

The Latchford Glass Factories

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When William J. Latchford left the Southern Glass Co. in 1925, he joined his step-sons in the formation of the W.J. Latchford Co. at Compton, California. He built a new, expanded plant at nearby Huntington Park in 1932, specializing in demijohns and other large ware but making a general line of containers. Upon Latchford's death, one of his step-sons, W. Baird Marble, became president and renamed the business as the Latchford-Marble Glass Co. When Marble died, Latchford's natural son, W.J. Latchford, Jr., took charge, changing the name to the Latchford Glass Works. The firm continued to produce glassware until 1989, when it was engulfed by the Mexican giant Vitro, S.A.

Histories

The Latchford glass factories went through three distinct phases, each with its own name, logos, and products. Each story is complete in itself, but the three blend to create a unique corner of the glass industry on the West Coast.

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

Along with his step-son, John McK. Marble and William McLaughlin, William J. Latchford founded the Southern Glass Co. at Vernon, California, in 1918 (see the section on Southern Glass for more information). Latchford left in August 1925 over a dispute with the other officers over his involvement with the Monarch Glass Co. at Compton, California, operated by Latchford in conjunction with another step-son, W. Baird Marble (Toulouse 1971:314).

Reporting of the period between 1922 and 1926 is *very* confused and confusing. Latchford and one or both of the Marbles *may* have leased or purchased an older factory at Compton as early as 1922. By 1924, one of the glass factory directories listed the Monarch Glass Co. – at 7520 S. Alameda St. – with a single 28-ton day tank, producing demijohns and carboys. John McKay Marble was the manager. The Marble brothers *may* have sold the business to Latchford in 1925, and this may mark the date of actual production. By at least October,

Latchford had renamed the business the W.J. Latchford Co. (Roller n.d.).¹ Roller (1983:253) noted that the company was actually incorporated in 1926, probably a corporation including one or both Marbles. The address of the factory was the same location as the Monarch Glass Co.

Latchford was arrested on September 18, 1926, one of several charged with “the manufacture and distribution of bottles and labels. . . with knowledge that they were being used for liquor” (*Los Angeles Times* 11/11/1926). Latchford was fined \$150 after pleading “nolo contendere on charges of conspiring to violate the National Prohibition Act by manufacturing bottles intended for dispensing of liquor illegally” (*Los Angeles Times* 12/17/1926). See the section on McLaughlin for a description of his part in this incident.

The *Times* of November 11 located the W.J. Latchford Co. at 7419 South Roseberry avenue. Latchford apparently built this second factory at nearby Huntington Park shortly after he left Southern Glass in 1925. By 1927, the company made “machine and hand fruit jars, proprietary ware, green beverages, 5-gallon bottles and carboys” at two continuous tanks with three rings – and this listed both factories. Latchford was listed as the owner of both plants and the sales manager. One of the factories expanded in 1929, adding another tank and increasing the total rings to six; it also produced amber beverage bottles for the first time. This was also the first year that *American Glass Review* listed the firm as a corporation, with Latchford as president and treasurer, Baird Marble as vice president and general manager, and O.S. Parker as secretary.² The following year, Latchford added flint beverages, and he increased to eight rings in 1932. In 1932, Latchford built a new plant at 7505 Roseberry Ave., Huntington Park. Both Compton and Huntington Park are within the umbrella of Los Angeles, and the address was frequently given as Los Angeles. We have not discovered the disposition of the old factory. The number of rings had again decreased to seven in 1933 (*American Glass Review* 1927:139; 1929:100; 1930:91; 1932:75; 1933:67; Toulouse 1971:315).

¹ The *American Glass Review* (e.g., 1927:139), listed the firm as “Latchford Co., W.J.” – without the word “Glass.” Toulouse (1971:314-315) used the term W.J. Latchford Glass Co., but most (not all) original sources, including court transcripts, left out the word “Glass.”

² This contradicts the Roller date of 1926, but we have not confirmed either claim by other sources.

