

Keystone Mason Jars, Part I

John Landis Mason and His Companies

Bill Lockhart, Beau Schriever, Bill Lindsey, and Carol Serr.

In his lifetime, John Landis Mason received or was assigned 40 patents, including the most famous fruit jar patent of all time – for what came to be called the Mason Jar – on November 30, 1858. Roller (2011:638) admitted that Mason’s “history is not well known or recorded,” so our information on his life and dealings is limited. The Mason Mfg. Co. produced a number of jars, some with the word “KEYSTONE” or a keystone symbol embossed on the sides, but other jars – not directly connected with Mason – were also embossed with either the symbol or the word. This study attempts to unravel at least some of the identities involved. Part I addresses the firms directly connected with John L. Mason.

John Landis Mason

John L. Mason established a tinsmith shop in New York City in 1857 and received a patent for a lathe and forming tool to make screw caps on June 2 of that year, although he did not patent the cap, itself. John K. Chase patented the cap on October 27, 1858, and Mason received another patent – for a chuck for making the caps on March 30. William Brooke, a New York mold maker, created the initial molds for Mason. Although Homer Brooke claimed in 1920 that his father, William Brooke, actually invented the Mason jar (after Mason was safely dead and unable to refute the charge), the senior Brooke never filed any legal claims during his lifetime (Roller 2011:639-640; Toulouse 1969:343-344).

The original manufacturer of the jars is the subject of some debate. The earliest jars were called “Crowleytown” jars in the belief that the jars were made at Samuel Crowley’s Atlantic Glass Works in Crowleytown, New Jersey, because a complete jar was dug at the glass house site. Creswick (1987:127) suggested that Clayton Parker, one of Crowley’s employees, blew the first Crowleytown Mason jar. Early glass house sources (e.g., Van Rensselaer 1926; Knittle 1927) cited the 1868 *History of Camden County, New Jersey*, that placed Mason as leasing the Norcross works at Tansboro, New Jersey, “about 1856” (our emphasis). The 1860 New Jersey state directory listed Mason as a glass manufacturer at Longacoming (now called Berlin) – about

two miles north of Tansboro. Since the first known advertisement was in 1859, the Tansboro works remain a strong possibility (Roller 2011:640-641). Creswick (1987:127), however, claimed that “it is believed by some glass authorities that Mason leased the Tansboro Glass Works at Wilston, New Jersey in 1856 and made jars there for the next two years.”

Mason took on Thomas W. Frazier, Thomas Frazier, Jr., Benjamin W. Payne, and Henry Mitchell as partners ca. 1858 at 257 Pearl St., New York City where they probably made lids, although the jars were almost certainly blown at another location (Tansboro?). The 1859 and 1860 city directories listed Mason at that address as making cans. Mason held five patents at that point, and he transferred them all to Henry Mitchell and someone named Bennett on August 26, 1859. Although the process is unclear, the patents became the property of Mitchell, Louis R. Boyd, and one Barclay who transferred them to the Sheet Metal Screw Co. of New York City on July 24, 1862. By 1864, the firm still advertised the Crowleytown style of Mason jar (Roller n.d.; 2011:641).

Mason invented a top-seal jar in 1859 but listened to bad advice and did not seek a patent. Mason finally applied for the top-seal patent on January 5, 1868, and received a patent for the jar on May 10, 1870. However, Samuel Rowley had already patented the design on December 14, 1869, and sued Mason for infringement. Unfortunately for Mason, the courts found in Rowley’s favor in 1876 (Roller 2011:642, 678). For more about Rowley, see the section on the Consolidated Fruit Jar Co.

The Great Patent Caper

Because the Mason patents were due to expire in 1871 and 1872, Lewis R. Boyd, now president of the Sheet Metal Screw Co., and others, joined with Mason to return the patents to him so that he could extend them for seven more years (since extensions were only available to the original patent holder). On December 12, 1871, the group created the Consolidated Fruit Jar Co. (Roller 2011:642). Boyd, owner of the patents formerly granted to John M. Mason, transferred the patents back to Mason on January 27, 1872 – with the explicit agreement that Mason would then transfer the patents back. In March 1872, Mason received a seven-year extension for Patent No. 19,786, then good until March 30, 1877, assigning the patent back to the Consolidated Fruit Jar Co. on May 2. He further obtained a similar extension for Patents No. 22,129 and 22,186 on November of the same year, in force with the extension until November

30, 1877, transferring those to Consolidated on January 6. Mason received \$5,000 in payment for the transfers on December 12, 1872 (Banning & Arden 1882:380, 377).

On November 13, 1872, Mason “secretly and fraudulently” granted “a general right and license” to John K Chase. According to the courts, Chase was aware that Mason did not have the right to allot him the license. Chase, in turn, transferred the license to Henry F. Johnson on February 27, 1873. On April 16, Johnson then assigned the license to the Standard Union Mfg. Co. Remember that Mason had legally assigned the patents to the Consolidated Fruit Jar Co. on January 27, 1872 (Banning & Arden 1882:377-378, 380)

As a further complication, Mason made an agreement with the Whitney Brothers (Thomas H. and Samuel A. Whitney) on December 12, 1871, allowing them the right to make the Mason jars. At that point, Mason had not yet received the patents back from the Sheet Metal Screw Co. Mason informed the Whitney Brothers that he had the right to license others in the State of New Jersey and elsewhere (Banning & Arden 1882:378-380). The court found “that the good faith of the Whitneys has not been impeached” (because they had no knowledge that the license was illegal) although they had no further rights to the Mason patents (Banning & Arden 1882:385).

