

Sydenham Glass Co.

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The Sydenham Glass Co. began production in 1895, making bottles and jars, adding lamp glass in 1900 (possibly discontinuing prescription bottles at that time). The plant added jar machines in 1901, soon shifting its production from Beaver jars to Gem jars. The firm merged with the Diamond Flint Glass Co. in 1913 to form the Dominion Glass Co.

History

Sydenham Glass Co., Ltd., Wallaceburg, Ontario, Canada (1895-1913)

According to Toulouse (1971:221-222), the Sydenham Glass Co. had a rocky beginning. On March 8, 1881, the company formed as a result of a town meeting. The initial tank furnace collapsed in 1883 because the clay had been fired when it was too “green.” Undaunted, the firm rebuilt the tank, this time with better results. The Sydenham Glass Co. was chartered on November 7, 1894, with J.W. Steinhoff as president and John Scott as managing director. Production began about April of the following year, and D.A. Gordon soon replaced Scott as managing director. Sydenham was one of the earliest North American users of a continuous tank. The plant built a second tank in 1897, so that it could produce green and amber containers simultaneously. Part of the factory was leveled by fire in 1901, but it was quickly rebuilt (King 1987:101-104; Toulouse 1971:222).

During the early period (ca. 1895-1900), Sydenham made medicinal bottles as well as fruit jars. The plant began the manufacture of lighting glass ca. 1900 and may have ceased production of medicinal containers about then (although that is unclear). Roller (1983:; 2011:99) added that the September 28, 1901, issue of *Commoner & Glassworker* reported that the Ontario Glass Co. had installed Frank O’Neill machines in the spring of 1900. When D.A. Gordon purchased the plant for Sydenham Glass, Sydenham moved the machines to the Wallaceburg plant. The plant had one furnace with eight pots and two continuous tanks with 15 rings in 1904. By 1908, the factory made bottles, lamp and lantern chimneys, lantern globes, fruit jars, and tumblers (King 1987:103; Toulouse 1971:222).

Sydenham apparently had a fire in late 1908 or early 1909. According to the *Bridgeton Evening News* for May 3, 1909, T.B. Dundas, the secretary-treasurer reported that “the destroyed portion of the factory is being replaced by fireproof construction work and that the plant is being equipped with automatic machines [rather than the semiautomatics used until that time].” The factory added an third continuous tank in 1910 and a final one in 1912. When the Board of Directors met on April 26, 1913, it agreed to sell all Sydenham assets to the Diamond Flint Glass Co., Ltd. Diamond Flint became part of the Dominion Glass Co., Ltd., on May 15, 1913, and the former Sydenham factory became the Wallaceburg plant (King 1987:101-104; Toulouse 1971:222).

Containers and Marks

King (1987:102-103) cited Toulouse for the Crown, Gem, New Gem, and Wallaceburg Gem jars and included a photo of a Beaver jar with a right-facing beaver. Various researchers assigned different jars to Sydenham Glass.

Anchor (poss. ca. 1900-1910)

Toulouse (1969:20) illustrated and discussed a single jar with a slanted anchor logo (Figure 1). He dated the jar ca. 1910-1920 but had no idea who made it. Toulouse (1971:46) said that he did “not think they [i.e., Anchor Glass] were the maker of the Anchor fruit jar” and illustrated one of the “other” anchors.



Figure 2 – Vertical anchor (North American Glass)

Roller (1983:11-12; 2011:25-26) discussed two jars with anchor designs, noting that both were machine made. The first had an embossed drawing of a vertical anchor above the word “Anchor” in cursive (Figure 2). He noted that the anchor was about 1.5 inches tall, although a variation reached 2.5 inches. Although

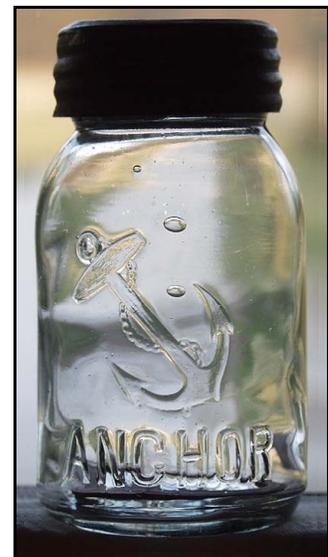


Figure 1 – Slanted anchor (North American Glass)

he declined to list a maker, he noted that “generally, these jars are thought to be of Canadian manufacture.” Another depicted a slanted anchor above “ANCHOR” in block capitals. He illustrated a trademark for a similar design taken by the Anchor Glass Co. on September 8, 1908 – but added that “this jar is considered by many to be of Canadian make, since it is most often found there.”