The firm dropped green beverages (leaving flint and amber) in 1934, and added milk bottles. More changes occurred in 1935. The plant was all machine, using four continuous tanks with eight rings to make “wines and liquors, proprietary ware, flint and amber beverages, 5-gallon demijohns.” The listing remained the same in 1939 (*American Glass Review* 1934:95; 1935:95; 1939:89). Upon the death of Latchford, John Marble became the president and renamed the operation the Latchford-Marble Glass Co. in 1939 (Toulouse 1971:314-315).³

Containers and Marks

L

Toulouse (1971:314) dated a lone “L” mark “possibly 1925 to 1938; definitely 1957 to date [i.e., 1971].” He further explained, “The use of the letter ‘L’ for the earlier Latchford company . . . is uncertain since there is no way of knowing to which period a jar may belong.” However, neither Roller (1983) nor Creswick (1987) listed any jars with a lone “L” mark, and we have not found any in other searches. Whitten (2017) noted, “I have doubts that the W. J. Latchford Glass Company used the “plain L” in the earlier period, but perhaps they did so.” We agree with those doubts.

L in a Shield (1925-1939)

According to Padgett (1996:56) Latchford and William McLaughlin were keen competitors for the five-gallon water bottle trade in California. McLaughlin had the two major companies, Arrowhead and Puritas (later Arrowhead Puritas), but Latchford carried contracts with many smaller companies. According to McLaughlin, Latchford was sometimes unscrupulous in his competitive dealings. Empirical evidence, however, suggests that Latchford made at least some of the Arrowhead and Puritas containers.

³ On page 315, Toulouse (1971) noted that “when he [i.e., W.J. Latchford] died in 1946” – yet on page 332, he mentioned 1939 as “about a year after the death of W.J. Latchford.” Since W. Baird Marble stepped into the presidential shoes at that time, and added his own name to the firm, it is *very* likely that the senior Latchford died in 1938.

Several eBay sellers have offered five-gallon water bottles made for Arrowhead or Puritas with an ornate shield on the base surrounding a lone “L” and a two-digit number.

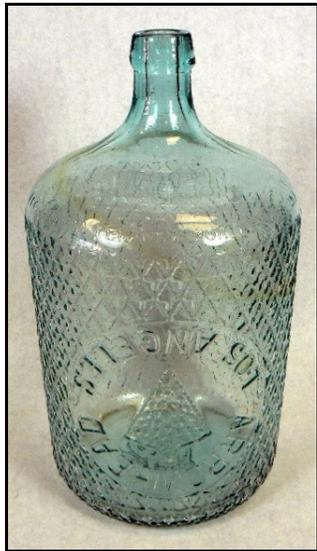


Figure 2 – Arrowhead 5-gal (eBay)

One, for example, was embossed “ARROWHEAD (arch) / {embossed arrowhead} / LOS ANGELES (inverted arch) on the body (to be read with the finish pointing down – as in a water dispenser) and “L / X 26” all in a shield on the base (Figures 1 & 2). As noted above, Padgett (1996:56) claimed that William McLaughlin had captured both Arrowhead and Puritas contracts; however, Latchford may have received occasional orders when McLaughlin was unable to fill the demand. The “26” was very likely a date code for 1926. We



Figure 1 – L / X 26 Shield (eBay)

have recorded other date codes of 27, 28, 31, and 37 (Figure 3). Since Latchford was in business from 1925 to 1939, these codes are unlikely to be coincidental, fitting almost perfectly within the life of the firm. Whitten (2017) confirmed the identification of Latchford as the user of the mark.



Figure 3 – L / 37 Shield (eBay)

L in a Circle (ca. 1930s)

A study of rim code dating on California milk bottles (Schulz et al. 2009) suggests that the Circle-L mark was also used by the earlier Latchford company. The mark was associated with September and October 1932 date codes on milk bottles. During this first business, Latchford may have only used the Circle-L logo on milk bottles. A 1937 Latchford ad for Stubby and Steinie non-returnable beer bottles illustrated what *may* have



Figure 4 – Latchford ad (*Western Brewing World* 1937:29)

been a Circle-L on a base (although it could be an Oval-L) and an Oval-L logo by the company name (*Western Brewing World* 1937:29 – Figure 4).

