

Victory Glass Companies

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The Victory Glass Co. came into being in 1919 and purchased a glass factory, probably the plant of the defunct Fort Pitt Bottle & Novelty Co. at Jeannette, Pennsylvania. The firm made glass novelties, most notably glass toys containing candy. A victim of the Great Depression, Victory Glass reorganized with new owners in 1937 as Victory Glass, Inc., and continued to make the same toy candy containers (and other products) until the J.H. Millstein Co. purchased the plant sometime between 1952 and 1955. A former employee of Victory Glass, Millstein broke away from the firm to form his rival company in 1943, possibly becoming a sales outlet for Victory. All three firms marketed similar or identical candy containers. Millstein abandoned the glass business at some point (possibly soon after 1955) to enter real estate.

Histories

Fort Pitt Bottle & Novelty Co., Jeannette, Pennsylvania (1903-ca. 1909)

The Fort Pitt Bottle & Novelty Co. was incorporated in 1903 with a capital of \$10,000. The incorporators were Joseph Longhead (possibly Laugheid), F.W. Cunningham, William Ehnehy, O.W. Ainslie, P.J. Clancy, and W.M. Westenhagen – all experienced glass workers. The plant was listed in the 1907 and 1909 glass factory directories as working two day tanks with six rings. Joseph Longhead was president and manager with D.W. Zeber as secretary and treasurer. The 1909 entry noted that the factory was idle (*Illustrated Glass and Pottery World* 1903:15; *Pharmaceutical Era* 1903:351; Roller 1998). We have not discovered any logos used by Fort Pitt.

Victory Glass Co., Jeannette, Pennsylvania (1919-1937)

In 1919, the Victory Glass Co. began, although it was not organized as a Pennsylvania corporation until the following year. The firm purchased a glass factory at Jeannette to make colorless glass candy containers shaped like a variety of toys, including animals, airplanes, telephones, etc. (Hawkins 2009:504; Leagle 2019). The glass factory was probably the defunct

Fort Pitt Bottle & Novelty Co. plant. We have found little about the first decade of Victory Glass operation, but the factory probably used the day tanks it inherited from Fort Pitt.

In 1927, Victory Glass Co. made “machine and hand fruit jars, packers and preservers ware, [and] specialties” at one continuous tank with seven rings and two day tanks with ten rings. Joseph T. Sheerer was president with H.B. Faunce as vice president, C. Rachel Edge as secretary, and James Edge as treasurer and general manager. James W. Burgher was listed as factory manager in 1928, when production shifted to “novelties and specialties” made at two continuous tanks (*American Glass Review* 1927:147; 1928:132). Roller (1998) noted that Victory filed a complaint against the Public Service Commission in 1930 over the price of sand.

The *American Glass Review* listings were completely at odds with a 1952 court report that described the Victory Glass Co. as “a hand plant and had no glass making machine. It had used only small day tanks and one old type lehr in making its glass and glass products. It had no equipment for decorating glass” (Walker 1952:384). There were no listings after 1928 noting whether the plant used hand or machine methods of production, although the 1927 *Review* listed two continuous tanks for the factory throughout the Victory Glass Co. period. Many of the candy bottles were made with red highlights (or other colors) that could only have been added by hand.

Gilbert (2003) placed the Victory Glass Co. in business from 1919 to 1930 and noted that figural bottles made during the 1940s and 1950s were marked “Victory Glass, Inc.” – but the story is more complex. In 1933, the product listing shifted to “novelties, lenses, lamps and parts, special mold work in crystal and colors” – four years before the shift to Victory Glass, Inc. – and P.E Moore replaced Burgher as factory manager the following year. From 1936 to 1940, no officers were included in the listings for the plant, although J. Howard Fry became factory manager in 1936 (*American Glass Review* 1930:126; 1933:95; 1936:128).

A victim of the Great Depression, Victory was unable to meet its obligations in 1932 and struggled with a series of bonds for a few years, but the company was placed in receivership in August of 1935. The firm applied for a loan from the Reconstruction Finance Corp. in 1936 and received one pending the sale of the firm’s property to a reorganized corporation. On January 29, 1937, the new company incorporated under the laws of Pennsylvania as Victory Glass, Inc. and purchased the assets of the Victory Glass Co. for \$11,000 at a sheriff’s sale on February 1 (Leagle 2019).

Containers and Marks

The primary purpose of the Victory Glass Co. was “the manufacture of glass novelties and toys to be filled with candy and sold eventually to or for children at a low retail price” (Walker 1952:384). Although Victory Glass, Inc., seems to never have marked its goods with anything but paper labels, Hawkins (2009:505) listed quite a few glass marks for the Victory Glass Co.:

J'NE'T (or JENET – even JNET PA reversed on a duck – Figure 1)

VICTORY GLASS CO.

V.G.CO.

