

# Lancaster Glass Works

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The Lancaster Glass Works opened in Erie County, New York, in 1849. During the next 32 years, a number of owners, mostly partnerships, operated the plant, making a large variety of bottles and flasks – few of them with manufacturer’s marks. In 1881, a group of workers purchased the factory, renaming it the Lancaster Cooperative Glass Works, a corporation. The group reorganized in 1893 or 1894 and again in 1897, becoming a limited corporation or partnership – although it reverted to corporate status in late 1898 or 1899. The plant may have closed in 1903 or 1904, then reopened in 1907, but the business closed permanently ca. 1909.

## Histories

### **Lancaster Glass Works, Lancaster, New York (1849-1881)**

Charles W. Reed and seven other glass blowers from Pittsburgh established the Lancaster Glass Co. in Erie County, New York, in 1849, under the firm name of Reed, Allen, Cox & Co. – and began making glass about the first of August at a single furnace and only five pots. The company made flasks and many styles of bottles, including (but not limited to) beer, soda, mineral water, ale, bitters – and even some pitchers and occasional other off-hand pieces (Bilotta 1970:5; McKearin & Wilson 1978:144).

Samuel S. Shinn acquired the interests of one or more of the owners, and Reed, Shinn & Co. operated works from at least 1859, although the plant burned to the ground that year – to be rebuilt almost immediately. In 1863, Dr. Frederick H. James purchased Shinn’s shares, and Nathan B. Gatchell apparently bought the interest of one or more of the other owners.<sup>1</sup> The firm became James, Gatchell & Co. James and Gatchell purchased the remaining shares in mid-1864 and became a major producer of insulators – although none were marked with the glass factory name. Tax records show James, Gatchell & Co. until March 1864, but the firm was James &

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<sup>1</sup> This may have occurred a year earlier. Von Mechow (2017) discovered a sale notice in the *Buffalo Daily Courier* of April 11, 1862, offering Shinn’s interest.

Gatchell by August. James acquired Gatchell's interests in 1866 and operated the plant as the James Glass Works until 1881 (McKearin & Wilson 1978:144; von Mechow 2017).

Toulouse (1971:433) correctly connected the Lancaster Reed with the Reed of the Clyde Glass Co. ca. 100 miles to the east of Lancaster at Clyde. When Charles W. Reed left the Lancaster Glass Works, he moved to Clyde in 1865 or 1866 to purchase Amon Wood's share of Southwick and Wood, becoming Orrin Southwick's partner in Southwick & Reed. The firm eventually became Ely, Reed & Co. in 1878, and Reed left in 1880 (see the section on the Clyde Glass Works for more details). However, Toulouse was incorrect in assuming that this was the same Reed family that started F.E. Reed & Co. at Rochester (although they may have been more distant relatives). Charles Reed moved to Massillon, Ohio – not to Rochester – and opened Reed & Co. there in 1881 (see the section on Reed & Co. for more on that firm).

#### **Lancaster Cooperative Glass Works, Lancaster, New York (1881-ca. 1909)**

Dr. Frederick H. James retired from the glass business in 1881. A group of workers purchased the factory and renamed it the Lancaster Cooperative Glass Works. By 1893, Thomas Leary was president of the Lancaster Cooperative Glass Co. By 1898, the firm was a limited liability company, although that apparently only lasted for a few years, possibly just 1897-1898 (Dunn 1971:8; von Mechow 2017).

The recorded names, however, were interesting and may have constituted a series of reorganizations:

1886-1893 – Lancaster Cooperative Glass Works (a corporation)

1894-1897 – Lancaster Cooperative Glass Co. (probably a corporation)

1898 – Lancaster Cooperative Glass Works, Ltd.

1899-1908 – Lancaster Cooperative Glass Works (a corporation)

The factory operated a single furnace with five pots in 1897 (Roller 1998). The Lancaster Co-operative Glass Works was listed as making “Prescription; Beer; Soda; Wine; [and] Brandy” bottles in 1907 and 1909. In 1912, Thomas Register listed the Lancaster Glass Works for the last time (Thomas Publishing Co. 1907:159; 1909:201; 1912:480).