It is very important *not* to confuse the Circle-L basemark on milk bottles – apparently only used by Latchford in 1932 – with an “L” in an ejection scar used on milk bottle bases by the Liberty Glass Co. during the 1920s (Figure 5). The ejection scars are almost always off center, and they should appear on bottles with “L.G.” or “L-G” embossed on the heels



Figure 5 – L in ejection scar (eBay)

L in an Oval or Round-Cornered Rectangle (1925-1939)



Figure 6 – Squared oval L

We discovered a machine-made beer bottle in California with L in a round-cornered, horizontal rectangle embossed on its base. The base was not stippled and had no number codes (Figure



Figure 7 – Oval L (eBay)

6). This was almost certainly a variation of the oval logo. We have cataloged several Oval-L marks, all but two on non-stippled bases (Figure 7). One of these was a heelmark on a beer

bottle (with a non-stippled base), the other an oval mark on



Figure 8 – Oval L heel

the base of a gallon jug that had stippling on its outer surface and a krinkly base surface (Figures 8 & 9). Späth

et al. (2000:91, 95) listed

an amber beer bottle base embossed with an L-in-an-oval mark above a “0” – possibly a date code for 1940. These challenge the Toulouse assertion that the Oval-L mark was used since



Figure 9 – Krinkled base (eBay)

1957. The oval logo was probably the earliest mark used by Latchford and apparently continued in use as the primary logo until the reorganization in 1939.

MFD. BY W.J. LATCHFORD CO. LOS ANGELES, CALIF. (1925-1939)

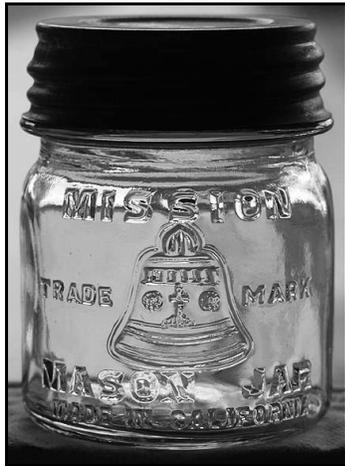


Figure 10 – Mission Mason (eBay)

Toulouse (1969:218-219; 1971:634) noted that a “MISSION MASON JAR” in conjunction with an embossed bell was found on jars made by the W.J. Latchford Co. between 1925 and 1938. The front was embossed “MISSION / TRADE {bell figure} MARK / MASON JAR / MADE IN CALIFORNIA (Figure 10). Creswick (1987:96) illustrated the jar showing

“MFD. BY W.J. LATCHFORD CO. LOS ANGELES, CALIF.” embossed in a circle on the base (Figures 11 & 12).

At least one mold was made with California misspelled as “CALIFORINA” (Figure 13). Roller (1983:253) dated the jars 1926-1930s and added that:



Figure 13 – Califorina (eBay)



Figure 11 – Mission base (eBay)



Figure 12 – Mission Mason (Creswick 1987:96)

a new stock issue bulletin by the company dated March 1, 1928 stated “. . . Another important product is the mason fruit jar, large quantities of which are sold through the Safeway Stores and other large jobbers on the Coast, under the trade name ‘Mission’.” These jars were made on Lynch “R” machines, according to 1929 correspondence between Latchford and Ball Brothers Glass Co. regarding a possible sale of the plant to Ball. A great deal of variation may be found in the bell figures, especially in the size and detail of the cross on the bells.

Roller (1983:393) added that a variation was made by the Tropical Glass & Box Co., embossed with a TF (in diamond) logo on the base (see the Florida Glass Mfg. Co. section for more information about Tropical Glass & Box.. The Roller update (2011:378) included a variation with “MADE IN CALIFORNIA” removed.

MADE FOR M.E. NEWMARK & CO. (1930s)



Figure 14 – Newmark jar (eBay)

An eBay auction offered a jar embossed “Newmark” (arched fancy German font) / Special Extra (slight upward cursive) / MASON NAR (horizontal)” with small Fleur-de-lis between lines on the front and “MADE FOR M.A. NEWMARK & CO. LOS ANGELES, CALIF.” in a circle around an Oval-L logo on the base (Figures 14 & 15). Roller

(1983:264) stated that the jar was “made c. 1930s by W.J. Latchford Co., Los Angeles, Calif., for M.A. Newmark & Co., a Los Angeles department store.” Creswick (1987:99) dated the jars ca. 1925-1938.



