

Marion Flint Glass Co.

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The Marion Flint Glass Co. was formed to produce bottles for two jobbers – Dean, Foster & Co. and A.M. Foster & Co. Incorporated in 1887, the Marion Flint Glass & Bottle Co. was the first of three firms at Marion, Indiana, to supply the jobbers, followed by the Marion Flint Glass Co. in 1888 and the Marion Bottle Co. in 1916. The Upland Flint Bottle Co., another A.M. Foster affiliate, purchased the Marion firm in 1922 and installed fully automatic machines.

Histories

Marion Flint Glass & Bottle Co., Marion, Indiana (1887-1888)

Marion Flint Glass Co., Marion, Indiana (1888-1916)

The Marion Flint Glass & Bottle Co. was incorporated in December 1887, with Thomas K. Sheldon as president along with Fred G. Seitz (actually George Frederick Seitz) and Charles E. Seitz as incorporators.¹ The factory was located on E. Charles St., west of Meridian Ave. The company was reorganized as the Marion Flint Glass Co. on July 1, 1888, with Fred G. Seitz as president, A.M. Foster as vice president, George A.H. Sheideler as secretary and treasurer, Thomas K. Sheldon as the superintendent, and R. Edwards Breed was the business manager. When Charles Seitz died, his brother, Fred, purchased Sheldon's share then brought Breed and Scheidler into the corporation as new investors. In the beginning, Marion had at least some of its molds made by Charles Yockel in Philadelphia (although it eventually opened its own mold shop). An 1888 letterhead advertised "prescription-vials, flasks, brandies, pickle-bottles &c." (Cumback & Maynard 1899:147; Roller 1994:61-62; 1998; Toulouse 1971:45; Tyson 1971:22).

¹ According to Hawkins (2009:231-232), Seitz and his associates purchased the former Gallatin Glass Works at Marion in May 1888. The Gallatin Glass Co. had been formed at Leasdale, Pennsylvania, in 1885 and had relocated to Marion after its factory had burned in September 1887. The firm completed the new plant at Marion in January.

The plant was using 22 pots to turn out 50,000 bottles a day by 1892. In 1897, the factory used two furnaces with 21 pots to make flint bottles, and that number remained steady until at least 1902 (*National Glass Budget* 1897:7; 1902:11). By 1899, the plant still made prescription bottles, vials, flasks, brandy bottles, pickle ware, and other types, specializing in “high grade lettered ware.” By this time, Breed had become the vice president, although Seitz remained president and Scheidler continued as secretary and treasurer. In 1900, there was a revision of officers with R. Edwards Breed as president and treasurer, Fred G. Seitz as vice president and George A.H. Sheideler as secretary – although the products remained the same (Cumback & Maynard 1899:147; *Indianapolis News* 12/17/1892; Roller 1998).

The firm intended to leave Marion in 1903 because of a shortage of natural gas, but the proposed move never actually took place. This may have been one of the factories that survived by switching to coal. On February 6, 1904, the new Board began making changes. The firm purchased the North Marion Window Glass Co. and converted it into a bottle factory. The new plant made prescription and proprietary ware, beer bottles and fruit jars. The old factory was now called Factory A, and production was discontinued as soon as Factory B (the former window glass plant) was operational (*American Glass Review* 1934:153; *Money* 1903:16; Roller 1998).

The firm made prescription, beer, wine, soda, packers’ and preservers’ ware, along with fruit and milk jars by 1907 (Thomas Publishing Co. 1907:158; 1909:199, 1100). And the Red Cross trade mark appeared on letterheads and billheads by at least 1908. In 1909, Mayer (1909:1) reported:

Forty-two bottle shops are on the Marion Flint Glass Co.’s roster, Marion, Ind., making prescription ware and some lines of liquor goods. One hand press is being operated on pomades at present. Milk bottles, packers’ goods, etc., are being produced on the two machines, which have been installed in the firm’s new factory, which also accommodates a number of blowers on both shifts.

In 1913, Marion used two continuous tanks with 24 rings to make a “general line” of bottles by both semiautomatic machine and hand methods. The firm employed 412 men, 13 women, 22 boys, and 2 girls by that time (*Journal of Industrial and Engineering Chemistry* 1913:952; State Bureau of Inspection 1913:60). The company became the Marion Bottle Co. in 1916.