About this time, Mason found himself in another mess – apparently not his fault this time. As noted above, Mason had invented a top-seal fruit jar closure in 1859 but had received bad advise and not attempted to patent it. According to Roller (2011:641-642), Mason finally applied for a patent for his top-seal idea, but “it was immediately thrown into interference hearings by the Patent Office because of a similarity to an application made by Salmon B. Rowley.” Rowley eventually received his patent on December 14, 1869, but, by a strange turn of fate, Mason received an almost identical patent on May 10, 1870 (see the patent section below for more on these two patents and Mason’s other top-seal patents). Mason used the 1870 patent for his legitimacy to make the Mason’s Improved jar at the Standard Union Mfg. Co. (Roller 2011:678).

Mason’s short-lived business – the Mason Mfg. Co. (see below) – survived for only about two years, until it lost its identity in the merger that created the Consolidated Fruit Jar Co. Standard Union did not last much longer – 1873-1876. Mason continued inventing without receiving much benefit from his devices and died in poverty on February 26, 1902 (Roller 2011:642-643). For a more detailed account, see Roller (2011:639-642).

Mason and Related Patents

John L. Mason received a number of patents for various inventions, the most important of which were the early jar-related patents. As detailed above, he managed to wind up in court over some of his best ideas.

The Early Patents of Mason and Chase

Mason received three patents during 1857 and 1858 that set the tone for what would become the Mason jars. In addition, John K. Chase patented a similar screw cap for the jars. Unfortunately, patents issued prior to 1872 rarely included the date of the patent application, so we can only conjecture that Mason and/or Chase first had the ideas for the jars in late 1856 or early 1857.

John L. Mason – June 2, 1857

On June 2, 1857, John L. Mason received Patent No. 17,437 for an “Improvement in Manufacturing Screws of Thin Metal” – or in more modern terms, a continuous-thread jar lid (Figure 1). The main force behind Mason’s invention was forming the lid in a single piece by turning it on a lathe against a carefully designed chuck. In addition, the lid was formed without cutting off excess metal at the end of the process.

John K. Chase – October 27, 1857

John K. Chase patented an “Improved Metallic Cap for Fruit-Jars &c.” (No. 18,498) on October 27, 1857 (Figure 2). He noted that his invention was for

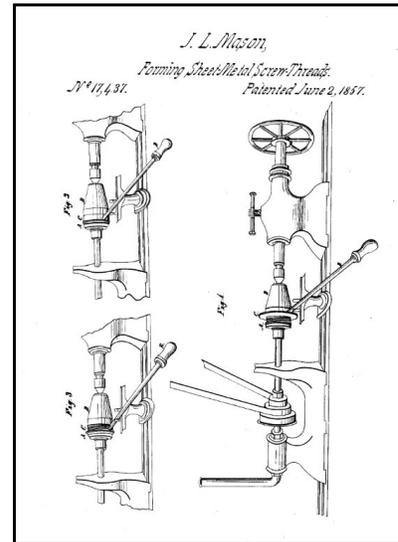


Figure 1 – Mason 1857 patent

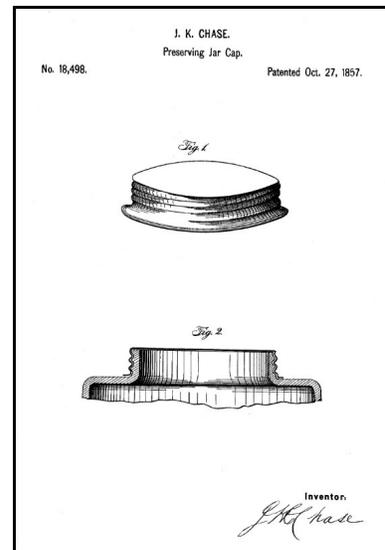


Figure 2 – Chase 1857 patent

forming a thin elastic screw-cap out of a solid piece of sheet metal, by spinning up the same out of a single plate without casting, chasing, or swaging, as has heretofore been done, by which I obtain a cap without joint, seam, or flaw, for covering glass, metal, or earthen cans or jars, the elasticity of the screw serving to fit the unequal threads thereon, and the seamless cap insuring tight joints.

As noted by Toulouse (1969:427), the only real problem with the Chase lid was that it lacked a gasket to form a true seal. At some point, Chase assigned the patent to Mason.

John L. Mason – March 30, 1858

On March 30, 1858, Mason received the first of his three early patents, No. 19,786, for a “Chuck for Making Sheet Metal Screws” (Figure 3). The term “sheet metal screws” meant the zinc caps for the fruit jars. As Mason

described it, the important points of his chuck for making the caps consisted of a process for creating “a flange, a rounded thread, and a rounded groove, the groove and thread vanishing gradually at the flange” by spinning the sheet metal on a lathe.

