

Streator Bottle & Glass Co.

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

The Streator Bottle & Glass Co. had a very straight forward history from its opening in 1881 to its merger with other glass houses to form the American Glass Co. in 1905. The business was successful from the beginning, specializing in beer bottles but making a variety of other containers. Although the plant only used a single logo to mark its products, those appear in several variations.

Histories

Streator Bottle & Glass Co., Streator, Illinois (1881-1905)

The *Illinois State Journal* reported on January 19, 1874, that the Secretary of State issued “a certificate to open books of subscription” to the “Streator Glass Works company” with a capital of \$50,000.” On August 26, 1880, the *Illinois State Register* noted another incorporation, this time for the “Streator Glass Company” with a capital of \$85,000. The *Journal* reported a final incorporation on February 18, 1881, this time for the “Streator Bottle Works” – yet another new corporation – with a capital of \$20,000. All of these firms were apparently aborted prior to any construction, and we have found no further information on any of them.

William W. Haskell, Hiram N. Ryon, and William J. Williams incorporated the Streator Bottle & Glass Co. On June 4, 1881, with a capital of \$40,000. Thomas W. Wood became the first superintendent, and Daniel Mac blew the first bottle on October 1. Mathew Jack soon joined the company, and the plant prospered under his management. In late 1882 or early 1883, the ubiquitous William F. Modes arrived to become foreman after fire destroyed the De Steiger Glass Co., where he had been working (*Illinois State Register* 6/5/1881; *Ottawa Free Trader* 7/30/1881; Toulouse 1971:461).

The making of turn-mold bottles in the United States began ca. 1880, and it is probable that the De Steiger Glass Co. was the first to bring the process to beer bottle manufacture. However, “the period was probably earlier in Germany, whence came many of our turn mold (or

twister) blowers. A section of Streator, Illinois, where a number of German ‘twister blowers’ settled in the 1880s became known as ‘Twister Hill’” (Toulouse 1969:532; also see Lockhart, Serr et al. 2007).

The *American Glass Worker* (1886:2) stated:

The Streator bottle works, under the management of the well-known Modes and the patronage of the Anheuser-Busch Brewing Company, of St. Louis, have brought the La Salle gang of non-union blowers to Streator, and started to blow in the new tank furnace last week.

Twister Hill was actually settled in 1885, following a fire at De Steiger in 1885, when 60 more De Steiger employees, “many of them German ‘twister blowers’” came to Streator. Business increased so much that the company built a third furnace (Toulouse 1971:461-462). Thus, Streator made turn-mold bottles by at least 1886. An 1892 Streator letterhead noted that the company made “TURNED MOLD BOTTLES & LETTERED WARE in amber & light green colors.” Johnny Evans replaced Modes as superintendent in 1890 (Roller 1997). For more information about the De Steiger Glass Co., see that section.

William F. Modes received three patents during this period, any or all of which may have been used at the Streator factory. On April 16, 1885, Modes applied for a patent for a “Regenerating and Reverberating Glass-Furnace.” He received Patent No. 320,951 on June 30 of the same year. He applied for another patent on January 31, 1887. On June 14 of that year, he received Patent No. 364,840 for a “Mold for Blowing Turned Bottles” (Figure 1). The unique feature of this mold was a post-style baseplate that turned as the bottle was turned in the mold, allowing for the baseplate to be embossed on a turned-mold bottle. Typically, the turning erased any seams, embossing, or other marks on the bottle. Modes applied of his final patent of the period on December 16, 1888, for a “Glass-Melting Furnace” and received Patent No. 405,317 on June 18, 1889.

