

Kentucky Glass Works Co.

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The city of Louisville, Kentucky, boasted two glass factories with very similar names, although they existed during different time periods. The latter plant produced a large quantity and variety of bottles, flasks, and jars, usually embossing one of four sets of initials on the bases.

History

Kentucky Glass Works, Louisville, Kentucky (1850-ca. 1855)

The Kentucky Glass Works opened in 1850. As with many glass factories during that period, the operating company and the plant, itself, used different names. The name of the operating firm for the Kentucky Glass Works during the first few months in 1850 was Taylor, Stanger, Ramsey & Co. From the late part of 1850 to ca. 1855, Douglass & Taylor operated the works. Because of that name, the factory was often referred to locally as the “Douglass Glass Works.” The plant became the Louisville Glass Works ca. 1855, originally run by Douglass, Rutherford & Co. (Whitten 2005a:46-47). See the section on the Louisville Glass Works for more information.

Kentucky Glass Works Co., Louisville, Kentucky (1879-ca. 1888)

The Kentucky Glass Works Co. incorporated on July 23, 1879, in Louisville, Kentucky, with Edward Bull as president, William Cromey as secretary, and John Stanger, Sr., as plant manager. Stanger switched allegiance, joining W.C. DePauw’s operation at New Albany, Indiana, and was replaced on December 9, 1879, by Henry C. Lentz. Located at Fourth and C Streets, the plant made a large variety of bottles and jars during almost a decade of production. The factory had occasional fires, including a major blaze on January 26, 1881, that destroyed most of the outbuildings and damaged a quantity of beer bottles. Fortunately, the estimated \$10,000 damage was fully insured (Whitten 2005b:42).

Wilson and Caperton (1994:70) recorded all beer bottle advertising in *The Western Brewer* between 1883 and 1890 as well as samples from issues between 1878 and 1882. The Kentucky Glass Works Co. advertised in the journal from at least mid-1882 until March 1884. The plant ceased operations ca. 1888, although it continued to be listed in the city directories the following year (Whitten 2005b:42). The plant made a wide variety of containers, including wax-sealer fruit jars, medicine, bluing, and beer bottles, and liquor flasks. For a more detailed history and an in-depth discussion of the bottles produced, see Whitten (2005b:42-43).

Containers and Marks

Whitten (2005:46) observed that the earlier Kentucky Glass Works “is NOT the source of bottles and jars marked ‘KY.G.W’ and ‘KY.G.W.Co.’” He further noted that the glass house did not mark any of its bottles with the company or factory name, although one bottle, possibly made by the company, was marked with the word “KENTUCKY.” He attributed several other bottles to the company, but none had distinctive manufacturer’s marks (Whitten 2005a:46).

Bottles and jars from the later company were marked with four major styles of marks: KY.G.W., KY.G.W.Co., K.Y.G.Co., and K.G.W.Co. (Whitten 2005:43). Our sample (admittedly small), drawn mainly from eBay and the David Whitten collection, showed several minor variations of some styles. All photos are from the David Whitten collection unless otherwise noted.

KENTUCKY (poss. 1850-ca. 1855)

Whitten (2005a:46) noted that a bottle, “similar in shape to the imported London Mustard bottles,” was embossed vertically on the side with “KENTUCKY” in wide letters. He suggested that the bottle *might* have been made by the Kentucky Glass Works (1850-ca. 1855). There is no solid evidence connecting the bottle to the glass factory. An article in the April 1974 issue of *Antiques* noted that these bottles had been dug adjacent to the Kentucky Glass Works.

Toulouse (1969:166) noted a grooved-ring wax-sealer fruit jar embossed on the side with “KENTUCKY” and “LGCo.” Since this jar does not appear in Roller (1983), Creswick (1987), or any of the Red Book for Fruit Jar series, it is almost certainly bogus.