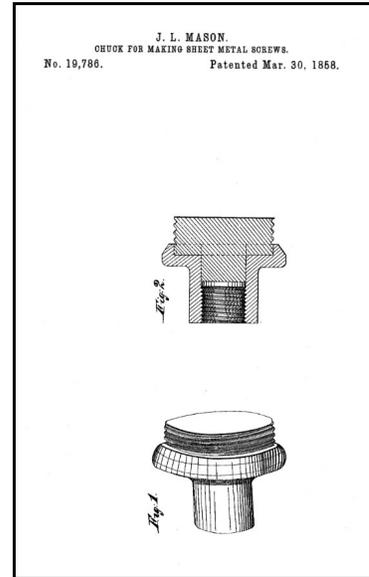


Figure 3 – Mason 1858 patent 1

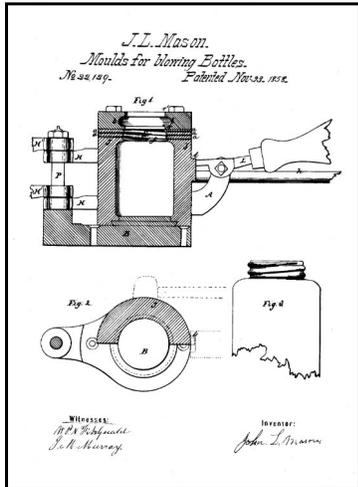


Figure 4 – Mason 1858 patent 2

John L. Mason – November 23, 1858

Mason received his next patent, No. 22129, for a “Mold for Making Bottles” on November 23, 1858 (Figure 4). The mold was cleverly made, creating the continuous threads on the finish, while allowing more glass to extend above, so that the finish area would not break when the pontil was detached. Since this was the only way continuous threads could be formed prior to machine manufacture, this was an important innovation. Once the jar was blown and broken off the pontil, the remaining jagged glass on the rim was ground until the top was even – although not smooth. This was eventually called the blowover method. The mold also made the threads so that they gradually tapered off instead of stopping abruptly.

John L. Mason – May 10, 1870

Mason received Patent No. 102,913 for “Fruit Jars” on May 10, 1870 (Figure 7). According to Toulouse (1969:438), “this was an almost direct copy of Rowley’s December 14, 1869, top seal, including the slanting surface for sealing, the slight angle above it to hold the sealing rubber in a fixed position.” Mason, however, prescribed glass “or other vitreous material” for the insert. He called this his “improved” finish, and that designation was generally embossed on the jars with this finish style. As noted above, Rowley sued Mason for infringement – and won.

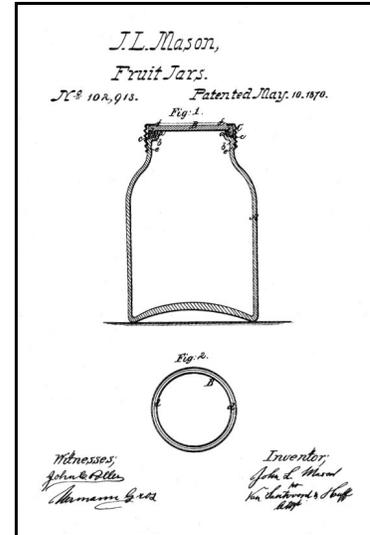


Figure 7 – Mason 1870 patent

John L. Mason – June 6, 1871

In this patent, received by Mason on June 6, 1871 (No. 115,754) for an “Improvement in Screw-Caps and Rings for Fruit-Jars,” Mason added a small, vertical bump on the side to aid in the removal of the cap.

John L. Mason – September 24, 1872

Mason received Patent No. 131,695 for and “Improvement in Fruit-Jars” on September 24, 1872 (Figure 8). This patent was for an improved bump on the side of the lid and a wrench to remove it.

John L. Mason – April 1, 1873

Mason received two patents on April 1, 1873 – No. 137,431 and 137,432, the first for “Fruit-Jars” – the second for “Fruit-Jar Covers” (Figure 9). The only significance for either of these is the presence of the word “KEYSTONE.” on the drawing of the jar. Roller (1983:223, 2011:340-341) used this drawing as evidence that the jar embossed with both a keystone symbol and the word “KEYSTONE” (see below) was made by the Mason Mfg. Co.

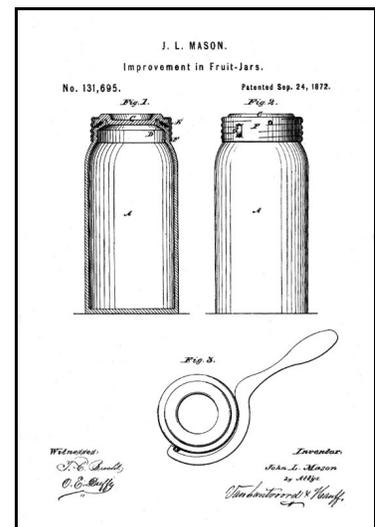


Figure 8 – Mason 1872 patent

Although Mason had other patents – including one for a nursing bottle – his glory days as an inventor was over.

John L. Mason Firms

Mason Mfg. Co., New York, New York (ca. 1869-late 1871)

According to Toulouse (1969:343), Mason “re-established his business, as the Mason Mfg. Co. on Spring Street in 1865” – not mentioning whether that business was fruit jars or tinsmithing. Roller (2011:456) noted that Mason was either not mentioned in directories during the 1853-1869 period or was listed as making stoves at his home address.