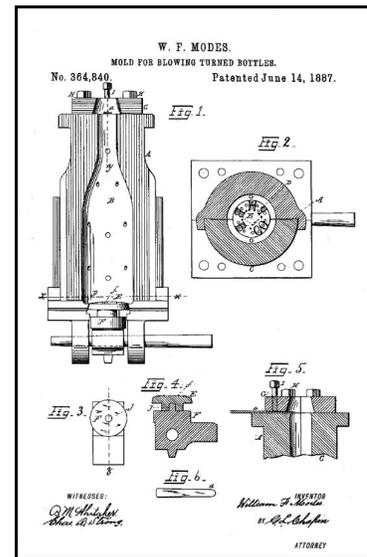


Figure 1 – Modes 1887 Patent

Wilson and Caperton (1994:70) recorded all beer bottle advertising in *The Western Brewer* between 1883 and 1890 as well as samples from issues between 1878 and 1882. Surprisingly, Streator only advertised in the journal

from January to December of 1886. Since beer bottles were the specialty of the factory, this lack of advertisement in a major brewing journal is remarkable, unless the entire output had previously gone to a single brewery (e.g., Anheuser-Busch). Streator increased its capital from \$50,00 to \$100,000 in August of 1888 (*Ottawa Free Trader* 8/4/1888). An 1892 letterhead included a drawing of the factory (Figure 2).

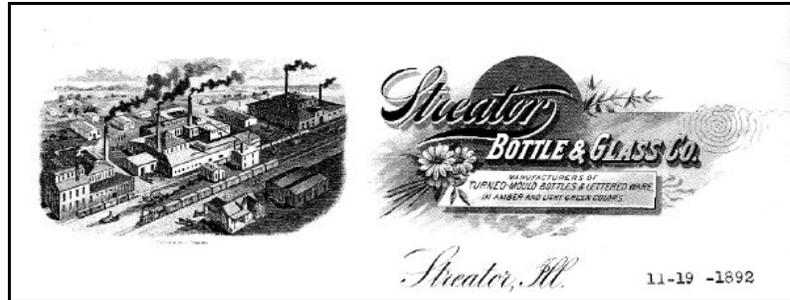


Figure 2 – 1892 Letterhead (eBay)

In 1897, Streator operated “four continuous tanks on light green and amber bottles” (*National Glass Budget* 1897b:5). The firm bought the Streator Flint Glass Works from Adolphus Busch in 1898, when it became the “upper works” – the older factory becoming the “lower works.” This brought the total to four furnaces known as the “old house,” the “green house,” the “stockyards,” and the “rooster house” – the latter so called because it was topped with a rooster-shaped weather vane (Toulouse 1971:462) (Roller 1987).

The company also began experimenting with semi-automatic bottle machines in 1900 and successfully installed at least one English “Johnny Bull” machine in the “upper works.” Later, the firm added more machines to the “lower plant” (Toulouse 1971:463; Wilson & Caperton 1994:75). It is likely, however, that at least one factory continued to make bottles by hand. Although the number of tanks and rings varied from year to year, by 1901, the plant had six tanks with 77 rings (Roller 1997). A different listing noted 117 “pots” (possibly a combination of actual pots and rings) in 1900 and 122 “pots” in 1901 and 1902 (*National Glass Budget* 1898:7; 1900:11; 1901:11; 1902:11).

In 1904, Streator used six continuous tanks with 83 rings to make “green and amber beers and liquors, packers ware.” M.W. Jack was the president and treasurer with W.J. Crane as secretary and J.C. Evans as manager (*American Glass Review* 1934:149). In 1905, however, the company became part of the merger that formed the American Bottle Co. and lost its individual

identity (Toulouse 1971:30). For information on the later plant, see the American Bottle Co. section or Lockhart, Schulz et al. 2007).

Streator Flint Glass Works, Streator, Illinois (1890-1893)

A group of investors, mostly already involved in the Streator Bottle & Glass Co., incorporated the Streator Flint Glass Works in April 22, 1890 (Roller 1997). The plant operated a 14-pot Gill furnace. One of the primary investors was Adolphus Busch. Because of the 1893 depression, the plant closed and failed to reopen. Eventually, all other principals sold their interests to Busch, and he sold the business to the Streator Bottle & Glass Co. in 1898 (Toulouse 1971:409). In 1898, the Streator Flint Glass Co. used 13 pots to make its products (*National Glass Budget* 1898:7). The plant was still listed under the flint glass name until 1900 (Roller 1997).