Figure 15 – Newmark jar (eBay)

Latchford-Marble Glass Co., Huntington Park, California (1939-1957)

A year after the death of W.J. Latchford, Sr., the corporation reorganized as the Latchford-Marble Glass Co. in 1939, still at Huntington Park. The firm made bottles, jars and demijohns (Toulouse 1971:332-333). The 1940 listing showed W. Baird Marble as president and general manager, with W.J. Latchford as vice president and sales manager.⁴ The plant made “proprietary ware, liquors, packers’ ware, flint, green and amber beverages, 5-gallon demijohns” at four continuous tanks with eight rings (*American Glass Review* 1940:97).

⁴ This could only be William J. Latchford, Jr., natural son of the founder.

By at least May 1942, Latchford-Marble had a branch in San Francisco called the Northern Glass Co. according to an ad for Steinie non-returnable beer bottles in *Western Brewing and Distributing* (Figure 16) – but we have found no further mention of that plant. That year, the listing included three continuous tanks but still claimed eight rings. The firm also added “Private mould work,” and all production was done by machine (*American Glass Review* 1942:103). Marble became Chairman of the Board in 1956, moving W.J. Latchford, Jr., into the presidency. When Marble died the following year, Latchford reorganized the company again as the Latchford Glass Co. (Toulouse 1971:333).

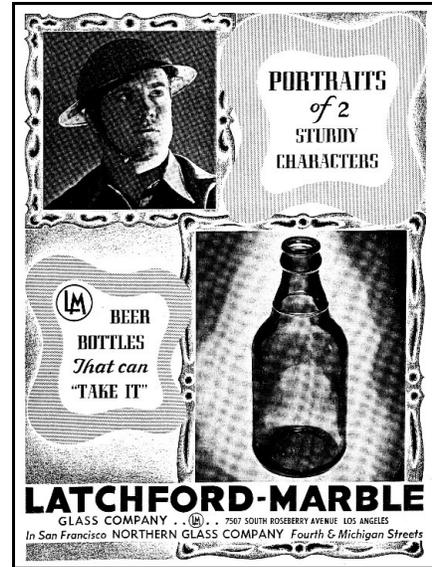


Figure 16 – Steinie ad (*Western Brewing and Distributing* 1942)

Containers and Marks

LM Monogram

Toulouse (1971:332) showed the monogram of a sans serif “L” slightly higher than an “M” with the lower bar of the “L” intruding into the left “leg” of the “M.” He dated the mark to the full extent of Latchford-Marble, 1939 to 1957. The mark was not listed in Peterson (1968) or Giarde (1980). Oddly, the mark remained on a 1964 table of glass trademarks compiled by Owens-Illinois (Berge 1980:83). Also included in the same table was the LM Monogram in a circle and L in an oval. This may indicate that the LM marks continued to be used by Latchford for a time, or it may just be that Owens-Illinois had old data. We have never seen an example of the LM Monogram in any form but the one surrounded by a circle. Since Toulouse posited uncircled marks for each of the three Latchford companies, these may be inventions or misunderstandings.

LM Monogram in an Oval

Toulouse (1971:332) also showed the LM Monogram in an elliptical, horizontal oval. This, too, he dated from 1939 to 1957. The mark was not listed in Peterson (1968) or Giarde (1980), nor have we seen an example.

LM Monogram in a Circle (1939-1957)

We have recorded the LM-Monogram in a Circle on several examples, although the circle variation was unreported by Toulouse. One was on an amber, stippled beer bottle base. The full mark is 107 / Circle-LM 53 / 3. The 53 is a date code for 1953, and it is likely that many LM marks include date codes (at least on returnable bottles). We have found a Purex bottle with a base embossed “1 / LM (in circle) 53 / 612 J” and another “7 / Circle-LM 51 / 372E” that confirm the date code (Figure 17).