Marion Flint Glass Co., Gas City, Indiana (1892-1994)

The Marion Flint Glass Co. contracted to have a factory built at Gas City in June 1892. The plant was in full operation by October 1, making druggists' bottles, prescription ware, and flasks at a single 14-pot furnace. Even though company letterheads continued to state that Marion Flint had plants in both Marion and Gas City until at least 1900, it is clear that the Gas City plant had become the Sheldon-Foster Glass Co. in 1894 and operated under that name until 1902 (Roller 1994:32; 1997). See the section on Sheldon-Foster for more information.

Containers and Marks

According to Griffenhagen & Bogard (1999:117-119), the Marion Flint Glass Co. advertised Egyptian Ovals (1900), Marion Ovals (1900), Red Cross Ovals (Registered 1908), and Westlake Ovals (1896). Any of these could also have been offered earlier or later than these dates. The Red Cross Oval was exclusive to the company as was probably true of the Marion Oval. The others could have been made by other glass houses as well – although they, too, could have been Marion Flint specialties. The Westlake Oval was offered by A.M. Foster & Co., a glass jobber, in 1907 (and probably other years) (Figure 1).

It is virtually certain that both the Marion Flint Glass Co. (later Marion Bottle Co.) and the Sheldon-Foster Glass Co. were built primarily to supply bottles and jars to Dean, Foster & Co. (along with Dean, Foster & Dawley) and A.M. Foster & Co. According to Barbe & Reed (2003:143) and Toulouse (1971:45), A.M. Foster was the secretary of the Marion Flint Glass Co. during its early years, and a Dean, Foster & Co. letterhead from 1892 included a drawing of the “Marion Factory” – an obvious reference to the Marion Flint Glass Co. as the firm’s supplier (Tyson 1971:13; Winterthur Library). See more about both of those glass jobbers at their respective sections.



Figure 1 – Westlake Oval
(A.M. Foster catalog, 1907)

M (1894-ca. 1912)

Catalogs from both Dean, Foster & Co. and A.M. Foster & Co. (e.g., A.M. Foster 1907) illustrated and discussed the Chicago Oval – also illustrated by Bethman (2008:210, 225) and Miller (2008:225). Each Chicago Oval was embossed either “D.F.&D.” or

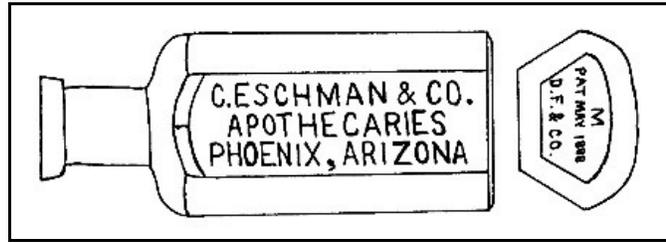


Figure 2 – M Logo (Bethman 2008:210)

“D.F.&Co.” – the initials of the respective jobbers, and many (possibly all) of them included a single initial – either an “F” or a “M” (Figures 2 & 3).² The “M” almost certainly indicated the Marion Flint Glass Co., and the “F” probably pointed to the Sheldon-Foster Glass Co.

In the original Dean, Foster & Co. section, we misidentified the Foster-Forbes Glass Co. as the probable user of the “F” initial, but Foster-Forbes did not begin production until 1929 – long after both Dean, Foster & Co. and Dean, Foster & Dawley had closed. It is likely that both Marion Flint and Sheldon-Foster manufactured the Chicago Ovals for the jobbers because of the popularity of the model. Since the patent date on the base of each bottle was “MAY 1888,” it is virtually certain that bottles with no letters were made by Marion Flint between 1888 and 1894, before Sheldon-Foster first opened. Prior to the opening of Sheldon-Foster, there would have been no need to identify the plant, so the “M” and “F” bottles would have been made in 1894 or later.³



Figure 3 – F Logo

These seem to have been the only bottles made for Dean, Foster & Co. or A.M. Foster & Co. by either Marion Flint or Foster-Forbes (or any other glass house we have found) that were

² The bases of the Chicago Ovals pictured in the 1907 A.M. Foster & Co. catalog also had “D.F.&Co.” embossed on their bases.