Containers and Marks

SB&GCo (1881-1905)

Only one mark – “SB&GCo” – is currently known for Streator, and it was used during the entire life of the company from 1881 to 1905 (Toulouse 1971:461). Although export beer bottles were the main product, Streator made other types of beer bottles, Hutchinson soda bottles, pickle bottles, some bitters bottles, and probably a few other types. Although marks on the different types of bottles were similar, placement and accompanying numbers require that beer, Hutchinson soda, and bitters bottles be addressed separately.

Beer Bottles

Generic export beer bottles were the main product for the Streator plant, although the factory produced other beer bottles styles (as well as exports) for individual breweries with the names of the companies and/or other information embossed on the sides. It appears that individual side embossing began ca. 1890, but we need to observe a larger sample of such bottles. Currently, all side-embossed bottles with Streator manufacturer’s marks that we have seen have had tooled finishes, apparently beginning ca. 1890.

Export beer bottles embossed with “SB&GCo” marks have been reported by Jones (1966:8; 1968:24), Herskovitz (1978:9), Ayres et al. (1980), Wilson (1981:123-124), Wilson and Caperton (1994:65), and Lockhart (2007). Both Clint (1976) and Feldhaus (1986) provided limited information about other beer bottle types.

In most cases, the researchers included data on the configuration of the marks and their locations on the bottles.



Figure 3 – SB&GCO arch (NPSWAC)

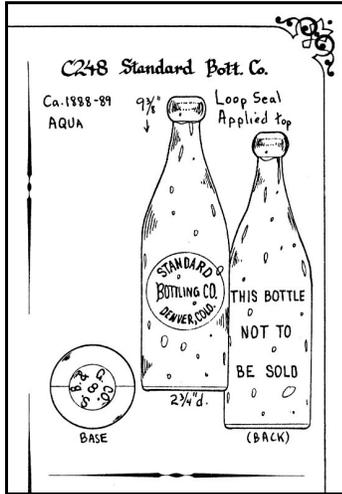


Figure 4 – SB&GCO circle (Clint 1976 ;147)

Based on those data, along with information gleaned from eBay auctions and collections, SB&GCo marks may be divided into seven variations plus an unmarked bottle category (see Table 1). We have ordered these into a probable chronology based on mold numbers, marks on bases found in archaeological contexts, and dating of local embossed bottles. Note that there is some overlapping of categories. These may be the result of the whim of an early mold maker (or even reflect the changing of mold-making companies).

Several aspects of this chronology need to be examined more closely. Streator made turn-mold bottles beginning ca. 1886. We have not found any information about how long Streator offered this process. Unless historical data surface, we cannot pin down the use of either unmarked or turn-mold bottles with any greater accuracy.

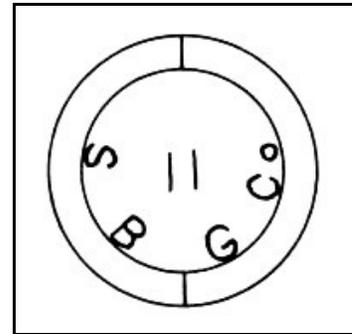


Figure 5 – SB&GCO inverted arch (Wilson 1981:124)



Figure 6 – SB&GCO split (Fort Stanton)

Most Streator beer bottles were blown into post-bottom molds, and those continued into the 1900s. At some point, probably during the early 1890s, Clint (1978:114, 116, 154-155, 180) illustrated several beer bottles with cup-bottom molds with date ranges of ca. 1890, 1890-1895, 1894-1896, and 1895-1905. Streator began using cup-bottom molds. These have only been found with the last three basemarks (Variations 5-7), although the

horizontal basemarks also appeared on post-bottom bottles (Figures 3-8). The “o” in “Co” varies in the different configurations of the mark, and each also has its own series of mold numbers. The earliest variations were only found on bottles with applied finishes, while the later ones appeared with tooled finishes. The horizontal mark spanned the transition from applied to tooled finishes and post to cup bottom molds. All of these are addressed in Table 1.