KY.G.W. (1879-ca. 1888)



Figure 2 – KYGW variations

According to Whitten (2005:43), this is the most common mark used by the Kentucky Glass Works Co. It has been found on wax-sealer fruit jars, medicine and bluing flasks, coffin flasks, blob-top beer bottles, square cathedral pickle bottles, and generic pepper sauce bottles (as well as other types). Toulouse (1971:313) dated the mark from “1849 to 1855 or later,” obviously mistaking it for the earlier company.

Toulouse (1971:179) observed the mark (possibly in the separated form with a “5” below the logo) on a grooved-ring wax-sealer fruit jar and dated the mark ca. 1855, obviously mistaking it as

belonging to the earlier company. Roller (2011:286) noted this mark on the base of a grooved-ring wax-sealer fruit jar and tentatively identified the Kentucky Glass Works but gave no dates. Creswick (1987a:97) illustrated the separated KY GW mark on the same jar but was more positive about the manufacturer (Figure 1). We have isolated four variations of the mark – with the first one definitely the most common:

- KY.G.W. – horizontal (Figure 2)
- KY.G.W. – arched (see Figure 2)
- KY. G. W. (Figure 3)
- KY. G.W. / 5 (or 4) (Figure 4)

In some cases, the punctuation is very faint.

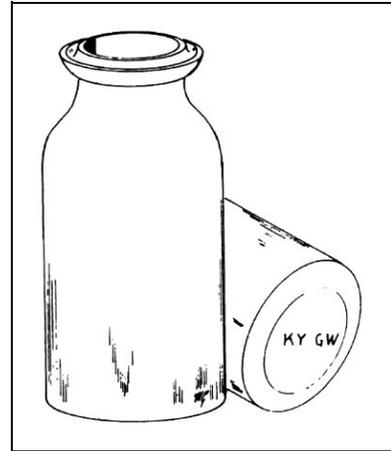


Figure 1 – KYGW (Creswick 1987a:97)



Figure 3 – KY G W



Figure 4 – KYGW / 4 (eBay)

KY.G.W.Co. (1879-ca. 1888)



Figure 6 – KYG.W.Co (eBay)



Figure 7 – KGWCo variations

Toulouse (1969:179) noted the earlier Kentucky Glass Works (ca. 1855) as the maker of a grooved-ring wax-sealer fruit jar, marked “KY.G.W.Co.” on the base. In his later book, Toulouse (1971:313) also attributed this mark to the earlier company and dated it “1849 to 1855 or later.” Roller (1983:186; 2011:286) suggested that the Kentucky Glass Works was the manufacturer but failed to offer a date. Creswick (1987a:97) illustrated the mark on a wax sealer and identified the Kentucky Glass Works as the maker but also offered no dates (Figure 5).

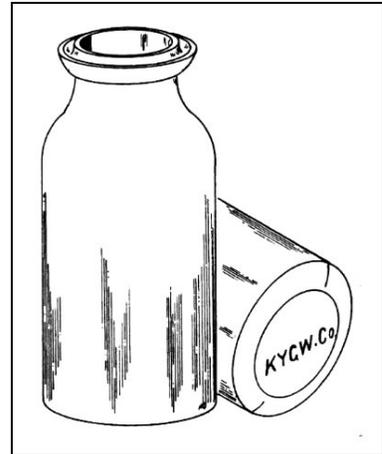


Figure 5 – KGWCo (Creswick (1987a:97)



Figure 8 – KGWCo arched

Whitten (2005b:43) noted that this mark appeared on amber cream ale-type bottles, wax-sealer fruit jars, tonic syrup bottles, amber export beer bottles, at least one blob-top, “torpedo” soda bottle, bitters, and other types. Hutchbook (Fowler 2016) listed five examples of this logo on Hutchinson bottles. This mark appears in at least three variations:

KYG.W.Co (Figure 6) [eBay]

KY.G.W.Co. or KY.G.W.CO. – horizontal (Figure 7)

KY.G.W.Co. – arched (Figure 8)

KY.G.W.C^o (Figure 9)

KY. / G.W.CO. (Figure 10)



Figure 9 – KY.G.W.C^o

KYGC^o (1879-ca. 1888)



Figure 10 – KY. / G.W.CO.