³ Alternatively, the “F” bottles may have been made at the Gas City plant, although the reason for the “F” is not intuitively obvious. In that case, the use of the initials could have begun as early as 1892.

specifically marked with some kind of initial. Typically the bottles had either the jobber’s initials or no mark at all. That suggests (although this is by no means certain) that each glass house made different bottles for the two jobbers with no need for factory marks because there was no duplication. For example, the Marion Oval was almost certainly exclusively manufactured by the Marion Flint Glass Co.

M.F.G.Co. (1888-1916)

Toulouse (1969:215) noted these initials “known only from a dealer’s want list.” Roller (1983:250) also listed the initials on the base of a grooved-ring, wax-sealer fruit jar but made no attempt to identify either the maker or the dates. Creswick (1987a:157) did not illustrate this jar but called the initials “M.F.C.Co” and suggested the Marion Flint Glass Co. as the maker. Although she did not specifically state it, Creswick seems to have believed that the “C” was a mis-stamp for “G.” Whitten (2017) agreed that the user of the “M.F.G.Co.” logo was “probably Marion Flint Glass Co.” – and we concur. The initials probably only appeared on bottles made for customers besides Dean, Foster & Co. and A.M. Foster & Co. Although we have seen examples of this mark in the past, we could find no photos for publication.

Red Cross in stylized letters (1894-1922)

Bethman (1991:76) noted that “the name of ‘Red Cross’ was a trademark for a certain line of prescription bottles produced by the Marion Flint Glass Company.” Bethman (1999:444) illustrated a single example of the RED CROSS bottle and dated it ca. 1914. Coincidentally, Marion Flint began offering sterilized bottles that were hand packed in dust-proof boxes, apparently the only glass house to do so at that time (*Southern Pharmaceutical Journal* 1914:42). According to Griffenhagen and Bogard (1999:45), Marion registered “the symbol of a cross between the words *Red* and *Cross* as their trademark for glass bottles” on February 4,

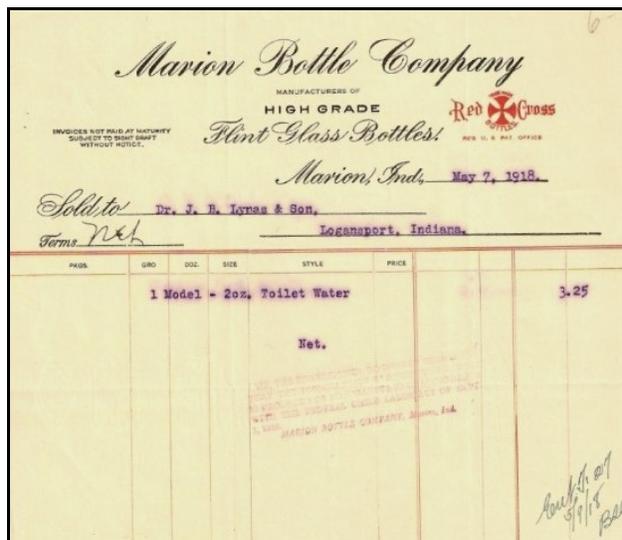


Figure 4 – Marion Flint invoice (eBay)

1908, claiming a use since November 1, 1894.” Peterson (1968:42) confirmed mark and the date. A 1921 Marion Bottle Co. billhead clearly shows that the bottles were used until the end of the company (Figure 4).



Figure 6 – Red Cross 2 (Etsy)

Several eBay auctions showed that there were variations in the bottles. On some, the side as well as the base was marked with “Red Cross,” although only the body marking used the full trade mark (Figure 5). Another variation had the trade mark embossed on the side just below the shoulder but not the base (Figure 6). A final variation was only marked on the base (Figure 7). All variations appear to be graduated on both sides of the center plate and were made with reinforced prescription finishes.



Figure 5 – Red Cross 1 (eBay)

The earliest reference we have discovered for the reinforced finish was in the 1902 Whittall Tatum catalog, so these were probably first used ca. 1900. Despite the earlier reference to the use of the *name* “Red Cross” on bottles made by Marion Flint Glass Co. and the Marion Bottle Co., the term was probably only embossed on bottles between ca. 1900 and 1922. There was probably a temporal order to the variations, likely the more complex design first, followed by the shoulder label, with the basemark used most recently. If this ordinal scale is correct, the earliest was almost certain made during the Marion Flint Glass Co. period (1900-1916), while the last one was produced during the Marion Bottle Co. era (1916-1922). The middle one, however, could have been used at the end of the early firm or the beginning of the latter one – or both. All examples we have seen were mouth blown, so it is highly unlikely that any were made after 1922 by the Upland Glass Co.