The firm was listed in 1904, with Joseph Kupfer, president and D. Hummell as both secretary and treasurer. The factory still operated a single continuous tank with six rings, making prescription, liquor & proprietary ware (*American Glass Review* 1934:159). According to Dunn (1971:8), the plant “flourished until 1904,” and the historical marker at the factory’s location agrees with that date. The buildings then remained idle for several years until the plant was demolished in 1920. Bilotta (1970:5), however, claimed that the plant continued in business until 1907.

Despite these early claims for a closing, Roller (1998) cited glass factory directories for later entries. Although the same officers were listed in 1905, by 1906, M.E. Rothburg was the president, with M.W. Comstock, secretary and F.E. McGrath as treasurer and manager. The officers remained static until 1908, but W.A. Koch replaced McGrath as both treasurer and manager in 1909. By 1912, however, the directories listed the plant as “no report,” and there were no listings from 1915 to 1920.

Von Mechow (2017), however, suggested that the firm was “purported to have closed in 1903 or 1904, but reopened in 1907 and operated under [the Lancaster Cooperative Glass Works] name during 1908.” We agree that the changes in officers and the listings for a manager suggest that there was at least *some* activity between 1905 and 1909. As noted above, both the Thomas Register (Thomas Publishing Co. 1909:201) and other directories (Roller 1998) listed the firm again as the Lancaster Glass Works. Lawsuits began in 1909 and continued to 1911. If the plant had not closed earlier the suits almost certainly closed down the operation (von Mechow 2017).

The *American Glass Review* (1934:159) reprinted the 1904 glass factory directory in its 1934 edition along with updated notes – including whether or when the 1904 firms ceased operations.<sup>2</sup> For the Lancaster Cooperative Glass Co., the notation read: “Later became Hygeia Glass Co., and now Lancaster plant of Hazel-Atlas Glass Co.” This was incorrect. Although the Industrial Glass Co. opened at Lancaster in 1907, the firm constructed its plant on Sheldon Ave. Lancaster Glass was located at Factory Ave. The Hygeia Nursing Bottle Co. purchased the Industrial Glass Co. in 1921 and sold the factory to the Hazel-Atlas Glass Co. at the end of 1929. For more information, see the section on the Hygeia Glass Corp.

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<sup>2</sup> These were not 100% accurate, although they were generally close.

## Containers and Marks

McKearin & Wilson (1978:292) noted that Samuel Shinn of Lancaster, New York, received Patent No. 22,091 on November 16, 1858, for what appears to be a mixed media mold – using metal and “clay, plaster of Paris, or other of the earthly matters commonly employed for such purposes” – for making “druggists’ vials” – although “the same construction is applicable to molds for all kinds of bottles” (Figure 1). Shinn did not assign the patent to the Lancaster Glass Works and was probably not yet a partner in the firm. He may have bought into Lancaster Glass as a vehicle to utilize his mold design.

Under the heading of “Fruit Jars for the Million,” the June 26, 1862, issue of the *Rochester Daily Union and Advertiser* promised that “orders by mail [would be] promptly attended to and carefully filled. Also wax, for sealing cork to jars.” These would have been early fruit jars produced by Lancaster, probably generic (von Mechow 2017).

On November 21 1865, F.H. James and N.B. Gatchell received Patent No. 51,058 for an “Improved Clamping-Punty” – antedated to November 8 (Figure 2). This was a spring-loaded pontil rod that clamped onto the body of a bottle, eliminating the need for adhering the older style pontil to the bottle base. This was not the first snap case; the sabot was already in use in France, and others had been in use since at least the 1850s, but the mid-1860s was the general period when the older, affixed pontil vanished from the working glass tables of the U.S. (Lindsey 2017; Toulouse 1968:204).