Roller (2011:678) cited the 1869 New York city directory for 9 Bedford St. as the address for the Mason Mfg. Co. as well as John L. Mason – the earliest mention for the business. The same directory listed the Mason Fruit Jar & Screw Cap Co. at 115 Nassau St. with Stephen R. Pinckney as the president. In 1870, the Mason Mfg. Co. incorporated with Mason, Pinckney, and William S. Carr as directors – an obvious merging of the two firms. The firm lost its individual identity in December 1871, when it became part of the merger that created the Consolidated Fruit Jar Co. (Roller 1983:446). It is highly unlikely that the firm actually made any glass, although it may have produced the zinc caps.

Containers and Marks

As we noted in the section on A.R. Samuel, available sources are very unclear about Mason’s early manufacturing history – including specifics about the jars made after the

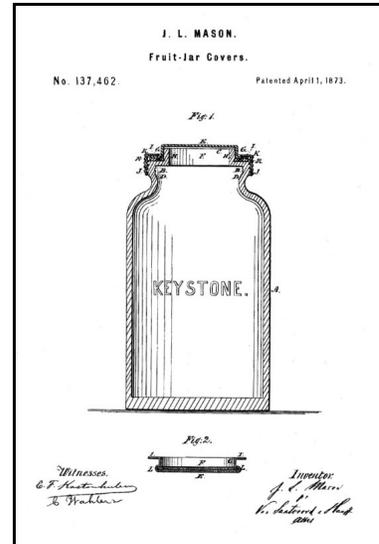


Figure 9 – Mason 1873 patent

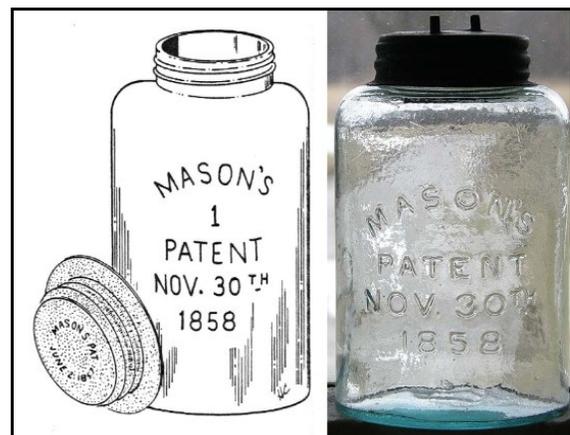


Figure 10 – Crowleytown Mason (North American Glass; Creswick 1957a:128)

Crowleytown Mason jars discussed above (Figure 10). However, the keystone symbols embossed on Mason jars may be divided into two distinct configurations based on the top line of the keystone – those with a slightly arched top line and those with a flat one. It seems most likely that Mason had made for him the earliest of the jars with the rounded-top keystones during the ca. 1869-1871 period, when he operated the Mason Mfg. Co. The style of the keystones is the most datable aspect of the jars.

MASON’S / {keystone} / KEYSTONE (1869-1871)

Roller (1983:223, 2011:340-341) noted that these earlier jars were made during the 1869-1871 period for the Mason Manufacturing Co., New York, and was the first to spot the slightly arched upper bar on the keystone. Roller also cited photographs and ads from ca. 1870 showing the arched symbols (Figure 11). These jars were labeled “MASON’S (horizontal) / {keystone symbol with arched tops} / KEYSTONE (inverted arch)” (Figure 12). He also noted that Mason’s February 14, 1870, patent drawing illustrated a jar embossed with the word “KEYSTONE.” (see Figure 9).

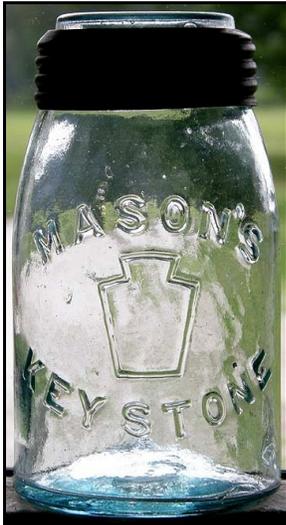


Figure 12 – Mason’s Keystone jar (North American Glass)

Creswick (1987:124) noted that the jar was also embossed “PATD JAN 19 1869” on the base (Figure 13). She said that the jar was sealed by a metal insert with an embossed keystone figure. Mason received Patent No. 86,089 on January 19, 1869, that required a “lid straddling the ground lip,” preferably of glass, although the seal could either be on the top or side. She suggested that metal inserts stamped with a keystone monogram may have been used instead of glass. She stated that a jar in her collection with the 1869 patent date “more closely resembles the patent issued on May 10, 1870[,] to John L. Mason. The 1870 patent calls for a glass lid.” Also see the section on A.R. Samuel for information on that firm’s production of early Mason jars.

