

Chapter 4

Rhode Island and Other Seals

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Rhode Island followed the examples of Massachusetts and Maine in adopting a very similar seal system for use on its milk bottles – although the smaller state instituted the system much later than its neighbors – apparently in the late 1920s. Several other states also joined the system, using similar marks, and Minnesota had a completely unique format, with a triangle mark. In Ohio, some cities – notably Cleveland – required seals, and California used a registration system. Virtually all of the states discontinued the seal systems in 1947.

The Rhode Island System

In 1906, Capt. George H. Pettis, State sealer of weights and measures, complained that 60,000 “glass milk jars in use in Rhode Island were declared to be of short measure.” The problem, according to Pettis, was that “many of the glass milk bottles which have been condemned by Massachusetts inspectors for the past fifteen years have been shipped to Providence” (*Massachusetts Ploughman and New England Journal of Agriculture* 1906:8).

By 1915, a customer could bring any milk bottle to the Rhode Island sealer to be checked – for a fee of 25¢. The 1915 law further noted that glass manufacturers could seal their own bottles to guarantee the correct measure (volume) and that such bottles were to be “marked with the name, initials, or trade-mark of the manufacturer, and by any other mark which the State sealer of weights, measures and balances may require.” It is possible that the “other mark” referred to a seal. However, the lack of specific wording to that effect makes it unlikely. The Rhode Island seal system was apparently not yet in place by 1926, when the law continued to have the identical wording (Dept. of Commerce 1926:723-724; State of Rhode Island 1915:192).

Unfortunately, we have found no other references to the law. Like the other New England states and Minnesota, Rhode Island discontinued its seal system in 1947 (Owens-Illinois records).

The Rhode Island Seals

The Dairy Antique Site (2016) listed the following seals for Rhode Island:

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| R.I. 11 SEAL | Thatcher Manufacturing Co. |
| R.I. A.B.C.2 SEAL | Atlantic Bottle Co. |
| R.I. BB SEAL | Berney-Bond Glass Co. |
| R.I. L52 SEAL | Lamb Glass Co. |
| RI T SEAL | Thatcher Manufacturing Co. |

R.I. 11 SEAL

The Thatcher Mfg. Co. frequently used the number “11” to identify its milk bottles (see the section on Maine Seals for examples). The seals were consistently embossed “R.I. (arch) / 11 / SEAL (inverted arch)” in a circular format on milk bottle shoulders (Figure 1). Thatcher seals were certainly used during the entire Rhode Island seal period ca. late 1920s-1947.



Figure 4-1 – R.I. 11 seal

R.I. A.B.C.2 SEAL

The Atlantic Bottle Co. used a seal embossed “R.I. (arch) / A.B.C.2 / SEAL (inverted arch)” on milk bottle shoulders (Figure 2). Atlantic Bottle purchased the Fidelity Glass Co. at Brackenridge, Pennsylvania, in 1916 and made milk bottles until the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. acquired the factory in 1930. Thus, the use of the mark may have been very limited in Rhode Island.



Figure 4-2 – R.I. A.B.C.2 seal

R.I. BB SEAL

The Berney-Bond Glass Co. used its initials “BB” in the circular seal format (Figure 3). Berney-Bond was formed as a merger between the Berney Glass Co. and the Bond Glass Co. on September 24, 1904. The firm began making a general line of bottles but added machines in 1917 and specialized in milk bottles after that. The Owens-Illinois Glass Co. took over the plants in 1930. As with Atlantic Bottle (above), this was apparently a short-lived seal.



Figure 4-3 – R.I. BB seal (eBay)

R.I. L52 SEAL

The Lamb Glass Co. embossed “R.I. (arch) / L52 / SEAL (inverted arch)” on the shoulders of its milk bottles for use in the state of Rhode Island (Figure 4). The firm opened in 1921 and adopted the L52 logo (with “52” in the crook of the “L”) ca. 1929. The Dorsey Co. absorbed Lamb in 1963. The seal was probably used in Rhode Island from 1929 to 1947.