Table 1 – Manufacturer’s Mark Data for the SB&GCo Logos

#	Mark	Dates	Mold No.	Bottom	Finish	“o” in “Co”
1	“SB&GCO” in an arch on base*	ca. 1885-ca. 1890	1-19	Post	Appl	Capital**
2	“SB&GCO” in a circle on base*	ca. 1885-ca. 1890	None	Post	Appl	Capital
3	“SBGCO” in an inverted arch on base†	ca. 1888-ca. 1890	11-12	Post	Appl	Lower Case
4	“SB&” in an arch, with “GCO” in an inverted arch on base	ca. 1890-ca. 1894	A-O	Post	Appl	Capital
5	“SB&GCO” horizontal at center of base	ca. 1890-1905	1-38; A-P	Post, Cup	Appl, Tooled	Both
6	“SB&GCO” horizontal with large letters at ends decreasing to small letters at center	ca. 1900-1905	None	Cup	Unkn	Capital

* These may actually be the same mark; the only difference may be the size of the post in which the mark was placed. A smaller post required that the letters be closer together. Some of the arches almost form a circle, and we have only seen a single example that completely encircled the post.

** Wilson (1981:123) showed the mark with a lower-case “o” – but all photos and other sources show the “O” as a capital.

† The only information on this mark is from Wilson (1981:124), who showed a lower-case “o” in his drawings and illustrated the mark *without* an ampersand (&). This may reflect a single order where the request for an arch was misunderstood. However, we have seen an arched logo with a number “11” embossed below it.

All mold numbers or letters were embossed in the center of the base, or, in the case of the horizontal mark, below the logo. A single base with a horizontal center mark had a tear drop

embossed above the mark and a large dot below it. Letters differ in size both within and between the variations, but the size difference follows no pattern we have been able to detect and probably reflects the whims of the mold makers. Some bottles in the horizontal variation had the double stamp, generally found between ca. 1895-1914 (Figure 9).



Figure 7 – SB&GCO horizontal (eBay)



Figure 8 – SB&GCO (eBay)

Finishes on all the earlier marks (Variations 1-4) were applied and were generally one-part. It is probable that at least some bottles (Variations 1-5) were also made with two-part finishes, although we have not seen examples. Variation 5, the most common mark, has been found with one-part applied finishes, one-part tooled finishes, and tooled crown finishes. Finish types are not currently known for Variation 7.

Occasionally, beer bottle styles with “SB&GCo” marks have been embossed with names that obviously belong to soda bottlers. Aside from Hutchinson bottles, which could have been used for beer as well as soda, no specific soda bottles are known to have been made by Streator. Thus, Streator marks on “soda” bottles follow the dating patterns of Streator beer bottles. It is possible that some beer bottles had heelmarks, but we have not recorded any.



Figure 9 – Double stamp (eBay)

Hutchinson Soda Bottles

Hutchbook (Fowler 2019) listed 254 Hutchinson bottles embossed with the “SB&GCO” logo. All but two of those were embossed on either the front or reverse heel of the bottle (Figure 10). An eBay auction included a photo of one basemark, showing that it was in an arched configuration – almost completing the circle in a post mold.

One- or two-digit numbers were embossed either before or after the heelmarks, and these included 2-5, 7-8, 19, 22, and 93-99. Since these appeared repeatedly on bottles used by different bottlers at various locations, they were most likely catalog or model codes. Number 94 was especially popular. Many also had embossed numbers on the bases, and by far the most common of these was 15, possibly another model code. There seemed to be no preference between front and reverse heel locations for the logos.



Figure 10 – Heelmark (Bill Porter)



Figure 11 – Albuquerque Hutchinsons

Wood & Lockhart (2016:23-24) discovered Hutchinson bottles used at Albuquerque, New Mexico, embossed with

“15” on the bases but heelmarks of 19 and 99. They hypothesized that the basemark was

a model number used by the Streator Bottle & Glass Co. based on both the number of bottles with “15” on the base plus “SB&GCO”

heelmarks on other bottles and the fact that the use of bottles with the number

but no manufacturer’s marks centered around Illinois.