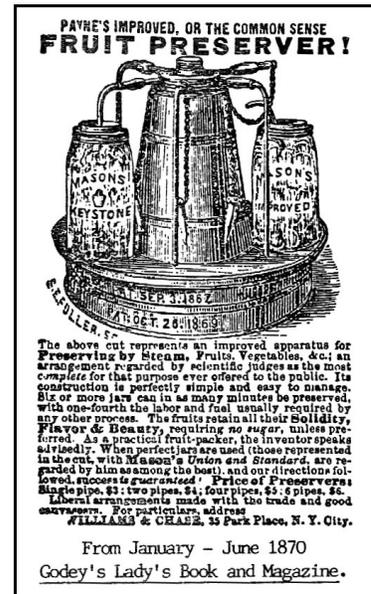


Figure 11 – Ca. 1870 Keystone ad (Mason 1983:444)

MASON'S / {flag} / STANDARD (1869-1875)

Roller (1983:247; 2011:368) discussed a mouth-blown jar embossed “MASON’S (slight arch) / {US flag} / STANDARD (slight inverted arch” on one side. At that time, only two of the jars had been discovered, both without caps, but Roller suggested that the closure was a “straddle-lip top seal, glass lid and metal screw band” that was probably similar or identical to the one used on the Mason Jar of 1872 (see the section on the Standard Union Mfg. Co. below). Consolidated Fruit Jar registered the flag and STANDARD trademark on June 10, 1873, noting that the Mason Mfg. Co. used the trademark in 1871 and 1872. A letterhead from the Standard Union Mfg. Co. – dated November 13, 1874 – showed a drawing of the jar, and it was advertised in an 1870 ad (Figure 14).



Figure 13 – Mason’s Keystone jars (Creswick 1987a:124)

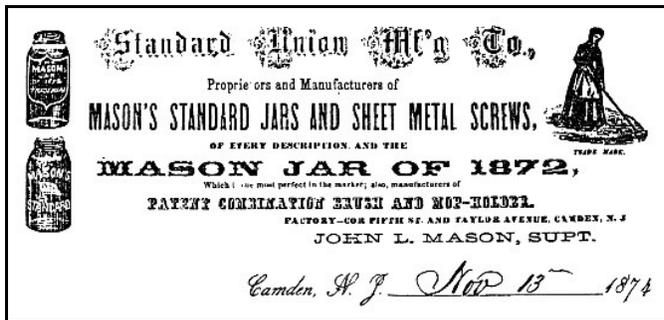


Figure 14 – 1874 letterhead (Roller 1983:247)

company, stressing made *for* rather than made *by* (Figure 15). She, too, noted the trademark, No. 1,307. The most recent source we have (McCann 2017:260), suggested that there were still only three of these jars known, all without closures. He noted that the finish on the jar indicated that the closure was similar or identical to the one on the Mason Jar of 1872.

Creswick (1987:153) illustrated the jar and listed both the Mason Mfg. Co. (1869-1872) and the Standard Union Mfg. Co. (1873-1875) as the issuing



Figure 15 – Flag Standard jar (Creswick 1987a:153)

MASON'S {shield} UNION (1870-ca. 1875)

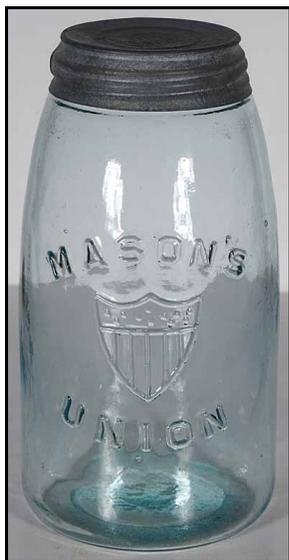


Figure 16 – Shield jar
(North American Glass)

Roller (1983:247-248;2011:369) discussed a jar embossed “MASON’S (slight arch) / {shield} / UNION (slight inverted arch)” on one side (Figure 16). The shield was complex, with 13 stars in the upper section and a series of vertical stripes in the lower one. He described the jars as having a side seal with a zinc screw cap. He noted that the jars “seal on an elongated, tapered neck rather than on the shoulder, which is too narrow for an effective seal.” Consolidated Fruit Jar registered the shield trademark on June 10, 1873, claiming a use by the Mason Mfg. Co. from 1870 to 1872.

J.P. Smith, Son & Co., glass jobbers at Pittsburgh, advertised Mason’s Union Jars with “Metal Cap” or “Porcelain Cap” on July 3, 1872.

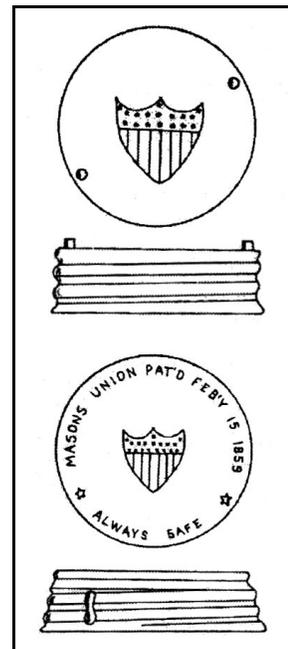


Figure 17 – Shield lids
(Roller 2011:369)

Roller (1983:247-248; 2011:369) listed three caps used on the jars and noted that Mason’s patent of June 6, 1871, showed the “pressed-out wrench lug” that was present on the caps (see Figure 8):

1. Shield figure embossed on top of unlined cap, two vertical wrench lugs soldered on top (Figure 17)

2. MASON’S UNION PAT’D FEB’Y 15 1859 (arch) / * ALWAYS SAFE * (inverted arch) around shield in center stamped into top, wrench lug pressed out from cap side, porcelain-covered iron-disk liner (Figure 18)



