

## **Northwestern Glass Co.**

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Emerging from the ashes of a failed enterprise, the Northwestern Glass Co. had a rocky beginning, using the outmoded equipment of the older firm. Despite the rough start, Northwestern Glass became a major West Coast manufacturer, especially producing beer bottles.

### **History**

**North West Glass Co., Seattle, Washington** (1929-1930)

**Seattle Western Glass Co., Seattle, Washington** (1930-1931)

According to Toulouse (1971:390), North West Glass Co. opened in 1929 at Seattle, Washington, but failed the next year and was replaced by the Seattle Western Glass Co. In 1930 (probably early in the year), North West had a single tank making “bottles and containers” (*American Glass Review* 1930:93). Seattle went bankrupt the next year (Toulouse 1971:390).

**Northwestern Glass Co., Seattle, Washington** (1931-ca, 1987)

Alexander J. McDonald sold his McDonald Glass Co. at Compton, California, and moved to Seattle to start a glass factory there. Northwestern Glass Co. was incorporated in 1931 to replace Seattle Western. Actual operations began in 1932. According to Edward S. Campbell, an early president of the firm, the company was poorly financed and began production with the old O’Neill machines that came with the purchase of North West Glass. The plant made bottles and jars and was the first factory to use electricity to melt glass. (Roller 1998; Toulouse 1970:37; 1971:39-391).

In 1933, Northwestern made “beverage bottles and packers’ ware” by machine at one continuous tank. The following year, the listing noted the colors as flint and amber and added preservers in 1935. The listing remained the same until at least 1944 (*American Glass Review* 1933:69; 1934:96; 1935:89). The plant used outdated O’Neil machines until 1939, then upgraded. A third machine was placed in operation in 1942, followed by a fourth machine (this

time, an I.S.) in 1950. They installed a fifth machine in 1955. By 1962, there were seven machines at four tanks, but that grew to five tanks with nine machines in just two years (1964). The machines gradually transitioned until all of them were I.S. machines (Toulouse 1970:37; 1971:931).

Although the Indian Head Corp. (Obear-Nester) acquired Northwestern in 1968, the plant retained its individual identity (see the section on Obear-Nester for more information). In 1982, the factory made “returnable & non-returnable beer and beverage containers; food (narrow neck and wide mouth); medicinal, wine, and liquor containers” in flint, amber, and green glass on 12 machines at five tanks. The same listing appeared in 1985. Since the Northwestern mark was no longer listed in 1990, the company likely closed between 1985 and 1990. Indian Head became Incon in 1986 and merged with Ball to form Ball-Incon in May 1987 (*Glass Industry* 1982:36; Haas 1970:110; Owens-Illinois 2001; Perrine 1985:27; Powell 1990). It is likely that Northwestern lost its individual identity in the Ball-Incon merger of 1987.

## Containers and Marks

### Electroglas

This trademark was almost certainly for some sort of glass technique. Northwestern Glass Co. registered the mark (No. 7,204,413) on October 25, 1960, claiming a first use on February 28, 1958. The last listed owner was Indian Head, Inc., and the trade mark was cancelled on November 4, 2001. According to Roller (2011:394), the term referred to the factory’s use of electricity to melt glass. We have never seen this mark on an actual bottle, although the term appeared in cursive on fruit jars.



Figure 1 – Electroglas (eBay)

Toulouse (1969:108) noted the jar but did not mention the word “MASON.” He claimed that it was made by Northwestern only from 1950 to 1953. Roller (1983:266) listed the “NW-Ligature / Electroglas (slight upward slant, cursive, underlined by an electric bolt) / WIDE MOUTH / MASON” jar (Figure 1). The NW was the NW-Ligature used by Northwestern (see below). Roller illustrated the embossing

and dated the jar ca. 1940s-1950s. Creswick (1987:99) illustrated two variations of the jar (wide mouth and regular) and dated them both 1950-1955 (Figure 2). Roller (2011:394) discussed both variations and noted that the “NW MASON” lids were sold separately as early as the 1940s, even though the jars were not made until the following decade – citing Tom Caniff as the source of the information.

