

## Seattle Glass Co.

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Although Toulouse posited an earlier Renton Glass Co., the Seattle Glass Co. was almost certainly the first glass house at Renton, Washington. The firm failed in 1907, but a new firm, the Renton Glass Co., acquired the plant in 1908 and continued producing glass. The Seattle Glass Co. was the probable user of an “SGCo” logo.

### Histories

Two Seattle area glass factories had a currently undefined relationship to each other. One – initially the North West Glass Co. – was located at Interbay, a suburb of Seattle, at Smith’s Cove, a small section on the shore of Elliott Bay on Puget Sound. The other – the Seattle Glass Co. – was less than 20 miles southeast at Renton.

### **The Interbay Glass Firms** (ca. 1900-at least 1905)

#### **Northwest Glass Works, Interbay, Seattle, Washington** (poss. 1900-1903)

Around May 1898, the Northwest Glass Works incorporated with a capital of \$60,000. By January 12, 1900, the firm was in the process of building its plant with a one-ton day tank. The April 21 issue of *Commoner and Glassworker* noted that “it is said the concern are at present making machine made jars, though they eventually expect to produce bottles.” A followup said the firm was to “to start blowing fruit jars on May 28th.” J.T. Pennypacker managed the plant (*Paint, Oil & Drug Review* 1898:26; Roller 1998).

According to the June 21, 1900, issue of *Ranch and Range*, Daniel Murry was the manager, with Thomas Bowes as Secretary. Although the paper did not mention other officers, It noted that the plant would produce fruit jars “with a glass top that is fastened on by a wire clamp, making a perfect seal.” The 1901 Seattle City Directory listed the Northwest Glass Works at 46 Starr-Boyd Bldg., although that had to have been the address of the office.

On March 25, 1901, Fred B. Hollenbeck, assigned by the courts as receiver for the Northwest Glass Works, solicited applications for redress from creditors (*Seattle Star* 4/23/1901). The *Seattle Daily Times* (7/6/1901), however, reported on July 6 that North West planned “to open its plant at Interbay about September 1. On October 19, the *Daily Times* announced that the North West Glass Works, located “on the westerly side of Smith’s Cove, in the harbor of the City of Seattle,” would be sold at auction to the highest bidder on October 26, 1901. Included in the sale was one “Haley glass blowing machine” – one of two at the factory. Since the other was under lein, it was not included in the sale.

The February 1903 issue of the *Illustrated Glass & Pottery World* gave us our last glimpse of the firm: “The Northwest Glass Works located at Seattle, Washington, will have its plant in operation by April 1; equipment is a day tank and the output at first will be confined to beer bottles.”<sup>1</sup> This contradicts the earlier claim that the plant was already in production or about to begin. The earlier reports were likely in error. The factory may never have actually made any glass.

#### **Washington Glass & Bottle Works, Interbay?, Washington (1903)**

The Washington Glass & Bottle Works incorporated at Seattle with a capital of \$100,000 on February 17, 1903. The incorporators were H.L. Rochelle, J.W. Bullock, and W.D. Hoffus (Roller 1998; State of Washington 1905:103). This brief incarnation *may* have been the successor to North West and may have become the Star Glass Co. in 1904.

#### **Star Glass Co., Interbay, Washington (ca. 1904-1905)**

Notations in Roller (1998) told an intriguing story of the Star Glass Co. He quoted the March 4, 1905, issue *China, Glass & Lamps* as stating that the

Renton Glass Works, at Renton, Washington, have made arrangements for the Star Glass Co., of Interbay, Washington, to operate their plant from now to July 1st, at which time the consolidation of the two plants is expected to take place.

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<sup>1</sup> This report could indicate the starting of the factory for the season or after repairs – rather than its initial beginning.

The Interbay plant will be remodeled and modernized. Chas. Jordan will be manager of both plants.

Roller (1998) added that the Star Glass Co. plant at Renton would employ about 75 men, making amber ware (probably beer bottles), while the Smith's Cove factory would produce fruit jars and soda bottles with a force of 50 men. We have found no other mention of *this* Star Glass Co. Nor any further mention of the intended merger (although, see the section of the Star glass firms for information on other firms that shared the name).