Figure 4-4 – R.I. L52 seal (eBay)

RI T SEAL

According to the Dairy Antiques site (2016), the “T” in the circular Rhode Island seal (Figure 5) was used by the Thatcher Mfg. Co., the same firm that used the “11” seal (see above). Thatcher used the “11” seal in Maine and the “T” seal in Massachusetts, although it seems strange to use both in Rhode Island. It is safe to assume, however, that the Dairy Antiques researchers examined the T-seal milk bottles for manufacturer’s marks, so their assessment is likely correct.

Rhode Island Discussion and Conclusions

Although Rhode Island seems to have adopted the seal system later than its neighbors, Massachusetts and Maine, it used the seals for



Figure 4-5 – R.I. T seal (eBay)

the same purpose – maintaining uniformity in the capacity of milk bottles. The state probably set the system in place in the late 1920s and continued to use it until all three states abandoned the seals as unnecessary in 1947. By that time, quality control and consistency had become so standard throughout the glass industry that further safeguards were redundant.



Figure 4-6 – Sealed (eBay)

Pennsylvania Seals



Figure 4-7 – Sealed 11 PA (eBay)

Although later than the others in this study, the State of Pennsylvania also instituted a seal program ca. 1930. We have recorded a single bottle embossed “SEALED” in a circle in a plate on the front neck/shoulder (Figure 6). The seal had no identifying letter or



Figure 4-8 – Sealed 11 PA (eBay)

number, but it was on a bottle with a Thatcher heelcode and a date code for 1930. By at least 1933, the state apparently included numbers and/or letters. An example was embossed “SEALED (arch) / 11 / PA. (both horizontal)” in a circular shoulder/neck plate – again with a Thatcher logo and 1933 date code (Figure 7). By 1940, at least some of the shoulder seals had changed, now reading “SEALED (arch) / 11 PA. (inverted arch) (Figure 8).” At least one bottle was embossed “SEALED



Figure 4-9 – Sealed 11 PA (eBay)

11 PA” at the heel (Figure 9). The only other Pennsylvania seal we have recorded was “SEALED / K9” in a small shoulder plate – the mark of the Knox Glass Co. The system must have been only used for a short time – or used sporadically. We have found *very* few bottles with these seals.

Michigan Seals

In 1915, the State of Michigan required that:

Bottles used for the sale of milk shall have clearly blown or otherwise permanently marked in the side of the bottle the capacity and the word “sealed” and in the side or bottom of the bottle the name, initials or trademark or the manufacturer and designating number, which number shall be different for each manufacturer. A penalty of \$500 shall be imposed for the violation of the law. Dealers who use inaccurate bottles shall be punished according to law” (*Milk Dealer* 1915:32).

The Michigan State Bulletin No. 1-273 (August 1895-June 1918) listed the following numbers assigned to glass houses wishing to sell milk bottle within the state:

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Essex Glass Co. | E-4 |
| Thatcher Mfg. Co. | 14 |
| Travis Glass Co. | T.19 |
| Dubois Glass Co. | 30 |
| Winslow Glass Co. | 5 W |
| Weiss Fibre Container Corp. | 19 |
| Wisconsin Fibre Bottle Co. | W.019 |
| Woodbury Glass Co. | 8 |
| Atlantic Bottle Co. | ABC-2 |
| Minnesota Fibre Bottle Co. | M.017 |

We have not found examples for most of these. As usual, of course, the Thatcher Mfg. Co. made the most common bottles, but the firm was incredibly inconsistent in its markings. We have recorded the following configurations for Thatcher:



Figure 4-10 – Sealed 14 (eBay)



Figure 4-11 – Sealed 14 (eBay)

“SEALED” on the heel with the Thatcher logo and a 1929 date code.

“SEALED (arch) / 14 (horizontal)” in a round shoulder plate – 1930 (Figure 10)¹

“SEALED / 14 (both horizontal)” in a round shoulder plate (Figure

11)

“SEALED / 14” in two lines on the shoulder (not in a circle) (Figure 12)



Figure 4-12 – Sealed 14 (eBay)



Figure 4-13 – Sealed T-19

Other Michigan bottles were embossed:



Figure 4-14 – Sealed 48 (eBay)

“SEALED (arch) / T19 (horizontal)” in a round shoulder plate (Figure 13)

“SEALED 48 in two lines on the shoulder (not in a circle) (Figure 14)

“SEALED 48” on the heel

“SEALED 51 in two lines on the shoulder (not in a circle) (Figure 15)



Figure 4-15 – Sealed 51 (eBay)

This study is obviously in its infancy, and we need a *much* large sample of Michigan milk bottles (looked at 351 Michigan milk bottles on eBay for this sample). We can glean from this that the system began in 1915 but had no consistency of configuration. Currently, we do not know when the state lifted the requirement.