Figure 7 – Red Cross 3

Marion Bottle Co., Marion, Indiana (1916-1922)

According to the *American Glass Review* (1934:153) the factory became the Marion Bottle Co. in 1916. By 1917,⁴ the listing for milk and fruit jars had been dropped, although the other products listed in 1907 were still made. The plant was not listed in 1918 or 1920 but was back in 1921 (Thomas Publishing Co. 1917:729; 1918:809; 1920:826; 1921:780). By 1921, the plant used one continuous tank with 12 rings to make “flint prescriptions, vials, patent & proprietary, toilets & perfumery” by hand (Roller 1998).

The Upland Flint Glass Co. purchased the company in 1922, although listings continued as late as 1925 (*American Glass Review* 1934:153; Roller 1994:62; Bethman 1991:76; Kelly Publishing Co. 1923:1931; WikiMarion 2007). By 1923, however, the factory was also listed as the “northside plant” of the Upland Flint Bottle Co. There currently remains little question that the operation was controlled by Upland from 1922. The Upland name was concurrent with a switch to fully automatic bottle machines. See the section on Upland for more information.

Containers and Marks

As noted above, it is virtually certain that the Marion Bottle Co. continued to produce the Red Cross prescription bottles initiated by the earlier Marion Flint Glass Co.

MB Ligature (1906-1922)

We have seen a single style of colorless, mouth-blown drug store bottle embossed with “MB” on the base (Figures 8 & 9). The right “leg” of the “M” extended slightly into the left edge of the “B” – creating a ligature. The bottle was also embossed on the flat front panel with graduation scales in ounces and cubic centimeters. At least one example was machine made (Figure 10). In addition, we have a round, amber medicine bottle – also



Figure 8 – MB ligature

⁴ The company was still listed as the Marion Flint Glass Co. Such errors of one to a few years were common in the directories.



Figure 9 – MB bottle (Ft. Bliss)

machine made – with the MB ligature on the base (Figures 11 & 12). There is no consistency in the font used for the ligature. The “M” was made with both serif and sans serif fonts, and the rounded sections of the “B” can be almost any shape. The two letters are also connected in a variety of ways, sometimes with very sloppy overlapping of the letters (see figures 8, 10, & 11).

Although we have no historical confirmation for the use of the MB Ligature, the Marion Bottle Co. was one of the few glass houses with MB initials. In addition, Marion Bottle specialized in prescription ware, so the connection



Figure 10 – MB ligature

with this logo is very strong. Since we have found no other glass house with the correct initials, the proper time period, and the right products, Marion is an excellent choice. This MB ligature was not related to the MB mark (with the two letters clearly separated) found on export beer bottle bases (see section on the Massillon Glass Works-Reed & Co.).



Figure 11 – MB ligature

These machine-made bottles create a small conundrum. While there is no question that the Marion Bottle Co. used wide-mouth machines by at least 1909 (probably a few years earlier), we have not discovered any specific reference to narrow-mouth machines. However, it is likely that the firm used semiautomatic narrow-mouth machines

at some point. When the Upland Flint Glass Co. purchased the firm, it converted everything to fully automatic machines. Therefore, it is probable that the machine characteristics do *not* question the identity of the logo.



Figure 12 – Round bottle

Toulouse (1971:346) illustrated a mark of “MBCo” that he assigned to the Muncie Glass Co., almost certainly in error. Griffenhagen and Bogard (1999:102, 126) repeated the error, obviously following Toulouse. For more information and the correct identification, see the Other M section. There is no reason to believe that the logo was used by the Marion Glass Co.

Discussion and Conclusions

The Marion Flint Glass Co. and the Marion Fruit Jar & Bottle Co. should not be confused. The two companies (as well as others) operated concurrently in Marion but were not connected (see Marion Fruit Jar section for more on the jar company). The firm used semiautomatic machines to make wide-mouth ware by 1909, possibly a bit earlier, but the plant never used narrow-mouth machines. Management closed the Marion factory in 1922 to switch operations to the Upland Glass Co. – with its new, fully automatic machines.

Aside from the Red Cross logo, all marks listed above are only tentatively identified with either the Marion Flint Glass Co. or the Marion Bottle Co. The evidence we possess, however, points toward Marion as the most likely choice.

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