### **Seattle Glass Co., Renton, Washington (1903-1907)**

The *Seattle Daily Times*, reported on May 3, 1903 that the Seattle Glass Co. had incorporated the day before with a capital of \$40,000 and planned to build a plant at Renton to produce “bottles, glass jars, chimneys and like articles of common use.” The incorporators were Charles Frye, W.A. McCutcheon, Charles Osner, J.R. Simonson, and E.M. Cox, with Cox as the manager. The plant was approaching completion by September 24 (*Seattle Daily Times* 9/24/1903). On January 24, 1905, the *Bridgeton Evening News* reported that “the Seattle Glass Works, located at Renton, Wash., a suburb of Seattle, began the manufacture of bottles last week.

On May 18, 1905, the *Seattle Daily Times* told a glass industry horror story. The union workers of the Seattle Glass Co. met with the saloon owners of Renton and informed them that they would no longer drink the “unfair” beer made in Seattle – that made at nonunion breweries. Instead, they demanded “fair” beer (union made) from Spokane, and the saloons complied. When word reached E.F. Sweeney, manager of the Seattle Brewing & Malting Co., he cancelled an order for “fifteen cars of beer bottles” (i.e., railroad carloads) and warned that the “patronage of the allied breweries [Seattle area] would go elsewhere.” F.W. Smythe, manager of Seattle Glass, said that the cancelled order would result in the closing of the glass plant – since the entire output of the factory consisted of beer bottles that were sold to local breweries. Union representatives and saloon keepers met with Sweeney and assured him that there would be no more boycott, and the saloons would order no more Spokane beer – so the crisis was narrowly avoided.

The Seattle Glass Co. reorganized in July of 1905 with a new slate of officers. W.A. McCutcheon was the president with William P. Trimble as vice president, F.W. Smythe as secretary, and Charles Osner as treasurer, with J.R. Simpson and Charles Bruhn as additional incorporators. The firm had a capital of \$100,000. The plant operated a single, 60-ton continuous tank but limited its output to amber beer bottles (*Morning Olympian* 7/27/1905; Toulouse 1970:33).

It seems interesting that three major events occurred in 1905. First, the firm leased the plant to the Star Glass Co. for five months in early March. Second, the union workers created problems over non-union beer in May, and, finally, the company reorganized in July, just as Star Glass relinquished the factory. Thus, the union trouble arose during the tenure of the Star Glass – even though it was the officials from Seattle Glass who took the lead in dealing with the issue. This suggests that Seattle Glass may have continued in at least some production during the Star period.

We have discovered no information about 1906, so we can only speculate about the period after the reorganization. The information presented above suggests that Seattle Glass may have had some form of problems that were not openly discussed in 1905 – and those may have continued into 1906. According to Toulouse (1970:33), the otherwise successful company closed in 1907 because it was difficult to find and keep glass blowers so far from the typical glass production centers. Unfortunately, Toulouse is our only source for much of our information for this firm.

The actual factory was called the Renton Glass Works, either informally or formally. This combination of names (Seattle Glass Co. and Renton Glass Works undoubtedly created the misunderstanding that caused Toulouse (1970:33) to state that a “Renton Glass Co.” was in business from 1904 to 1905. He cited a listing for the Renton Glass Co. in a 1905 glass factory director, noting that the plant made beer, soda, and packers’ bottles in green glass at a single tank. This was almost certainly a misunderstanding by someone.

## **Renton Glass Co., Renton, Washington (1908-1911)**

According to the *Seattle Daily Times*, the “reorganized” Renton Glass Co. acquired the “old works” of the Seattle Glass Co. by January 2, 1908, and planned to begin production soon. John Meench was president with Davis Robertson as secretary, George Mulford as treasurer, and Walter Meench as manager. The plant still used a single continuous tank with eight rings to make beer bottles, probably exclusively. Production at this factory, like the previous two, was likely by hand. The plant closed briefly in 1910 and reopened with six rings – listing O.B. Wooley as secretary-treasurer and D.S. Brouillier as manager – but probably closed again in 1911 because its hand production could not compete with machine prices from the San Francisco factories of the Pacific Coast Glass Co. and the Illinois-Pacific Glass Co. (Toulouse 1970:33-34).

The factory had a post-script, however. In December of 1913, the Washington Oregon Glass Co. incorporated, with a capital stock of \$200,000, to take over the Renton factory. The new firm expected to invest about \$5,000 to remodel the old plant and install new machinery. W.C. McConnell and T.J. Conway were the principals of the firm along with others not listed (*American Machinist* 1914:78; *Iron Age* 1913:1473). Since we have not discovered any further references to the company, this may have been one of the many that never moved beyond the planning stage. It was also the final faint stirring of the glass industry at Renton.

