

The Packham Firms – Jobbers in Liquor Bottles

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All three of the Packham firms were liquor supply houses – not glass manufacturers. The two latter companies almost certainly began marking their bottles in response to the requirement of the South Carolina Dispensary – for which E. Packham, Jr. & Co. was a long-term supplier (1896-ca. 1901). The final firm, Packham Bros., made Dispensary bottles briefly but continued to have at least some of their bottles embossed with the firm name.

Histories

Packham, DeWitt & Co., Baltimore, Maryland (ca. 1885-1895)

According to George K. Packham, he had been an employee of Packham, DeWitt & Co., a supply firm for liquor dealers that was organized ca. 1885 and was located at 101 E. German, Baltimore, Maryland. The Packham in the name was Eldridge Packham, Jr., with Charles DeWitt as the other principal. Although we have not discovered the details, the company apparently reorganized in 1895 with the formation of E. Packham, Jr. & Co. (General Assembly 1906). Although George Packham had joined Packham, DeWitt & Co. in 1889, he left the firm at some point to form a partnership with W.W. Barnes as Barnes & Co. – although he was unsure of the date. About 1895, Barnes & Co. became insolvent and sold to E. Packham, Jr. & Co. George went with the business (General Assembly 1906).

E. Packham, Jr. & Co., Baltimore, Maryland (1895-ca. 1901)

Although the details are unclear, DeWitt either died or left the firm in 1895, and Eldridge Packham, Jr., reorganized the company as E. Packham, Jr. & Co. Other members of the firm were his brothers, Lewis Packham, George K Packham, William A. Packham, and Harry Packham. This firm, too, supplied goods to liquor dealers. From 1896 to 1899, E. Packham, Jr. & Co. won a bid to provide half-pint, pint, and quart flasks for the South Carolina Dispensary (General Assembly 1906; Teal 2005:98-99).

The firm suffered a fire on December 22, 1898, but the goods and furnishings were completely covered by insurance. On January 4, 1899, George placed a notice in the *Baltimore Sun* that he had “severed [his] connections with E. Packham, Jr & Co.” George recalled that he “withdrew with my brother William,” and “we formed Packham Bros.” George remembered that the brothers quarreled because “E.P. . . . was very contentious.” Lewis also left the firm and went to Chesapeake Glass Co. E. Packham, Jr & Co. won the contract for 15 railroad cars of half-pint flasks and another 15 cars of pints in September 1900. With the defection of most of the family, E. Packham, Jr. & Co. soon folded, probably in 1901 (General Assembly 1906; Libros n.d.; Teal 2005:98, 109).

Packham Bros., Baltimore, Maryland (1899-ca. 1911)

After their withdrawal from E. Packham, Jr. & Co., George and William Packham formed the firm of Packham Bros. with a capital of only \$300. Initially, Harry remained with E. Packham, Jr., but he and Lewis soon joined George and William, and Packham Bros. took over E. Packham, Jr.’s business. Originally located at the Tyler Building on Pratt St. (Baltimore), Packham moved the company to 107 Cheapside in 1900. When business improved beyond the capacity of 107, the brothers relocated next door at 109 and 111 Cheapside. By September of 1902, George was an agent for the Bodine Glass Co. and won a bid for South Carolina Dispensary bottles that year. According to George, however, a fire “dismantled” the firm on February 7 and 8, 1904 (General Assembly 1906; Teal 2005:98-99).

After the fire, the company moved to 615 E Lombard St. then relocated again to 14 E Lombard St. – “near Light Street” according to the March 7, 1911, issue of the *Baltimore Sun*. At that point, the firm advertised Bottles, Corks, Demijohns, Labels, Bottle Wrappers, Jugs, and Bottle Cartons. This 1911 listing was the last mention we could find for the firm.

Containers and Marks

The two latter Packham companies made bottles for the South Carolina Dispensary system and marked their products on the back heels or bases of flasks to fit the requirement mandated by the Dispensary (Huggins 1997:10; Teal & Wallace 2005:98, 149). The final firm apparently had many of its other bottles embossed with the full company name. While we do not

know which glass house (or glass houses) made bottles for E. Packham, Jr. & Co., the Bodine Glass Co. made at least some of the containers for the Packham Bros.