The bottles appeared to be the same model (Figures 11-13). This may question the validity of the

heelmarks as model numbers – although it is not certain that these were made by Streator.



Figure 12 – Heelmarks



Figure 13 – Basemarks

The heelmarks have been illustrated in Clint (1976:112, 137), Wood (1998:[55]), and Fowler (1986:306; 1998:30). The apparent date range for the logos in these combined studies was ca. 1885-1905. The heelmark location was apparently only used on soda bottles. The

Hutchinson stopper was patented in 1879, so production at Streator may have begun at the beginning of the company in 1881. The “O” in “CO” was capitalized.

Bitters and Packers

The mark across the center also appeared on square pickle jars, although it extended diagonally across the square base. Griffenhagen and Bogard (1999:128), Fike (1987:33, 41), and Ring (1980:145, 423-424) all recorded the mark on L.E. Jung’s Columbo Peptic Bitters and Schroeder’s Bitters. Although both Griffenhagen and Bogard (1999:128) and Fike (1987:44) noted the mark on Winter’s Stomach Bitters bottles, Ring (1980:499) only recorded the Winter’s bottles with an A.B.CO. mark. Ring noted five variations of the “lady’s leg” bottles by Schroeder with the SB&GCo mark. Since the bottles were cylindrical and amber, the bases look no different from those of amber beer bottles. The Jung’s bottles were also amber, and the SB&GCo mark was embossed diagonally across the square base (Figure 14).



Figure 14 – Bitters marks (eBay)

The horizontal form of the logo was also embossed on an amber flask marked “CHAMBERLAIN & Co / DES MOINES / IOWA” on one flat side and “CURACOA BITTERS” on one side panel. The “o” in “Co” in the mark was lower case. Ring (1980:472) illustrated the bottle but did not include the SB&GCo mark. At least two square bottles had the mark in an arched configuration. One was offered at an eBay auction and had no side embossing; the other was a Columbo Peptic Bitters bottle (also an eBay photo).

SFGW

Toulouse (1971:469) noted that the SFGW mark was used by the Streator Flint Glass Works from 1890 to 1893. He added that the same mark was also used by the San Francisco Glass Works from 1869 to 1876, but the San Francisco plant only made amber bottles which would not be mistaken for Streator’s colorless glass. Currently, we have not seen an example of this mark, and a poll of California collectors elicited only negative replies. The mark was almost certainly *not* used by the San Francisco Glass Works.

Schulz (2006), however, negated the Toulouse assertion about glass color:

In fact, the Frisco factory originally only made flint, and didn't begin making amber etc. until Newman (the owner) invented his special pot for making different colors of glass in the same furnace.

Consequently, glass color is not a criterion that can be used for excluding the Frisco factory from using the SFGW mark on flint bottles. Still, since we never see such marks out here [California], I doubt that they ever used it.

S

Peters (1996:9) claimed that "S" was a mark used by Streator. Unfortunately, he did not state his reasons for the assertion.

Discussion and Conclusions

The only positively identified marks for the Streator Bottle & Glass Co. is the SB&GCo logo, found in several different forms. These are tentatively dated above, using the best available information. Hopefully, future research will discover tighter dating contexts for the marks and provide stronger evidence for date ranges for individual configurations.

Acknowledgments

Our gratitude to Wanda Wakkinen for her tireless proofreading.

Sources

American Glass Review

1934 "Glass Factory Yearbook and Directory." *American Glass Review*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Includes reprint of the *Glass Trade Directory for 1904*. Commoner Publishing Co., Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

American Glass Worker

1886 "Trade Notes." *American Glass Worker* 1(16):2.