## **Containers and Marks**

### **RGCo**

Although Toulouse (1971:440) attributed the “RGCo” mark to the Renton Glass Co., von Mechow (2019) provided a map that showed the distribution of the examples he had found. By far, the bulk of those beer and Hutchinson soda bottles with the mark were used in the Midwest and as far south as Georgia – with a single western outlier in Southern Arizona. We have discovered no bottles embossed with the logo from West Coast contexts. It is highly unlikely that bottles made in Renton were distributed so widely but not used locally. Researchers, such as Whitten (2019), von Mechow (2019), and others, have presented compelling evidence that the “RGCo” mark was used by the Root Glass Co. See the Root Glass Co. section for an in-depth discussion.

## SGCo or SGCO (1903-1907)

Although researchers have attributed the SGCo mark to other companies (see discussion in the Other S section, the S Logo section, and the section on the Southern Glass Co.), the mark was used on amber bottles by the Seattle Glass Co. We have observed one amber beer bottle, embossed with a faint “SGCO / 9” across the base, with an interesting concave base and rounded heel, similar to some soda bottles during the ca. 1905-1915 period. Figure 1 shows the actual base plus an enhanced version to the right. However, this was unusual on beer bottles. Bowers and Gannon (1998) recorded and photographed the mark on three Alaskan beer bottles and Späth et al. (2000:95, 151) reported an amber beer bottle base fragment embossed with “S.G.C[o.] / 7” also in Alaska. Ron Fowler (personal communication, 5/26/2008) reported that he had seen the mark “on quite a few Pacific Northwest amber beers and also on local medicine bottles.” Fowler also noted that Seattle was a major shipping point for bottles and other goods to Alaska, even prior to the 1897-1898 Klondike gold rush.



Figure 1 – SGCo base



Figure 2 – Solomon's Bitters

We have also recorded an amber King Solomon's Bitters bottle embossed on the base with “S.G.Co.,” one side with “KING SOLOMON'S BITTERS,” and the other side with “SEATTLE, WASH” (Figures 2 & 3). Ring (1980:283; Ring & Ham 1998:330) noted three variations of the bottle, all amber in color. One of the examples was machine made, but the others were all



Figure 3 – Solomon's base

mouth blown. Only one – the largest variation – had the “S.G.Co.” embossing, probably a single run by the Seattle Glass Co.

As noted above, Ron Fowler had also mentioned the logo on “local medicine bottles.” We have found two of these on eBay, embossed “S.G.CO.” and “SGCO.” Both were on prescription bottles – one of them mouth blown, the other machine made (Figure 4). Although there is virtually no chance that the Seattle Glass Co. blew the machine-made bottles, it could have produced the one that was mouth blown. All other examples of “S.G.Co.” logos we have found (except for the Southern Glass Co. of Vernon, California – a firm that specialized in soda and milk bottles) each had a lower-case “o” in “Co.” Currently, we have no good lead on the identity of the manufacturer of the machine-made bottle.



Figure 4 – SGCo bases (eBay)

## Discussion and Conclusions

Both the Toulouse history and the sources we have found were confused and confusing, although, as noted above, the jumbled information actually referred to only two glass factories. The earliest was located at Interbay, a community on Smith’s Cove, now the area where the cruise ships sail for Alaska and other destinations. The Northwest Glass Co. began in 1901 and was probably reorganized as the Washington Glass & Bottle Works in 1903. By 1905, the Interbay firm was certainly called the Star Glass Co. – although that is the final date we have found for the business.

The other factory began its life as the Seattle Glass Co. at Renton, Washington, in 1903. The plant was called either informally or formally the Renton Glass Works, and this almost certainly led to the listing that convinced Toulouse that the firm was originally called the Renton Glass Co. The Star Glass Co. rented or leased space in the Renton factory (or part of it) during a four-month period in 1905, while it renovated its Interbay plant. At that point, the Seattle Glass Co. resumed its operations, continuing to make beer bottles and other amber glass products until ca. 1907. The firm reorganized as the Renton Glass Co. in January of 1908 and remained in business until 1911.

We suggest that the SGC<sub>o</sub> or SGCO mark, with or without punctuation, was used *on amber* bottles by the Seattle Glass Co. (or Star Glass Co.) during its entire (although short) existence from 1903 to 1907. It is unlikely that the mark is found on bottles of any other color. The identification is even more positive on bottles found within a reasonable shipping distance of Seattle. The only probable exception is the SGCO medicinal bottle.

## Acknowledgments

We wish to thank Wanda Wakkinen for proofreading our works.

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Last updated 3/20/2019