E.P.JR.&Co. (1896-ca. 1901)

The “E.P.JR.&Co.” mark was embossed on the heels of South Carolina Dispensary flasks and bottles. The mark was used by E. Packham, Jr. and Co. (Huggins 1997:10). Teal (2005:99) noted that E. Packham, Jr. & Co. was in business from ca. 1895 to 1898, although subsequent evidence suggests a closing ca. 1901. Since the mark is currently only known on Dispensary flasks and bottles, it should be dated 1896 (when the firm won its first bid with the Dispensary) to ca. 1901 (Figure 1). The mark appeared in at least three formats: 1) horizontally across the base; 2) horizontally at the heel (on round bottles); and 3) in an inverted arch at the heel (flasks). The logo was also noted by Freeman (1964:110), although he did not directly associate it with the Dispensary. Since he described the eight-branched tree, it was almost certainly the same bottle described by Huggins and Teal.



Figure 1 – E.P.JR.&Co. (eBay)

Since this mark is unknown except on Dispensary bottles, it is almost certain that Packham created the logo in response to Dispensary requirements. According to Teal (2005:130),

the requirement for a glass house supplying bottles to the [South Carolina] Dispensary to have their initials blown into their bottles was a quality control measure that resulted from having more formal and specific bids and contracts. All of the glass house contracts from 1897 forward in the Dispensary records at the State Archives carry this provision.

E. PACKHAM JR. & CO, MANUF'S. BALTIMORE, MD

Ruby Lane offered a historic flask bearing a paper label with “E. PACKHAM JR. & CO, MANUF'S. BALTIMORE, MD” printed at the label's bottom. The flask was blown in the shape of a canteen, and the label included an eagle, flags, a shield, and cannons (Figure 2). It is doubtful that the firm had its name embossed on many – if any – bottles.



Figure 2 – E. Packham label (Ruby Lane)

P.Bros. (1901-1902)

Huggins (1997:10) noted that the Packham Brothers Glass Co., Baltimore, Maryland, embossed the P.Bros. mark on the back heels of South Carolina Dispensary bottles. According to Teal & Wallace (2005:99), Packham Brothers (not a glass company) was in business from 1898 to at least 1907 (actually 1899-ca. 1911). However, since all known bottles with the P.Bros. mark were connected with the Dispensary, the logo should be dated 1901 to 1902 (the years when the Dispensary system purchased bottles from the firm). See above comments on why this mark may have been embossed only on Dispensary bottles. The logo was embossed in an inverted arch on flask heels (Figure 3).

PACKHAM BROTHERS / BALTIMORE (1899-ca.1911)

Goldfrank (2001:4) reported a quarter-pint, strap-sided flask embossed “THE PALACE CAR / BABY / CUTTER WHISKEY” in a plate on the front and “PACKHAM BROTHERS / BALTIMORE” on the base. A half-pint flask was embossed “THE PALACE CAR / M. BARNETT / CONDUCTOR / 1110 E St. N.W.” on the side and “PACKHAM BROS / BALTIMORE” on the base. Although these were probably made to fill single orders, they could have been produced any time during the tenure of the company – 1899-ca.1911.



Figure 3 – P.BROS (eBay)

EWPGCo

The *may* be a mark from an earlier or later company called EW Packham Glass Co. or Eldridge & William Packham Glass Co. (Figure 4). At this point, the identification is purely speculation; there is no documentary evidence that any company by either of those names existed. See Other E Marks for more information. It is also possible that the mold maker completely botched the E.P.JR.&Co. logo.



Figure 4 – EWPGCO (eBay)

Discussion and Conclusions

We have found no record of any marked bottles from the first of the Packham companies, Packham, DeWitt & Co. Its successor, E. Packham, Jr. & Co., apparently only had its initials embossed on bottle bases in response to the requirements from the South Carolina Dispensary – although it had its name printed on some paper labels. The final firm, Packham Bros., also had its abbreviated name embossed on Dispensary flask heels but continued to have the full name marked on some bases after the Dispensary ceased operations in 1902.

Acknowledgments

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