Figure 17 – Circle-LM Purex base (eBay)



Figure 18 – Unstippled base (Tucson Urban Renewal Project)

None of the marks were listed in Peterson (1968) or Giarde (1980). As discussed above, this mark, too, remained on a 1964 table of glass trademarks compiled by Owens-Illinois in 1964 (Berge 1980:83). Some bases with these logos were stippled (e.g., see Figure 17); others were not (Figure 18).

Several base codes do not lend themselves to interpretation as date codes. For example, 38 / Circle-LM / 0 or 511 / Circle-LM / 3 mark, both from the same assemblage. The collection in general dated ca. 1940-1950. Conceivably, 0 could equal 1940 and 3 could be 1943. Single-digit date codes were common during the 1930s. A final example was embossed “661 / Circle LM / 4” (Figure 19). A 39 / Circle-LM was likely 1939 (on a wine bottle base), but it seems odd for the glass house to have used both single- and double-digit date codes. However, we have seen that before – with the 3-5-year transition of the Owens-Illinois Glass Co., for example. And a lone zero rarely indicates anything but a year ending with “0.” Since we have not seen any examples of the other marks, this was probably the only actual logo used by Latchford-Marble.



Figure 19 – Circle-LM base (California State Parks)

LATCHFORD-MARBLE GLASS CO. (1946-1950s)



Figure 20 – Bernardin jar (eBay)

Toulouse (1969:46) listed a jar embossed “Bernardin (upwardly slanted cursive with underlining tail) / MASON” on the body and “W.J. LATCHFORD CO., LOS ANGELES” in a circle on the base (Figure 20). He dated the jar “between 1932 and 1938.” He noted that a variation was embossed “EXCELLENT FOR JELLIES” on the reverse. He also listed a variation embossed on the base “LATCHFORD MARBLE GLASS CO. LOS ANGELES” (Figure 21). No other source we have found attributed the Bernardin jars to the early firm.

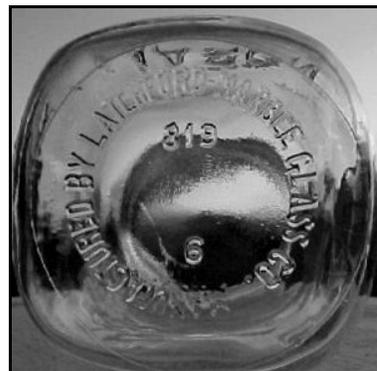


Figure 21 – Bernardin base (eBay)

By his second book, Toulouse (1971:47) only mentioned the Latchford-Marble Glass Co. as the maker of the jar. Creswick (1987:29) illustrated the jar (only as being made by the second company) and noted that the metal insert was marked “Bernardin Mason / The Ideal Vacuum Seal” with a Good Housekeeping seal (Figure 22). Like Creswick, Roller (1983) failed to mention the early variation, although he noted the one from Latchford-Marble (see below). He dated the jar 1938-1957, the entire tenure of the company. Roller (1983:66) noted the jar as being made ca. 1940s-1950s. The Roller update (2011:103) stated that the firm made various lid inserts for the jar and dated it from early 1946 to the 1950s.

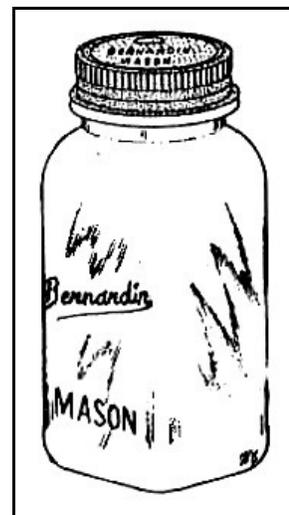


Figure 22 – Bernardin jar (Creswick 1987a:29)

Latchford Glass Co., Los Angeles, California (1957-1989)

W.J. Latchford, Jr., became president of the Latchford-Marble Glass Co. in 1956 and called for a renaming of the company to the Latchford Glass Co. in 1957. The firm produced both bottles and jars (Toulouse 1971:316). In 1961, the plant completed a \$1.5 million

expansion program (Simson 1962:64). W.J. Latchford, Jr., died in 1969, clearing the way for W. Simpkins to move into the presidential office. On March 24, 1977, the Connellsville, Pennsylvania, *Daily Courier* announced that Latchford had reached a decision to purchase the Los Angeles and San Leandro plants of the Anchor Hocking Glass Co. – bringing the Latchford total to three factories.