Figure 18 – Shield lids (North American Glass)

3. MASON’S UNION * PAT JUNE 6TH 1871 ALWAYS SAFE * around shield in center stamped into top, wrench lug pressed out from cap slide, porcelain-covered iron-disk liner

Creswick (1987:153) illustrated two sizes of the jar but claiming the same origin as for the Mason's Standard jar discussed above (Figure 19). She include the trademark information along with the number: No. 1,308. She also noted an additional closure:

4. Zinc lid with clear glass liner, marked on outside: TRADE MARK / UNION PATENT / PATD JUNE. 2 57 / OCT. 27 57 / JUNE 9 63 / MARCH 30 69

MASON'S IMPROVED

Toulouse (1969:201-202) listed five variations of jars embossed "MASON'S IMPROVED," including one with "MASON'S" in quotation marks and one with a Lightning closure. Although he attributed one of these to the Consolidated Fruit Jar Co., one to the Hero Jar Co., and one to the Mason Fruit Jar Co., he did not associate any with the Mason Mfg. Co. Roller (1983:218-220) also noted several forms of the Mason's Improved jars including one that he said was "the earliest [form] of Mason's Improved Jars, which were made for many years by many companies" (Roller 1983:219). The base of one variation of the jar was embossed "H. BROOKE MOULD MAKER NY PAT JAN 91 18 (Patented January 19, 1869). Another base had the correct patent date. Creswick (1987:120, 121) illustrated the jar and noted the Mason Mfg. Co. as the manufacturer (Figure 20). She also noted that the jar with the "H. Brooke" base was made by the Mason Mfg. Co. and cited four variations of the May 10, 1870, patent date on the base. The Roller update (2011:338) simply noted that the jar was made ca. 1869.

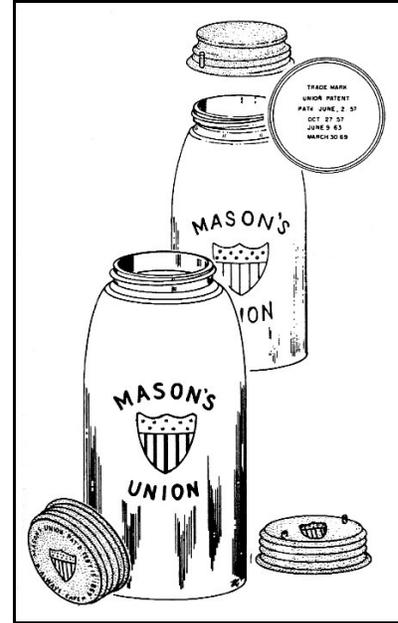


Figure 19 – Shield jars (Creswick 1987a:153)

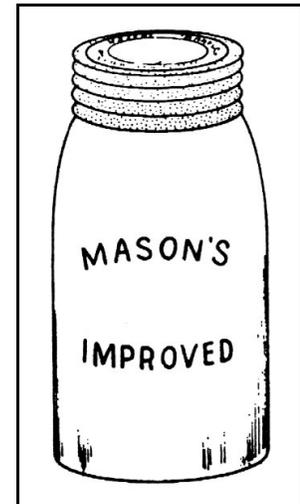


Figure 20 – Mason's Improved (Creswick 1987a:120)

In the section on A.R. Samuel, we also showed an example embossed "PAT NOV 26 61" in a circle around the number "1" (Figure 21). The correct patent date was February 26, 1869 (No. 87,274) for an "Improved Fruit-Jar." This patent was for a two-part closure, although the actual finish assembly appears to have been made to Mason's May 10, 1870, patent (No.

102,913). As noted in the patent section, both 1869 patents were far too complex for actual production. The A.R. Samuel section also discussed what was probably the first Mason's Improved jar, embossed "MASON'S / {keystone} IMPPOVED" (in error), probably made from a "MASON'S {keystone} KEYSTONE" mold.

Standard Union Mfg. Co., Camden, New Jersey (1873-1876)

Roller (1983:216; 2011:642) explained that when Mason regained control of his patents in 1871, he licensed other glass houses to make and/or sell the Mason jars. David Hannigan, George W. Palmer, and Gulian V. Quillard incorporated the Standard Union Mfg. Co. on the April 19, 1873, adding Henry F. Johnson, William H. De Camp, George Ross, and Isaac G. Speakers. Palmer was the first president, although he testified that Mason succeeded him in that office after "several months." The address for the firm was the Palmer & De Camp law office at 318 Broadway, New York (Banning & Arden 1882:383-384)

Quillard was the secretary for the duration of the company. Quillard testified that there had been "no meeting of the company since June 1874, that Mason has been the president and manager and conducted the business without the supervision of the board of trustees or any one else" (Banning & Arden 1882:384). The Consolidated Fruit Jar Co. sued Mason and his new firm, coming out ahead in the court battle in 1876 – signaling the demise of the Standard Union Mfg. Co. See the section on John F. Mason (above) for more details about the lawsuit.



Figure 21 – Mason's Improved (Jim Sears collection)

Containers and Marks

As noted in the section above, the Standard Union Mfg. Co. continued to produce some of the jars originally made by the Mason Mfg. Co. For example, and 1874 Standard Union letterhead illustrated a "MASON / {flag} / STANDARD" jar, and the firm seems to have offered "MASON'S IMPROVED" jars. Just how many jars were carried over to the Standard Union Mfg. Co. does not seem to have been explored.