Ayres, James E., William Liesenbien, Lee Fratt, and Linda Eure

1980 "Beer Bottles from the Tucson Urban Renewal Project, Tucson, AZ." Unpublished manuscript, Arizona State Museum Archives, RG5, Sg3, Series 2, Subseries 1, Folder 220.

Clint, David K

1976 *Colorado Historical Bottles & Etc., 1859-1915*. Antique Bottle Collectors of Colorado, Inc., Boulder.

Feldhaus, Ron

1986 *The Bottles, Breweriana and Advertising Jugs of Minnesota 1850-1920: Volume 1: Beer, Soda, Household*. North Star Historical Bottle Collectors Association, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Fike, Richard E.

1987 *The Bottle Book: A Comprehensive Guide to Historic, Embossed Medicine Bottles*. Peregrine Smith Books, Salt Lake City.

Fowler, Ron

1986 *Washington Sodas: The Illustrated History of Washington's Soft Drink Industry*. Dolphin Point Writing Works, Seattle.

1998 *Ice-Cold Soda Pop 5¢: An Illustrated History of Oregon Soda Pop Bottling*. Privately published, Seattle, Washington. [Revised version of the 1986 edition]

2019 "Hutchinson Bottle Directory." Seattle History Co., Hutchbook.com.

<http://www.hutchbook.com/Bottle%20Directory/>

Griffinhagen, George and Mary Bogard

1999 *History of Drug Containers and Their Labels*. American Institute of the History of Pharmacy, Madison, Wisconsin.

Herskovitz, Robert M.

1978 *Fort Bowie Material Culture*. University of Arizona Press, Tucson.

Jones, May

1966 *The Bottle Trail, Volume 6*. Nara Visa, New Mexico.

1968 *The Bottle Trail, Volume 9*. Nara Visa, New Mexico.

Lockhart, Bill

2007 "The Origins and Life of the Export Beer Bottle." *Bottles and Extras* 18(3):49-57, 59.

Lockhart, Bill, Pete Schulz, Bill Lindsey, Carol Serr, and David Whitten

2007 "The Dating Game: The American Bottle Co., A Study in Contents and Contradictions." *Bottles and Extras* 18(1):47-56.

Lockhart, Bill, Carol Serr, and Bill Lindsey

2007 "The Dating Game: De Steiger Glass Co." *Bottles and Extras* 18(5):31-37.

National Glass Budget

1897 "Flint and Green Glass Review." *National Glass Budget* 13(26):4-6.

1900 "Complete List of Glass Factories in the United States and Canada." *National Glass Budget* 15(48):11.

1901 "Complete List of Glass Factories in the United States and Canada." *National Glass Budget* 17(1):11.

1902 "Complete List of Glass Factories in the United States and Canada." *National Glass Budget* 17(52):11.

Peters, Roger

1996 *Wisconsin Soda Water Bottles, 1845-1910*. Wild Goose Press, Madison, Wisconsin.

Ring, Carlyn

1980 *For Bitters Only*. Nimrod Press, Boston. (+1984 & 1988 updates)

Roller, Dick

1997 "Streator, IL History Notes." Dick Roller files.

Schulz, Peter D.

2006 "Two 19th-Century Bottle Assemblages from Old Town San Diego." Unpublished manuscript.

Toulouse, Julian Harrison

1969 "A Primer on Mold Seams, Part 1." *Western Collector* 7(11):527-535.

1971 *Bottle Makers and Their Marks*. Thomas Nelson, New York.

Wilson, John P. and Thomas J. Caperton

1994 "Fort Selden, New Mexico: Archaeological Investigations of the Latrines and Magazine, 1974-1976." *The Artifact* 32(2-4):i-ix,1-145).

Wilson, Rex

1981 *Bottles on the Western Frontier*. University of Arizona Press, Tucson.

Wood, Zang

1998 *New Mexico Blobs - Hutchs Mineral Waters*. Privately printed, Flora Vista, New Mexico.

Wood, Zang, and Bill Lockhrt

2016 *New Mexico Hutchinson Bottles and the Bottlers Who Used Them*. Privately published.

Last updated 5/15/2019