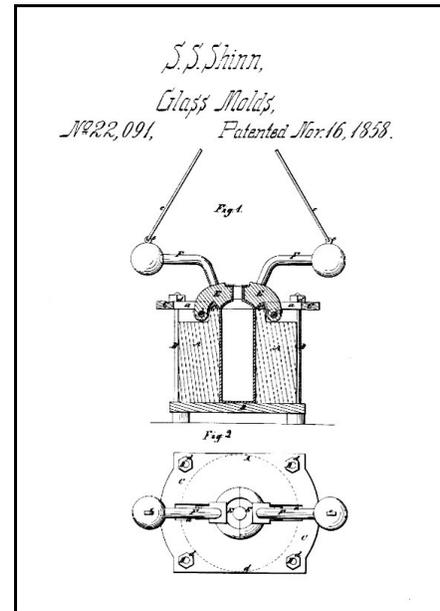


Figure 1 – Shinn 1858 patent

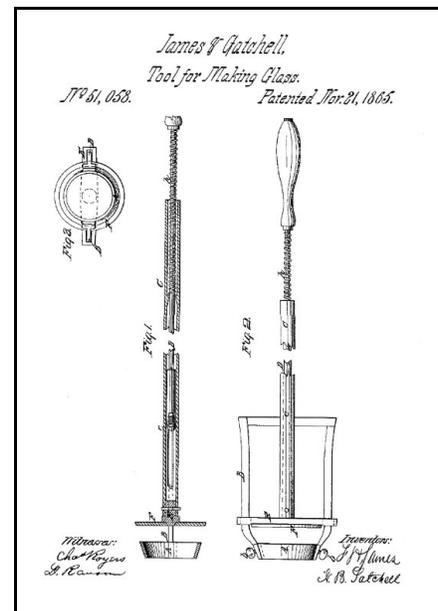


Figure 2 – James & Gatchell 1865 patent

## LANCASTER GLASS WORKS (1849-early 1870s)

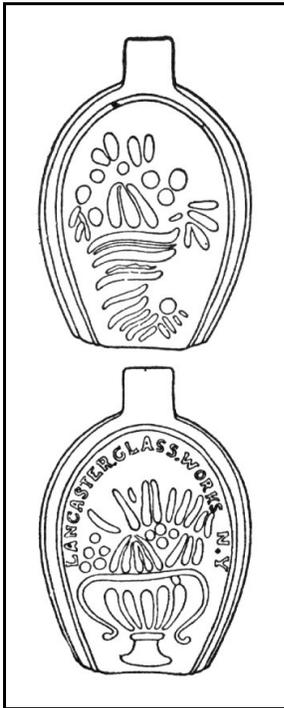


Figure 4 – Lancaster flask (McKearin and Wilson 1978:591)



Figure 6 – Pontil scar (American Bottle Auction)

McKearin and Wilson (1978:145, 674-675) illustrated and described a flask embossed “LANCASTER GLASS WORKS (arch) / FULL PINT (horizontal)” in a so-called “horseshoe” or “tombstone” shape (Figure 3). McKearin and Wilson (1978:145, 591) also illustrated a flask embossed “LANCASTER GLASS WORKS, N.Y. (deep arch)” along with a cornucopia filled with fruit and produce (Figures 4 & 5). Van Rensselaer (1921:11, 109) also noted one of the flasks. Each of these flasks had a “sheared lip” – essentially no finish at all – or one that was just slightly flared. Each also had an improved pontil scar

on the base (Figure 6). McKearin & Wilson dated these flasks between 1849 and ca. 1860. These were almost certainly made prior to the 1859 fire that destroyed the plant.

A final flask was embossed “LANCASTER (slight arch) / {8-pointed star} / ERIE. CO. N.Y. (slight inverted arch)” on the front (Figures 7

& 8). This variation had a double-ring finish and no pontil scar on the base. McKearin & Wilson (1978:145) dated this variation as ca. 1860 to the early 1870s. This is the only marked post-1859-fire container we have

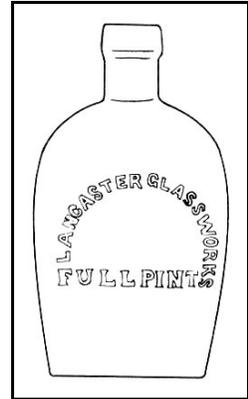


Figure 3 – Lancaster flask (McKearin and Wilson 1978:675)



Figure 5 – Lancaster flask (American Bottle Auction)

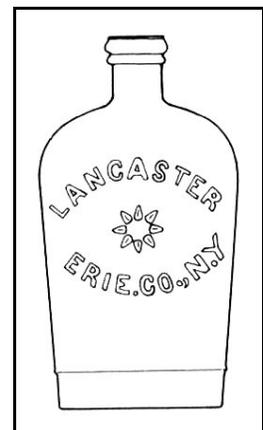


Figure 7 – Lancaster flask (McKearin & Wilson (1978:673)



Figure 8 – Lancaster flask (Glass Discoveries)

found for the Lancaster Glass Works, and it was probably made after the James and Gatchell 1865 patent for a snap case.