Creswick (1987b:4) depicted the two vertical jars noted by Roller along with the slanted anchor. She mentioned the Anchor Glass Co. 1908 trademark but added that “it is believed that” Sydenham made the jars (Figure 3). Sellers on eBay continue to affirm that the Sydenham factory made the Anchor jars, but there seems to be no actual evidence to support the claim. John Barclay noted that there was a slight ledge on the top of the jar that is found on other Canadian jars (Roller 2011:26). The actual manufacturer, however, is far from clear. The jar made to the 1908 patent was the Anchor Mason jar, made by the Anchor Glass Co., Mt. Pleasant, Pennsylvania. See that section for more information.

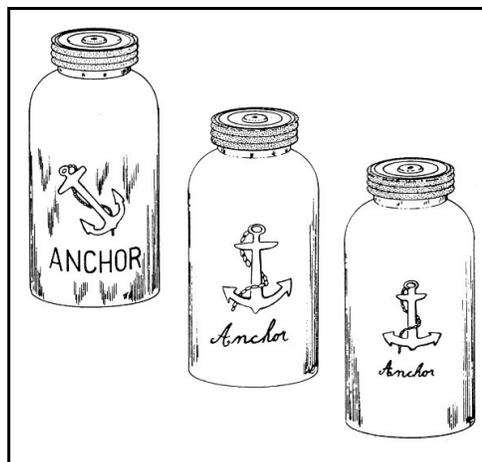


Figure 3 – Anchor jars (Creswick 1987b:4)

Beaver (1900-ca. 1902)

Toulouse (1969:44-45) listed and illustrated six variations of Beaver jars, all but one with embossed line drawings of a lone beaver. Only one example had the beaver facing left. He ascribed the jars to the Beaver Flint Glass Co., Toronto, Ontario., made ca. 1897.

Roller (1983:63; 2011:98) addressed the two beaver jars separately. The jar with the right-facing beaver above the word “BEAVER” was mouth blown, and he suggested the Ontario Glass Co. as the maker “because many of their fragments have been found at the plant site.” He added that “glassmaking



Figure 4 – Right-facing beaver (North American Glass)

began there on January 6, 1900, with bottles, jars and insulators reportedly being made in flint (clear), green and amber” (Figure 4). There were apparently several variations of the beaver and the branch it was chewing, and some had mold numbers below the drawings that matched numbers embossed on the bases (Figure 5).



Figure 5 – Beaver base (North American Glass)

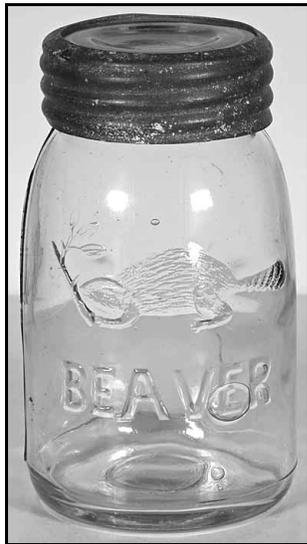


Figure 6 – Left-facing beaver (North American Glass)

Roller (1983:63; 2011:99) described the left-facing beaver jars as “smooth lip” (machine made). Some jars had finishes with “double interrupted threads” (Figure 6). The jars were made on O’Neill machines that had been installed at the Ontario Glass Co. in the spring of 1901. When D.A. Gordon purchased the plant for Sydenham Glass, Sydenham continued to make the jars by September 28, 1901. He added that a jar embossed “THE BEAVER” with no picture was probably not related.

Creswick (1987a:15; 1987b:29) illustrated and discussed several variations of the beaver jars, agreeing with Roller that both

Ontario Glass and Sydenham Glass made them. She added that left-facing beavers were “very scarce” and included such right-facing

variations as jars with “BEAVER” and no animal as well as the drawing but no word

(Figures 7 & 8). In some of the jars with a missing element, a faint embossing remains, so these were likely the result of worn molds. Since the machine-made, left-facing beaver jars are scarce, they could not have been made long, probably discontinued ca. 1902 with the adoption of the Gem series.