MASON JAR OF 1872



Figure 22 – Mason Jar of 1872 lid (North American Glass)



Figure 24 – Base (North American Glass)

Creswick (1987:125-126) illustrated and/or described six variations of the 1872 jar, all of which she ascribed to the Whitney Glass Works – including the one Roller credited to the Standard Union Mfg. Co. Leybourne (2014:272), however, illustrated the circle and square variation with a base embossed

Roller (1983:216; 2011:327) described a jar embossed “THE MASON JAR OF 1872 TRADEMARK (in circle and circumscribed square)” on one side. The lid was a “straddle-lip top seal, glass lid and metal screw band” – with a milkglass insert embossed “PATENTED SEPTEMBER 24TH 1872” (Figure 22). Although

Roller noted that the maker was uncertain, he suggested the jar was likely made for the Standard Union Mfg. Co. He further noted that a November 13, 1874, Standard Union letterhead showed the jar (see Figure 14). Roller (1983:215-216) also discussed a similar jar embossed “THE MASON JAR OF 1872” with “WHITNEY GLASS WORKS GLASSBORO, N.J.” on the base – as well as two slight variations (Figures 23 & 24). These jars were obviously made by the Whitney Glass Works, and Roller dated them ca. 1873-1874.



Figure 23 – Whitney Glass Works (North American Glass)

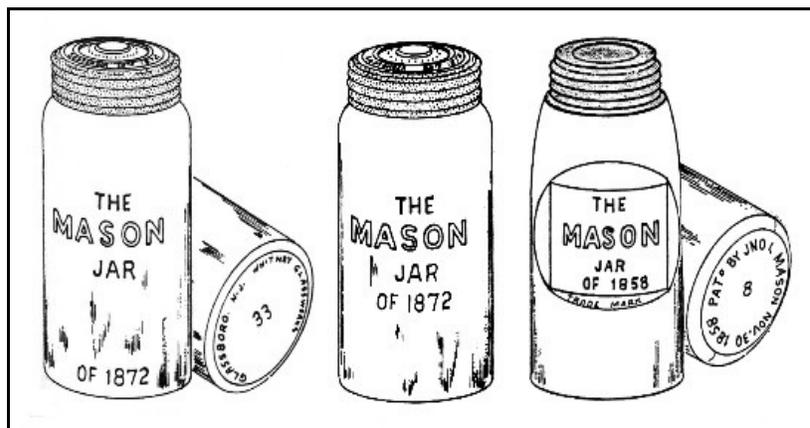


Figure 25 – Mason Jar of 1872 (Creswick 1987:125-126; Leybourne 2014:272)

“PAT^D BY JNO L MASON NOV 30 1858” in a circle around a number (Figure 25) – although this may be confused with the Mason Jar of 1858 (see below). See the Discussion and Conclusions section for a new hypothesis concerning this jar and the one listed below.

MASON JAR OF 1858



Figure 26 – Mason Jar of 1858 (North American Glass)

Roller (1983:215; 2011:326) described a jar embossed “THE / MASON (double line) / JAR / OF 1858 / TRADEMARK (in circle and

circumscribed square)” on one side, with “PAT^D BY JNO L MASON NOV 30 1858” in a circle around a number on the base and a cap stamped “* TRADEMARK THE GENUINE MASON JAR CAP OF 1858. LINED ALWAYS SAFE” (Figures 26 & 27). He listed the manufacturer as unknown and

noted a variation with “PATENTED NOV 30TH 1858” on the base and a ghosted “MASON IMPROVED” on the reverse.

Creswick (1987:125) also discussed and illustrated the jar (Figure 28). She suggested the Whitney Bros. (1839-1887) and the Whitney Glass Works (1887-1918) as the manufacturers. We have included this jar because of its marked similarity to the Mason Jar of 1872 discussed above – although the 1858 had the shoulder seal with a one-piece lid, while the 1872 had the two-part closure (see the Discussion and Conclusions section).



Figure 27 – Base and cap (North American Glass)



Figure 28 – Mason Jar of 1858 (Creswick 1987:125)

MASON'S / PATENT / NOV 30TH / 1858

On a page of base variations found on jars embossed “MASON'S / PATENT / NOV 30TH / 1858” on the sides, Creswick (1987:138) listed two with Mason's name (although she illustrated neither):

1. “JNO L MASON”
2. “PAT^D BY JNO L MASON NOV 30 1858” in a circle around a number.

We have found no other source that confirms the first basemark on *any* jars. Creswick also (1987:150) illustrated a jar embossed “MASON'S (slight arch) / D13D / PATENT NOV 30TH / 1858” on the side with a slight variation of the longer basemark discussed above – “PAT^D BY JNO L MASON (arch) / D / 13 / D / NOV 30 1858 (inverted arch)” (Figure 29). She attributed the jar to the John L. Mason Mfg. Co. Following Creswick, Leybourne (2014:333) also illustrated and described the same jar.