Whitten (2005b:43) noted this mark on “two sizes of light green-aqua coffin flasks. We have also observed the mark on aqua and amber packers’ bottles. We only found a single variation of this mark “KYGC^o” – note underlined superscript “^o” (Figure 11).

K.G.W.Co. (1879-ca. 1888)

Roller (1983:180) stated that jars marked K.G.W.Co. came in olive green and amber colors. Although he was unsure, he thought the mark might



Figure 11 – KYGC^o (eBay)



Figure 12 – KGWCo (eBay & Fort Stanton

have been used by the Kentucky Glass Works; however, he offered no dates. We have also found the mark on an amber export beer bottle base and a mug-base Hutchinson soda bottle. Hutchbook (Fowler 2016) listed the logo on seven Hutchinson bottles. Our sample of photos shows both “K.G.W.Co.” and “KG.W.Co.” variations – note position of periods (Figure 12).

Although Roller noted the existence of this logo on a wax-sealer fruit jar, David Whitten has never discovered an example despite decades of collecting and researching bottles and jars in the Louisville area. It is very likely that Roller confused this mark with the more common wax sealer embossed “K.Y.G.W.” on the base – a mark that was *not* included in his book. Please note that this applies only to the fruit jars. The logo was certainly used on various bottles.

KENTUCKY GLASSWORKS COMPANY (1879-1884)

The full name was embossed on glass target balls, probably made between 1879 and 1884 (Whitten 2005b:43). Note that the company was in business for a longer time; the date range reflects the probable period when Kentucky Glass Works made target balls. These are extremely rare and may only have been made for a short period of time or for a single order. Of course, all of them may have been shot up!

LKYGW

Toulouse (1971:314) noted this mark as used between 1873 and 1886. Whitten (2005b:43), however, was reasonably certain that the mark did not exist, and we have been unable to find an example.

Letter Styles

Aside from the “o” in “Co,” the letters “K” and “G” have some distinctive variations. These were almost certainly changed at the whim of the individual engraver. If we knew how, they would almost certainly be datable, but we would probably have to have the original molds and records in order to form a chronology.

In order to discuss the letter variations in connection with the marks, we need to number the marks. They are presented below in the order that Whitten (2005b:43) selected them as well as the way we listed them above:

No. 1 – KY.G.W

No. 2 – KY.G.W.Co

No. 3 – KY.G.Co.

No. 4 – K.G.W.Co.

The letter “K” was formed with a vertical line and two slanted lines, the upper line slanted upward and the lower line slanted downward. In the most common variation, the upper slanted line extended from the vertical line, and the lower slanted line extended from the upper slanted

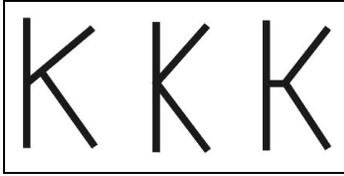


Figure 13 – K fonts

line. This type of “K” appeared in all four variations of the mark.

Variation No. 1 was the only style that had all three types of “K” fonts (Figures 13 & 14). None had serifs. Note in Figure 13 the differences in the fonts.



Figure 14 – K fonts



Figure 15 – G fonts

The letter “G” was also embossed in at least three fonts. The most common had the serif extending to the left (“into” the letter). This was found on Marks No. 2, 3, and 4. The second style had a “tail” extending downward and slightly to the right, found on Marks No. 1, 3, and 4. The final style, with the serif extending both left and right, was on found on Marks No. 1 and 4 (Figures 15 & 16).



Figure 16 – G fonts

Discussion and Conclusions

Whitten’s seminal work created histories of the two Kentucky Glass Works factories as well as considerable knowledge about the bottles, flasks, and jars they produced. Although the early plant apparently failed to leave its marks on products, the latter company used four major variations of its initials, but all must be dated to the entire tenure of the company, 1879-1889.

Acknowledgments

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