt" suggesting it was "used by the best creameries" (Figure 16) (California Dairy Association 1896:59).

Norton, Teller & Roden's services seem to grow in concert with the development of a regulated dairy industry, going from listings as commission agents and produce wholesalers to documentation of the trio entering butter competitions (Chamber of Commerce of San Francisco 1896:175; California Legislature 1903:175). Later, they would move into elected positions in the Wholesale Dairy Exchange (Pacific Dairy Review 1906:189).



Figure 14: San Francisco advertisement in the Dairy Convention Proceedings 1896. (California Dairy Association 1896).

Salt use in dairy serves several purposes: flavoring, moisture control, and preservation in butter and cheese (Cargill 2019). Prior to iodization, the only major difference between table salt and dairy salt was purity, since purer salt resulted in better cheese (Cargill 2019). In the early days of the U.S. dairy industry only high-quality, imported salt from Liverpool, England was thought to be of the correct purity and grain size for use in dairy applications (Willard 1871:451-452).

## **Conclusions and Suggestions for Future Research**

J.H. Brough & Co.'s salt was marketed as fine table salt in Canada, Australia and Argentina, but the only listing found in the U.S. shows it was marketed for use in the production of butter and cheese. While there is no evidence to support a large-scale dairy at Los Peñasquitos Ranch House, we do know butter was made in the general area where the square, J.H. Brough & Co. jar was found; a stone structure that houses an artesian well a short distance west of the jar's location was named "The Milk House" by an editor for The *San Diego Union* in 1869 (Ward et.al. 1980:11). Additionally, Mrs. Mohnike-Heisig, ranch resident in 1912, recalls sitting with her feet in the cool well water while churning butter as a child (Christenson 2016b:114). Unfortunately, we cannot confirm the bottle belonged to the Mohnike family due to the loss of stratigraphy at the site from heavy bioturbation. Future research should look for dairy activity where J.H. Brough's salt jars are recovered to determine if dairy processing is an application unique to the United States.

Only a few of J.H. Brough & Co.'s salt jar locations have been documented online, with most found in coastal areas. The rarity of the large sized square jars and their crude manufacturing features, similar logo style, and empirical evidence suggesting they are found in older sites, may indicate the square jar was an early packaging style for the company. Future research should focus on dating logo style and jar shape in well stratified sites. Special attention should be paid to ceramic J.H. Brough & Co. jars since they may be even more rare than the glass containers.

There is much to be learned from the distribution and comparison of sites where J.H. Brough & Co. salt jars are uncovered. The goal of this paper is to encourage more archaeologists to document and share the discovery of J.H. Brough & Co. products so we might better understand their distribution and cultural significance in the archaeological record.



A research database with ongoing research on J.H. Brough & Co. can be accessed here:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1282gMDGRTEhHf2jSAAvzI8uQRqbk0QM2NyXRucztFjQ/edit?usp=sharing>.

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