By 1982, Latchford still operated all three plants, making “one-way and returnable beer & beverage; food, household chemicals; liquor; preserve jars; [and] private mold” containers (*Glass Industry* 1982:40). In 1984, the plant installed Individual Section (IS) machines, beginning production in June with a commemorative bottle. One face was embossed with a line drawing of the glass blower above “Only / the best / comes in / Glass” in a laurel wreath. The opposite face was embossed “FIRST RUN OF COM-SOC / 10 SECTION I.S. MACHINE / JUNE 1984 PLANT 1” with a large Circle-L in the center (Figure 23). The base was embossed “Circle-L / L-10513 / 84 28.”



Figure 23 – Commemorative bottle (eBay)

However, by 1985, the company had closed one of the Los Angeles plants (probably the older, Huntington Park factory) and removed all the beer and beverage references – but added wine (Perrine 1987:30). Thompson Financial noted that Vitro, a Mexican glass corporation, acquired Latchford in late 1989 (Alacra 2008; Answers Corp. 2008), but the Latchford mark was still listed as late as 1996 (Emhart 1996:48).

Containers and Marks

We have discovered bottles with Circle-LM logos (Latchford-Marble Glass Co.) bearing dated codes from 1952 to 1957, and bottle with the Circle-L logos (Latchford Glass Co.) beginning with 1957 date codes. This empirical evidence strongly supports the date for the reorganization creating the Latchford Glass Co. as 1957.

L

Toulouse (1971:316) showed a sans serif “L” as being used by Latchford “since 1957.” The mark was not listed in Peterson (1968) or Giarde (1980), but we have seen a “L” embossed in the center of amber wine bottles made for Christian Bros. of California. Our examples had a stippled resting point, and the “L” was slightly off center in a faint circle. From about 1930 or so, the most common way of altering embossing was to drill out the old lettering or numbers, fill the hole with a dowel, grind the dowel flush with the bottle base, and stamp in a new number or letter. It often left a faint line such as the one in Figure 24. The “L” could have replaced a Circle-LM logo on the base. Latchford-Marble made similar bottles with slotted bases (see Figure 24).



Figure 24 – L basemark (eBay)

L in an Oval

Toulouse (1971:316) also showed the “L” in a horizontal, elliptical oval as belonging to the Latchford Glass Co. This mark, too, was dated “since 1957.” The mark was not listed in Peterson (1968) or Giarde (1980), but it was included in a 1964 table of glass trademarks compiled by Owens-Illinois (Berge 1980:83). With the exception of an unusual example (discussed in the W.J. Latchford Co. section), all oval marks we have discovered lacked basal stippling and were probably never used by the latter company.

L in a Circle (1957-1989)

The Circle-L mark was used by the Latchford Glass Co., Los Angeles, California, beginning in 1957. It was also shown in 1982 and was still listed in 1996. However, no listing for Latchford remained in 2005 (Emhart 1982:75; 1996:48; 2005; Powell 1990). Beer bottle date codes extend at least to 1975: “5 526-DB 75 (arch) / Circle-L” (Figure 25), although smaller bottle was only embossed “{five dots in a wavy line} / Circle-L / 3” (Figure 26). We have only



Figure 25 – Circle-L beer



Figure 26 – Circle-L

discovered a single example of the logo embossed on the heel of a beer bottle rather than the base (Figure 27). Since we have identified bottles with Circle-L year codes as early as 1957 and as late as 1989, this indicates the mark was used during the entire tenure of the final company - 1957-1989.