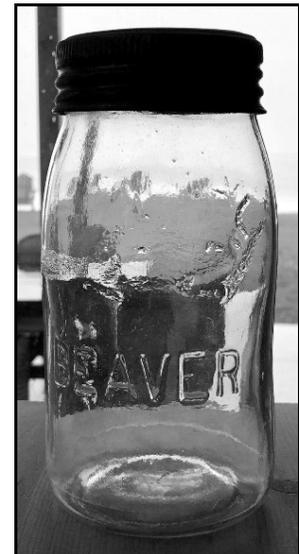


Figure 7 – Disintegrating beaver (eBay)

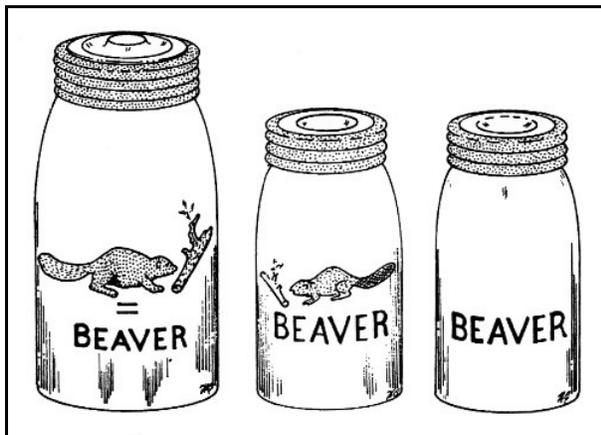


Figure 8 – Beaver jars (Creswick 1987a:15)

Creswick (1987a:15) also added a jar with a standing beaver above the word “BEAVER,” noting that these were very rare and had been reported by Harry Bridge, Ontario, and John Barclay, Kent Bridge. She noted that these jars had an “unfinished lip” (Figure 9). These may have been the prototype for the later beaver jars, or they may have been an experiment by Ontario Glass or some other glass house.

Improved Crown

Toulouse (1969:81) listed numerous Crown jar variations, ascribing them to various Canadian glass houses but only noted the jar embossed “Improved / Crown” in upwardly slanted cursive as possibly being made by the Sydenham Glass Co. ca. 1900-1913. Roller (1983:164; 2011:149) noted that the jars had Owens basal scars that “may have been made” by the Canadian Glass Mfg. Co. He did not mention Sydenham. Creswick (1987b:40) illustrated the Improved Crown jars and claimed that the Diamond Flint Glass Co. made them from 1903 to 1913, followed by the Dominion Glass Co. These were almost certainly not produced at the Sydenham plant.

Doolittle (1901-1913)

Toulouse (1971:165-166) began his short discussion of the Doolittle jar with, “It is not certain whether Sydenham made the fruit jar for their own trade, after arrangements with patentee Doolittle, or whether they made them to Doolittle’s order for his resale.” He added that the jar most found in collections was the one from Irving P. Doolittle’s fourth patent, No. 689,543, issued on December 24, 1901. Toulouse (1969:95-96) did not mention Doolittle in connection with Sydenham Glass in his first book.

Roller (1983:107; 2011:168) noted that the jars made in Canada were unembossed, but the lids were embossed “Doolittle PATENTED DEC 3 - 1901” – the Canadian patent date (Figures 10

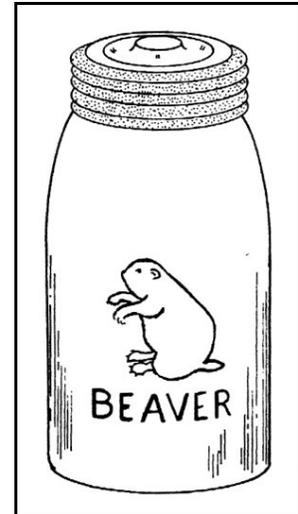


Figure 9 – Standing beaver (Creswick 1987a:15)



Figure 10 – Doolittle jar (eBay)

& 11). He dated the jars ca. 1900-1913 and suggested that “Doolittle was perfecting his invention in 1899, and by 1900, the Canadian manufacturing rights were given to Sydenham.” He added that Sydenham made the jars on the O’Neill machines by 1900 (actually 1901). Interestingly, Doolittle signed as a witness on the O’Neill patent document. Roller speculated that Doolittle and O’Neill may have developed the machines and jars simultaneously and in collaboration. The jars were also made in the U.S. by the Gilcrest Jar Co. and the Doolittle Glass Co. See the Gilcrest section for more information.