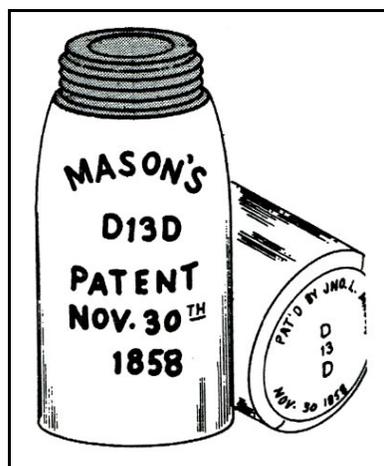


Figure 29 – Mason's Patent jar (Creswick 1987:150)

As noted above, Leybourne (2014:272) also illustrated the second variation on the base on a “MASON JAR OF 1872” – the jar variation that included the circle and square (see Figure 25). None of the other sources suggested that the Mason Mfg. Co. made “PATENT NOV 30TH” jars or that the “JNO L MASON” bases were found on that jar type. We have not found this specific jar in any other source, except Leybourne (2014:333), who used the same illustration. See the Discussion and Conclusions section for more discourse.

MASON {flag} STANDARD

As noted in the section on the Mason Mfg. Co. (above), the Standard Union Mfg. Co. also offered the Mason Standard jar with the American flag embossing (see Figure 14).

MASON'S IMPROVED

According to the Roller editors (2011:678), Mason used the 1870 patent for his legitimacy to make the Mason's Improved jar at the Standard Union Mfg. Co. – yet *none* of the sources (including Roller 2011) specify Standard Union under any of the individual jar discussions for the Mason's Improved jars. It is virtually certain that the Roller editors intended this comment to refer to the Mason Jar of 1872.

Discussion and Conclusions

The various jar sources were all very careful to use words like “probably” when opining that Mason did not make any jars, himself, or used terminology like “probably made for” Mason's firms when discussing individual jars. Although Roller admitted that evidence for Mason's life and businesses was incomplete, the only hint of Mason as a glass manufacturer was when early sources speculated that he leased a plant at Tansboro, New Jersey. Mason was a tinsmith, but there is nothing in his history to suggest that he had any experience with glass making. In addition, his address in New York City was an unlikely venue for a factory. All this rather strongly indicates that glass factories otherwise unconnected with Mason made the actual Mason jars. In addition, the address of his second firm (Standard Union Mfg. Co.) seems to have been a lawyer's office.

One of the most interesting questions about these keystone jars – one not addressed in the major jar sources (although Dick Roller *must* have been curious about it at some point) – is why Mason or someone closely associated with him selected a keystone symbol to decorate the side of an early jar. Mason was born in New Jersey and apparently confined his businesses to New York City. Since the keystone was and is the symbol of the State of Pennsylvania, its use by Mason makes no intuitive sense – *unless* Mason had the jars made in Pennsylvania.

As we noted in the A.R. Samuel section, Samuel's Keystone Glass Works was likely the earliest or one of the earliest to produce the “MASON'S / {keystone} / KEYSTONE” “MASON'S / {keystone} / IMPROVED” jars. This was very likely the connection between Mason's presence in New York and the use of the Keystone typically associated with Pennsylvania – as well as being the name of the Samuel glass plant.

As discussed above, only Creswick and Leybourne (almost certainly following Creswick) listed the Mason's Patent jars as being made for the Mason Mfg. Co., based on "JNO L MASON" being embossed on the bases of a few. That basemark was certainly used on the Mason Jar of 1872, but we have been unable to discover an example on a Mason's Patent jar. It is probable that Creswick was misled by a report from a collector; the basemark likely does not exist on Mason's Patent jars.

The circumstances around the American Flag jars and Shield jars also beg for some explanation. As noted in the text above, the American Flag jars are so rare that only three are known to collectors – all three missing closures. McCann (following Roller) noted that the finishes of the three suggested a two-part closure similar or identical to those used on the Mason Jar of 1872. Where the American Flag jars are rare, the Shield jars are more common. These were made to the older, shoulder-seal pattern. We suggest that this may be the first split between the Mason shoulder-seal jars and what would soon come to be called the Mason's Improved. When Mason began playing the double game, the Consolidated Fruit Jar Co. had solidly claimed the Mason's Improved name, so Mason chose new names in an attempt to avoid lawsuits.

We would also like to suggest a new interpretation for the Mason Jar of 1858 and the Mason Jar of 1872. Once the Mason Mfg. Co. had been coopted into the Consolidated Fruit Jar Co., the older name of Mason's Patent Nov 30th 1858 for the shoulder-seal jar and Mason's Improved for the new top seal were no longer available without an obvious breach of patent law, so Mason adopted new jar monikers for his Standard Union Mfg. Co. His shoulder-seal model – the former Shield jar – became the Mason Jar of 1858, while the former American Flag jar became the Mason Jar of 1872.

The timing of Mason's license to the Whitney Brothers (December 12, 1871) and the incorporation of the Standard Union Mfg. Co. is likewise very interesting. In order to operate a new firm in competition with Consolidated Glass, Mason needed a glass factory to produce the ware he would sell. The manufacturer had to be in place *before* Mason could establish his new firm. Once the Whitneys were producing the necessary jars, Mason could surround himself with backers for Standard Union. We therefore suggest that the Whitney Brothers made both the Mason Jar of 1858 and the Mason Jar of 1872 from 1872 to 1876 – when the court order forced them to cease production.

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