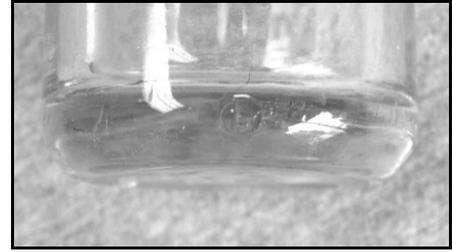


Figure 27 – Circle-L heel

Liquor Codes and Other Post-1970s Codes

Latchford-Marble received “84” as its federal liquor code by at least 1952, probably earlier – possibly in place for the W.J. Latchford Co., when Federal law required a specific code sequence beginning in 1934. Examples from eBay sellers included “D-963 / 84 Circle-L 67 / 274 / 11” and “LIQUOR BOTTLE / 6 Circle-L 345-D5 / 84 73”(Figure 28) Although the requirement for the code ceased in 1964, Latchford apparently continued to use the codes until at least 1978. An amber half-pint Seagram’s 7 whiskey flask was embossed on the base with “L-90712 Circle-L / 86 24” (Figure 29).



Figure 28 – Liquor code (eBay)

Apparently, Latchford moved its date codes to the left between 1978 and 1986. This actually appears to be a shift in general Latchford codes. We have examples of the “L” codes on liquor flasks and bottles, and two examples of “B” codes (526-DB) on beer bottles. Hence, “L” plus numbers seems to indicated liquor bottles or flasks, while “B” denoted beer (see Figures 24 & 29). Future research should discover a source for a larger sample of post-1970 Circle-L bottles to see if the pattern remains consistent and to discover other codes.



Figure 29- – Liquor code

Discussion and Conclusions

Aside from the few fruit jars produced by the plant, the Latchford series of glass firms only seems to have used four logos on bottles.

W.J. Latchford Co. – Oval-L (use of Circle-L on milk bottles) [1925-1939]

– Shield-L on 5-gallon demijohns [1925-1939]

Latchford-Marble Glass Co. – Circle-LM [1939-1957]

Latchford Glass Co. – Circle-L [1957-1989]

Empirical evidence suggests that the original firm (W.J. Latchford Co.) used the Oval-L mark on general ware, the Circle-L on milk bottles, and the Shield logo on demijohns – although a larger sample would be helpful for confirmation. It is reasonably certain that Latchford-Marble only used the Circle-LM mark, while the final Latchford firm relied entirely on the Circle-L logo – despite some claims for the oval mark.

An interesting shift in glass technology occurred as part of transmutation between companies. During 1940, the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. was the first to apply stippling all over the bases of returnable bottles, especially soda and beer bottles as an aid for even cooling of the glass. Within a few years, Owens-Illinois used the system on virtually all containers, and most other glass houses had adopted the apparently unpatentable procedure. By the 1970s, the process had shifted to only the resting point (leaving the rest of the base unstippled), often using different patterns, most notably a curved design similar to one side of parentheses.

Since stippled bases had yet to be invented, the earliest firm, the W.J. Latchford Co., only had plain, unstippled bases. In our sample, however, Latchford-Marble had both plain and stippled bases as befitted the 1939-1957 period – the time of the industry shift. For the final firm, the Latchford Glass Co., we have only found stippled bases, mostly on the resting points.

One discrepancy may eventually form another minor dating point. The base of a gallon jug was embossed with a “krinkled” appearance – actually a series of embossed lines going different directions – along with “PATENT / PENDING / FOR USE WITH / NESBITT’S PRODUCTS” (see Figure 9). This base arrangement almost certainly served the same purpose as

stippling and was apparently developed by Nesbitt’s, who attempted a patent that obviously never succeeded. The inclusion of an Oval-L logo on the base placed this jug in the W.J. Latchford period, 1925-1939, probably about 1938 or 1939 – and this design probably led Owens-Illinois to develop the stippling patterns. From about this time, all Owens-Illinois jugs and demijohns had a “krinkled” pattern – slightly different from the Nesbitt’s variation – on the bases (Figure 30).



Figure 30 – Owens-Illinois krinkle base (Travis Padgett)

The “L-in-a-shield” mark has not been identified by any other source, but Latchford was the only other “L” manufacturer in Southern California (that we have been able to locate) competing with McLaughlin for the five-gallon water bottle trade. He was thus by far the most likely user of the mark.

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