V.G. / Co. On candy containers

V overtop a G on candy containers

VG on toy doll baby bottles

While we have not found examples of all of these, Hawkins is a thorough researcher. The other undoubtedly exist.

VG monogram (1920-1936)

Hawkins (2019) described a “V” overtop a “G” used on candy containers and noted the Victory Glass Co. as the maker. We have found no indication of when this or any of the other Victory marks were used. The mark also appeared on toy milk bottles for dolls in a circle on the shoulder, but the few photos we have found were so poor that we have not reproduced them here.

Whitten (2019) noted that the “V/G entwined mark is seen on the base of clear/amethyst tint jars (similar to fruit jars) made for an egg beater / hand mixer assembly patented March 30, 1915, patent #1,133,413. The letter ‘G’ looks vaguely like a sideways Greek ‘Omega.’” Turney H. Stough applied for a patent for a “Kitchen Utensil” on March 16, 1914, and received Patent No. 1,133,413 on March 30 of the following year (Figure 2). The jar had a dimple on the inside



Figure 1 – JNET (Etsy)

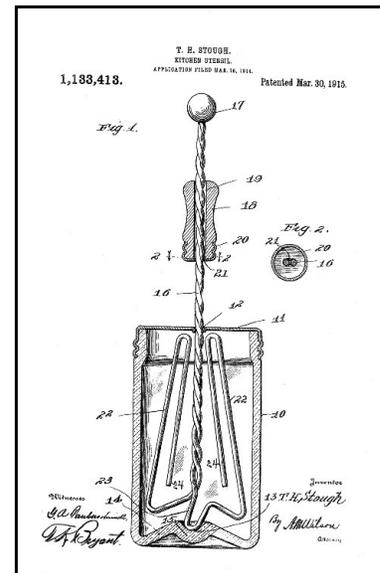


Figure 2 – Stough 1915 patent

of the base center to maintain the beater in place and used a typical metal cap and threaded finish to hold the egg beater assembly. A hole in the center of the lid centered the wire for the beater assembly inside the jar. Slough did not assign the patent, so there is no way of telling the meaning of the VG monogram. It seems unlikely that this was related to the figural candy bottles made by the Victory Glass Co. Aside from being a very different product, Slough received his patent four years prior to the beginning of the Victory Glass Co.

VGCo (1920-1936)



Figure 4 – Reverse (eBay)

A small bottle made for a doll was embossed with the VG monogram in a plate-like ring on the shoulder, “DOLLY’S / MILK (both upwardly slanted)” on the front, and “ $\frac{3}{4}$ OZ. / AVOR / V.G.Co. / JENET, PA.” (their abbreviation for Jeannette) on the lower reverse side (Figures 3 & 4).

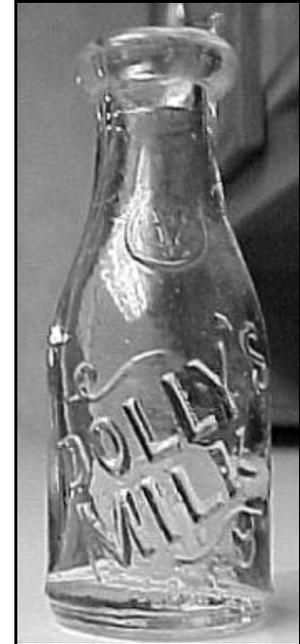


Figure 3 – Dolly’s Milk (eBay)

Hawkins (2009:505) noted that the Victory Glass Co. used marks of “U.S.A., V.G.CO., J’NE’T, AVOR., PENNA,” and “V.G.Co.” on its products, and we recorded most of those on the

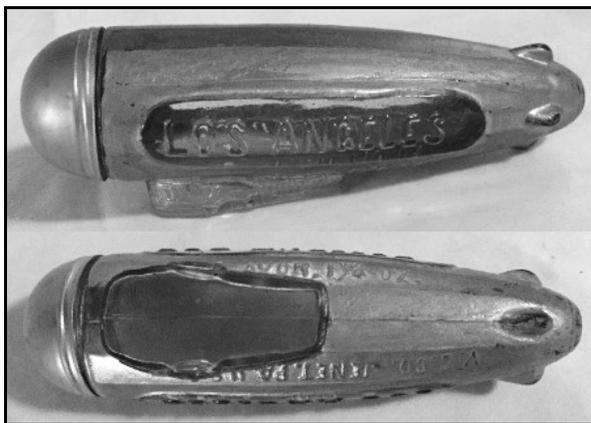


Figure 6 – VGCo (eBay)

reverse of the doll bottle described above. He included a photo of “V.G. / Co.” (Figure 5). An Etsy auction illustrated a “LOS ANGELES” blimp candy bottle embossed “V.G.CO. JENET. PA. U.S.A.” on one side of the bottom with “AVOR. $\frac{1}{4}$ OZ.” on the other (Figure 6).