Figure 11 – Doolittle lid (eBay)

Creswick (1987a:47-48; 1987b:43-44) illustrated several Doolittle jars and lids, including unembossed jars, those embossed “DOOLITTLE” in block capitals, ones embossed “Doolittle” in cursive, and others, “THE Doolittle SELF SEALER.” Of these, only the unembossed variations had lids embossed with the Canadian patent dates (Figure 12). Although Creswick claimed that the jars embossed “Doolittle” and “DOOLITTLE” were also made by Sydenham Glass, we have our doubts. The lids for these jars had the U.S. patent dates.

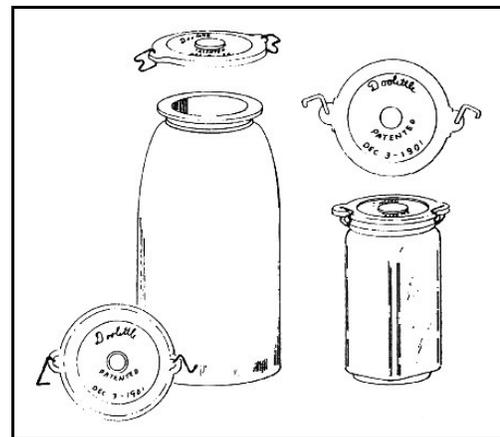


Figure 12 – Doolittle jar (Creswick 1987a:47)

Gem Series of Jars (1901-1913)

The Sydenham Glass Co. made a series of Gem jars that included the Gem, 1908 Gem, WALLACEBURG Gem, and NEW Gem. We have listed the jars with their historiographies below in alphabetical order, followed by a chronology.

Gem

Toulouse (1969:129) ascribed a jar embossed “Gem” in cursive with “1908” above the last two letters to the Sydenham Glass Co. “probably circa 1908.” In his later book, Toulouse

(1971:222) dated the 1908 Gem from ca. 1908 to 1913. Roller (1983:133) added that these machine-made Gem jars were produced by Sydenham ca. 1900 and agreed that the variation embossed “1908” was also made by Sydenham beginning that year (Figure 13). Both agreed that most jars with “GEM” in capitals were made by Hero Glass. Creswick (1987b:55) illustrated both the Gem and 1908 Gem ascribing them to Sydenham Glass in 1903 and 1908 respectively (Figure 14).



Figure 13 – Gem (eBay)

Improved Gem

Toulouse (169:127-128) listed numerous Gem jars and several for the Improved Gem. He noted that two variations embossed “Improved Gem” in upwardly slanted cursive were made by the Dominion Glass Co. “all in the style of the Sydenham GEMs before the Sydenham-Diamond merger.” One variation had “Gem” in quotation marks. Roller (1983:165), however, noted that the jars were made ca. 1910s-1920s by the Diamond Flint Glass Co. and Diamond Glass Co. (see the Diamond Glass section for more discussion about that firm). Creswick (1987a:57) illustrated several variations. It is pretty certain that these jars were *not* made by the Sydenham Glass Co.

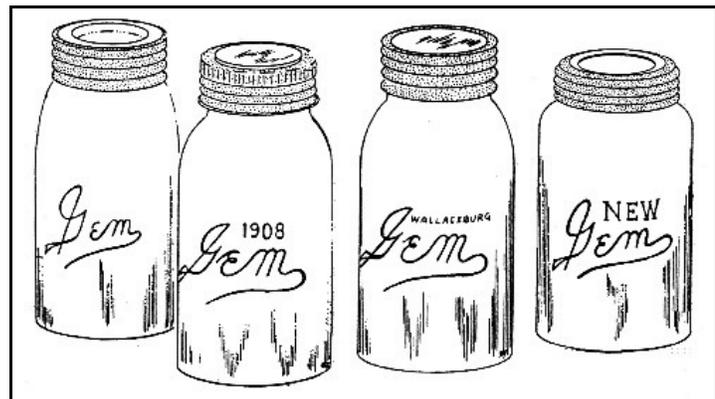


Figure 14 – Gem (Creswick 1987b:55)