¹ There were actually three sub-variations of this mark. On one, the “14” was in the center of the circle, on another at the bottom of the circle. The third was completely unique – “REGISTERED (arch) / 14 (‘14’ at the bottom).”

Wisconsin Seals

Wisconsin law required anyone who sold milk bottles within the state to post a \$1,000 bond to assure that they only furnished “Standard bottles.” Thus, if a Wisconsin dairy bought bottles from a bonded company, the manufacturer, *not* the dairy, would be responsible “if the bottles are not standard.” The word “standard” referred to the capacity of the bottle. Manufacturers were assigned specific codes, and “these numbers . . . should be on the bottom or side of the bottle, together with the initials or trade mark of the company” (*Stevens Point Journal* 1913:1).

The law was amended in 1915 to include “the capacity of the bottle and the word ‘Sealed’ and in the side or bottom of the bottle the name, initials or trade mark of the manufacturer and designating number” of the glass house. The “designating number” was “furnished by the state superintendent of weights and measures upon application by the manufacturer.” The bond remained at \$1,000 (*Stevens Point Journal* 1916:2). It is currently unknown when the requirement began or when the law was repealed. An article in the *Stevens Point Journal* (9/22/1913) listed the following manufacturers and numbers:

| | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Thatcher Mfg. Co. | 1 |
| Sheldon-Foster Glass Co. | 3 |
| Essex Glass Co. | E-4 |
| Winslow Glass Co. | 5W |
| Illinois Glass Co. | 7 |
| Empire Bottle & Supply Co. | 17 |
| Butler Bottle Co. | 24B |

A follow-up article from the same newspaper on August 18, 1916, added:

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------|
| Standard Milk Bottle Mfg. Co. | 29 |
| Crescent Milk Bottle Co. | 39 |
| Michigan Glass Co. | M.G. 2 |
| Travis Glass Co. | 19 |
| Bell Bottle Co. | 6 |

Wisconsin Fibre Bottle Co. W.019
 Woodbury Glass Co. 8

However, we have only discovered a few examples, mostly without good photos:

“WISC (arch) / 1 / SEAL (inverted arch)” circular pate on shoulder – 1922 (Figure 16)
 “SEALED (arch) / 48 (horizontal)” circular pate on shoulder
 “SEALED / 51 (both horizontal)’ circular pate on shoulder

As with the other seals described above, the examples were mostly taken from 153 eBay auctions, and we need a much larger sample.



Figure 4-16 – Wisc 1 Seal

City Systems in Ohio

[Parts of the following section were first published in Lockhart et al. 2014].

C.C.S-E (or other final letter) (ca. 1908-1960s)



Figure 4-17 – C.C.S.-E 1
 (Antique Bottles.net)

The initials “CCS” followed by a single letter appeared on numerous Ohio milk bottles. The Dairy Antique Site (2016) noted that the letters indicated the Cleveland City Sealer of Cleveland, Ohio. The site added that the city “required the milk bottle manufacturer to post a

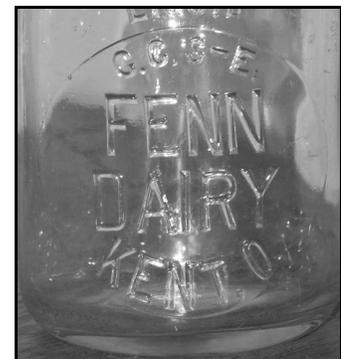


Figure 4-18 – C.C.S.-E 2
 (eBay)

\$1,000 bond with the city, and “seven manufacturers had been granted the privilege to use the official letters” according to a

1908 publication. Nearby dairies (likely ones that sold milk in the city) also adopted bottles with the “C.C.S.” initials. The mark appeared on both round and square milk bottles, but the code was not embossed systematically. It appeared in at least nine formats/locations:

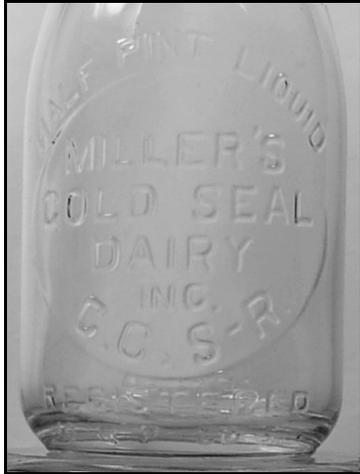


Figure 4-19 – C.C.S.-E 3 (eBay)

1. horizontal at various locations in a round front plate (Figure 17)
2. arch at the top of a round front plate (Figure 18)
3. inverted arch at the bottom of a round front plate (Figure 19)
4. horizontal at the heel (Figure 20)
5. slight inverted arch at the heel
6. horizontal on the base (Figure 21)
7. on the base in an inverted arch (Figure 22)
8. on the base in an arch
9. horizontal in a small round plate at the shoulder (Figure 23)



Figure 4-20 – C.C.S.-E 4 (eBay)



Figure 4-21 – C.C.S.-E 6 (eBay)



Figure 4-22 – C.C.S.-E 7

In some cases, the initials occurred on both a plate (either on the front body or shoulder) *and* on the front heel. Dairy Antiques (2016) noted four glass manufacturers that made bottles with C.C.S. initials to which we added two more:

1. Berney-Bond Glass Co.
2. Lamb Glass Co.
3. Owens-Illinois Glass Co.
4. Thatcher Mfg. Co.
5. Travis Glass Co.
6. Universal Glass Products Corp.
7. Winslow Glass Co.

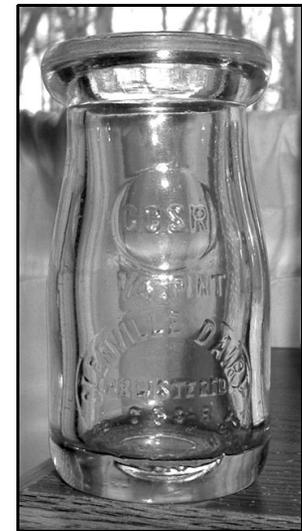


Figure 4-23 – C.C.S.-E 9 (eBay)

The CCS code is followed by another single letter, including C, D, E, F, O, P, R and W, according to the Dairy Antique Site (2016) and Dennis Osborn (Personal communication

8/13/2000). The final letter seems to indicate the manufacturer. If this is correct, however, the letters are not intuitively obvious. Although our sample is small, the following company logos match the letters:

C = 5W (Winslow Glass Co.)

E = L52 (Lamb Glass Co.)

O = Inverted-Triangle-T (Travis Glass Co.)

W = BB48 (Berney-Bond Glass Co.)

W = <(0)> (Owens-Illinois Glass Co. – purchased Berney-Bond in 1930)

The code may lack punctuation, but it usually had a period after each letter (e.g., C.C.S.), and the last letter was usually separated from the others by a hyphen (e.g., C.C.S.-E). However, the letters could run together (CCSD) or have all periods – although usually the final letter lacked punctuation (C.C.S.D).

The city of Toledo (T.C.S.) and Sandusky (S.C.S.) used similar systems, and dairies that served all three municipal areas embossed bases with all three logos (Figure 24). The initials were probably used between ca. 1908 and the 1960s according to Dennis Osborn (Personal communication 8/13/2000). One bottle we have found was made by the Travis Glass Co. in 1912 (Figure 25).



Figure 4-24 – C.C.S., T.C.S. & S.C.S. (eBay)



Figure 4-25 – Travis T-19-12 (eBay)

Discussion and Conclusions

Although the methodology and details varied from state to state, the basic idea of the seal system was to insure consistent capacity of dairy containers. Seals could be located on heels, bases, shoulders, or body plates – and were even applied in pyroglaze – but the purpose was the same. Most states simply used the word “SEALED” on bottle heels, and almost all of them ceased the requirement in or close to 1947 because improved machinery and the complete cessation of hand production of dairy containers had removed the need.

Acknowledgments

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