In addition, McKearin and Wilson (1978:144, Plate XIV following page 336) described and illustrated a light grey-blue porter

bottle “with a thick, deep, sloping collar and a small domed kick-up” that was embossed “LANCASTER

(slight arch) / GLASS WORKS (horizontal)” on the front body with “XX” on the reverse.

Other variations of these soda or porter bottles include “N.Y.” below “GLASS WORKS”; a large “X” between “LANCASTER” and “GLASS WORKS”; or three large “Xs” between “LANCASTER” and “GLASS WORKS” (Figure 9) All of these bottles had improved pontil scars, and most had rounded tapered finishes (Figure 10). A single example had the earlier, more angular tapered finish, and a few had early blob styles. These were almost certainly made during the 1849-1859 period – before the 1859 fire (von Mechow 2017).



Figure 9 – Lancaster soda bottles (American Bottle Auction)



Figure 10 – Pontil scar (American Bottle Auction)

### LANCASTER CO-OP GLASS WORKS (1888-96 & 1898-1903 & 1907-08)

Von Mechow (2017) listed seven examples of these later marks, embossed with four slightly different variations of the name (Figure 11). Variations could have a two-digit number in the center of the base, although the number was not reported on all examples:

LANCASTER CO-OP (arch) / 15. (horizontal) / GLASS WORKS (inverted arch)

LANCASTER CO-OP (arch) / GLASS WKS (inverted arch)

LANCASTER COOPERATIVE (arch) / 10 (horizontal) / GLASS WORKS (inverted arch)

LANCASTER COOPERATIVE (arch) / GLASS WRKS (inverted arch)

At least one of these variations was confirmed by an eBay auction – although the seller failed to include a base photo. These may actually contain recording or reporting errors. There may be only two actual variations of the mark. All of these were champagne soda bottles with rounded tapered finishes, and none had pontiled bases. They were probably made during the ca. 1881-1890 period. Von Mechow listed the date ranges as “1888-96 & 1898-1903 & 1907-08” – with 1897-1898 reserved for the “LD” variation.

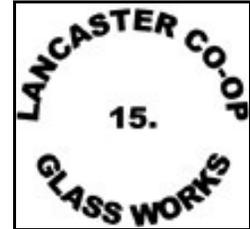


Figure 11 – Lancaster Co-Op (von Mechow 2017)

## LANCASTER COOPERATIVE N.Y. GLASS WORKS (1897-1898)



Figure 12 – Lancaster Co-Operative (von Mechow 2017)

Von Mechow (2017) also listed two bottles embossed on the bases with variations of the “Limited” logo (Figure 12):

LANCASTER CO-OPERATIVE  
(arch) / N.Y. (horizontal) / GLASS  
WKS. LD (inverted arch)

LANCASTER COOPERATIVE  
(arch) / GLASS WORKS. LD (inverted arch)



Figure 13 – Co-Operative base (Antique Bottles.net)

Unfortunately, we have found only a single base photo of one of these bottles (Figures 13 & 14). Note that “LD” is actually “L<sup>D</sup>” (with the “D” in superscript). As with the above logos, these may contain reporting errors (errors given to von Mechow). Von Mechow dated these bottles 1897-1898.

## Discussion and Conclusions

Dating and explanations for the Lancaster Glass Works marks and bottles are reasonably obvious and require little discussion here. It is quite clear that Lancaster – regardless of phase – never marked the vast majority of its bottles. The identification of the glass house on the face of liquor flasks was consistent with the period as was the later embossing on the bases of soda bottles during the Co-op era.

## Acknowledgments

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Figure 14 – Co-Operative bottle (Antique Bottles.net)

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