NEW Gem

Toulouse (1969:128) discussed and illustrated two jars embossed “Gem” in upwardly slanted cursive with “NEW” in serif block letters above the last two letters and “TRADE MARK REG’D” below “Gem” (Figure 15). He suggested the Sydenham Glass Co. as the manufacturer ca. 1910 for one but noted that the other had the Diamond-D basemark of the Dominion Glass Co. In his later book, however, Toulouse (1971:222) dated the New Gem ca. 1913-1915, made by Dominion Glass. Roller (263) agreed that these machine-made jars were products of

Sydenham Glass ca. 1910 but added a variation with “1908” ghosted through “NEW” – hinting that the “NEW Gem” followed the “1908” variation. Creswick (1987a:55-56) illustrated the New Gem, dating it ca. 1909 and claimed that the variation had “1908” under “NEW.”

WALLACEBURG Gem

According to Toulouse (1969:129; 1971:221), these jars were embossed “Gem” in upwardly slanted cursive with “WALLACEBURG” above the last two letters (Figure 16). He ascribed the jars to the Sydenham Glass Co., ca. 1905-1913. Roller (1983:375) agreed on the manufacturer but dated the jars ca. 1904-1905, noting that a variation had “1908” ghosted through “WALLACEBURG.” The jars were made in both U.S. and Imperial sizes. Creswick (1987b:56) illustrated the Wallaceburg Gem in both U.S. and Imperial forms, agreeing on the ghosting and dating the jars ca. 1905. She noted that later variations – with “Gem” in quotation marks – were made by Diamond Flint Glass and Dominion Glass.



Figure 15 – New Gem (eBay)



Figure 16 – Wallaceburg Gem (eBay)

Gem Chronology

The Roller editors (2011:206) dealt with the Gem series as a whole (see the Improved Gem, New Gem, and Wallaceburg Gem below). Although they included Dick Roller’s original dates as well as a revised set by Jerry McCann, we have mostly followed McCann in the chronology below:

1. Gem (ca. 1902)
2. WALLACEBURG Gem – U.S and Imperial measures (ca. 1904)
3. 1908 Gem (ca. 1908)
4. 1908 ghosted over WALLACEBURG (ca. 1909)
5. NEW Gem – including NEW ghosted over 1908 (ca. 1910)

S.G.Co.W (1894-1913, poss. only to ca. 1900)

Offered on eBay, a colorless pharmacy bottle, embossed “Dick’s Pharmacy (cursive) / 144 CHARLTON ST / ST. JOHN. N.B.,” was made ca. 1910. The base was embossed “S.G.Co.W. / 984,” and the mark was attributed by the seller to the Sydenham Glass Co., Wallaceburg, Ontario. We consider that attribution highly probable. Another one embossed “R.C.FULLER CHEMIST’S & DRUGGISTS AMHERST NOVA SCOTIA” was embossed “S.G.CO.W.985” on the base. The location of the drug stores in eastern Canada plus the “W” following “Co.” makes the identification of Sydenham Glass almost certain.

Discussion and Conclusion

Past research on these jars has been disconnected and often difficult to follow. Even though eBay sellers often claim that Anchor jars were made by Sydenham Glass, there is no real evidence to support that assertion. Although Sydenham *could* have been the producer, the jars currently should remain in the unknown category.

The manufacture of the Beaver jars by the Ontario Glass Co. is supported by evidence and well dated at 1900 as is the firm’s adoption of machines in 1901 and their relocation to the Sydenham Glass Co. later that year. The jars were soon discontinued, almost certainly in favor of the Gem and Doolittle jars. The only Doolittle jars made by Sydenham Glass were likely the ones with the 1901 Canadian patent dates. It is doubtful that Sydenham produced any jars with the U.S. patent dates, since other American firms were also making Doolittle jars.

It is highly probably that Toulouse was incorrect in assigning Sydenham Glass as the maker of the Improved Crown, and the Improved Gem was almost certainly made elsewhere. The chronology for the remaining cursive Gem jars is likely correct. The final mark “S.G.Co.W.” makes intuitive sense, and the initials only fit the Sydenham Glass Co. location at Wallaceburg.

Acknowledgments

Our thanks to Doug Leybourne for allowing us to reproduce the drawings from the Alice Creswick books and to Greg Spurgeon for granting us permission to copy the North American Glass photos. Gratitude, too, to Wanda Wakkinen for proofreading.

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Last updated 7/6/2019