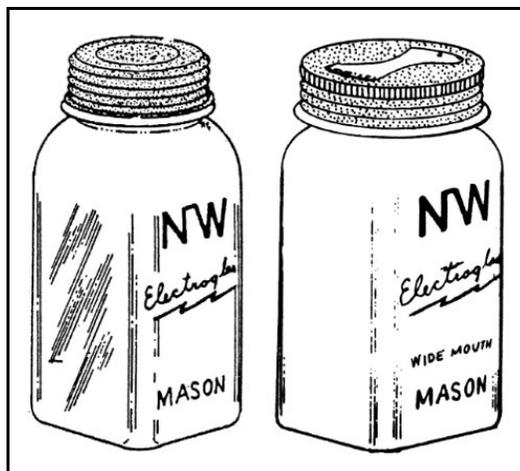


Figure 2 – Electroglas (Creswick 1987:99)

## NW / MASON

According to Roller (2011:394):

Northwestern made a mold for a packer who wanted a 32-ounce home style Mason jar to pack pickles. The idea didn’t work out so Northwestern added their logo and sold the jars as a home canning jar with Bernardin closures. One production run was made. Light green jars were sold to employees and clear ones to the public.

The publication dated the jars as made in the 1970s.

## NW-Ligature

The only mark identified by Toulouse (1971:390) as being used by the company was an “N” connected to a “W” by a short bar at the top of the two letters, used from 1931. The mark was still listed in 1982 but was absent in 1990 (Emhart 1982:75; Powell 1990). A single embossed date code of “84” suggests that the company was using the mark until at least 1984. It is likely that the firm continued to use the mark as long as it retained its identity ca. 1987 (see Histories above). Giarde (1980:73) added that the plant made milk bottles and agreed with Toulouse about the mark and dating (Figure 3).



Figure 3 – NW milk bottle (eBay)



Figure 4 – NW base

The earliest beer bottle base we have so far was reported and photographed by Späth et al. (2000:95, 153). This non-stippled base had the NW-Ligature mark embossed slightly below the center with “40” below it almost on the basal indent line. The typical three-digit catalog codes (see below) were absent (Figure 4).



Figure 5 – NW 40 (Spathe 2000:153)

Northwestern had at least five patterns for its logos and codes on non-returnable beer bottle bases plus a heelmark:

1. NW (horizontal – center) / 40 – 1940-? (Figure 5)
2. 52 NW 79 (arch at top of base) / 523 (inverted arch at bottom of stippled base) – ?-1952 (Figure 6)
3. NW / 53 (left side, centered) 523 (right side, centered) / 18 (all horizontal) – 1952-1968 (see Figure 6)
4. NW / 523 (left side, above center) 58 (right side above center) / 24 (all horizontal) – 1958-? (see Figure 6)
5. 657 NW 70 (all in an arch at the top) / E11 / NOT TO BE REFILLED (both inverted arches) – 1967-1970s (see Figure 6)
6. D64 NW 84 (“4” superimposed over a “3”) on heel – ?-at least 1984 (Figure 7)



Figure 6 – NW beer bases

Catalog code 531 for “Fat Select” style – mid-1970s (1975-1976 in our sample)

Hurst (2005:280) also listed three NW non-returnable beer bottles from 1956 and 1957 with model codes of “652,” “655,” and “552.” She called the bottles “stubby” but gave no other description except for the amber color. Although the two-digit date codes in our sample appeared on the right in all formats, the three-digit model codes occupied various positions. An Etsy auction also showed the logo on a float ball used during the 1940s.



Figure 7 – NW heelmark

### **NW-Ligature (*N* in italics)**

We have found a single example of this mark on an amber, export, returnable beer bottle with an embossed ring around the shoulder/neck joint (Figure 8). The base was heavily stippled, with the logo in the upper section and a “1” in the lower section. Both were offset slightly to the right of center. A colorless round base (bottle type unknown) was embossed “206 / NW (with the “N” in italics) / 2.” The stippling on the amber base is an indication of a manufacture in 1940 or later. Although “2” was almost certainly a mold number, “206” was likely the model code.



Figure 8 – Italics N

### **NW-Ligature (*N* in italics) in an Oval**

A 1964 glass trademarks table compiled by Owens-Illinois showed the “N” in the NW-Ligature in italics and in an elliptical oval with the lower left end of the “N” and the upper right end of the “W” touching the oval (Berge 1980:83). We have found this mark on an amber, export, returnable beer bottles with an embossed ring round the shoulder/neck joint and on an amber base fragment,



Figure 9 – Oval logo

possibly from a similar bottle (Figure 9). The beer bottle base had the partially italicized “NW” in an oval in the upper area of the base and a “1” in the lower. The base fragment had the Oval-NW in the center, a “9” to the left, and an illegible number (possibly a “3”) above. It is currently unknown whether these were made prior to the adoption of date codes by the company or if the partial italics logo was an earlier mark.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

Most of our empirical evidence for the NW mark comes from non-returnable beer bottles. These were made by Northwestern from at least 1940 until at least 1984. Although the patterns for the marks and codes changed, date codes were used by at least 1940. With current evidence, we cannot confirm the use of the mark earlier, although it is certainly possible.

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