Figure 5 – VGCo (Jay Hawkins)

Mobley (2004) recorded a single mouth-blown beer bottle embossed on the heel with “VGCo.” Although the initials match this company, it is highly unlikely that the Victory Glass Co. ever made a beer bottle. This may have been a mis-reading of the mark, or the bottle may have been made by a currently unknown company.

VICTORY GLASS CO. (1920-1936)



Figure 8 – Telephone (Midwest Emporium)

Hawkins (2009:505) also noted the self explanatory “VICTORY GLASS CO. JEANNETTE, PA. U.S.A.” mark. Unfortunately, he did not state where the mark was located, but we have seen it around the dial area of old-time telephone bottles for candy and some of the firm’s other figurals (Figures 7 & 8). Many (possibly all) of the candy bottles originally had cardboard labels on the bottom with the full company name and location. The cardboard was actually a plug that held the candy in.

At some point, possibly once the firm began having financial trouble ca. 1930, Victory stopped embossing the name on its products.

Embossing the name and all the other information noted above was costly – likely too costly to continue during hard times. The full name, however, continued to appear on the plug – the name of the toy (e.g. “MINIATURE WAR TANK”) / • MADE IN GLASS • / {list of ingredients} / MANUFACTURED AND PACKED BY / VICTORY GLASS CO. TOY DIVISION Jeannette, PA.” (Figure 9).



Figure 7 – Telephone (Midwest Emporium)



Figure 9 – Car (eBay)

Victory Glass, Inc., Jeannette, Pennsylvania (1937-ca. 1955)

R.E. Best, Frank Levin, and W.U. Gillespie organized Victory Glass, Inc., as a Pennsylvania corporation on January 29, 1937, buying the assets of the Victory Glass Co. on February 1, and moving into the plant on that date. None of the stockholders had been involved with the Victory Glass Co. Virgilio Chirico – the receiver for the defunct Victory Glass Co. – was elected president, even though he owned no stock. The officers were unpaid, the directors met once a week, and they hired a manager for the plant (Walker 1952:382-384).

The new firm initially used day tanks and hand production methods it inherited from the defunct Victory Glass Co., continuing to make the same products as its predecessor, and using the same sales outlet. But Victory Glass, Inc., quickly installed a new continuous tank, new lehr, and semiautomatic glass machines – refurbishing the entire factory – all in use by November of 1937. In addition, the plant began production of lighting fixtures and decorated glass (Walker 1952:384).

In 1938, the *American Glass Review* noted Victory Glass, Inc., as using one continuous tank and four day tanks to make the same product line that was listed in 1933. In 1940, however, the product list changed to “Illuminating ware, glass lamp parts, I.E.S. shades, special mold work and crystal and color.” The following year, the listing noted that Chirico was president with J.H. Millstem [actually Millstein] as purchasing agent, and J. Sedden as factory manager – and added Glass Toys to the products. A.L Keltz was noted as vice president in 1942 (*American Glass Review* 1937:120; 1938:115; 1940:132; 1941:133-134; 1942:146).

On April 14, 1947, Jacob H. Millstein applied for a patent for a “Candy Containing Horn Novelty” and received Patent No. 2,490,368 on December 6, 1949. Since he did not assign the patent, we have no way of knowing whether he made it for Victory Glass or if he was already planning on acquiring the firm. None of the earlier Victory Glass Co. or Victory Glass, Inc., products had patent dates or pending marks. We have not discovered an example of the horn.



Figure 10 – Tank (Etsy)

Containers and Marks

We have been unable to find any embossed marks used by Victory Glass, Inc. Apparently, the firm only labeled its candy bottles with the cardboard plugs on the base of each toy. The printing on the plug typically had the name of the toy followed by “MADE OF GLASS” / {list of ingredients} / MANUFACTURED AND PACKED BY / VICTORY GLASS INC. / TOY DIVISION Jeannette, PA.” (Figure 10).

J.H. Millstein Co., Jeannette, Pennsylvania (1943-at least 1955)

According to J.H. Millstein, Jr., Jeannette was where “in 1943 . . . Jack Millstein formed his own business, J.H. Millstein Company, which began as a manufacturer of glass products and eventually moved into real estate holdings and development” (Millstein 2003). In our most recent glass factory directory (1944), there was no mention of the J.H. Millstein Co., and Victory Glass, Inc., remained in the listing. Millstein’s name was not mentioned in the blurb and had not been since 1942 (*American Glass Review* 1942:146; 1944:146). This supports the 1943 date. Millstein apparently broke away from Victory Glass at that time to begin his own rival firm. We have found no mention of where his products were made or by whom. Possibly, he became the sales outlet (or one of them) for Victory Glass, Inc. Certainly, the products marked with the Millstein name were similar or identical to those made by Victory Glass.

Millstein purchased Victory Glass, Inc., in 1955 (Hawkins 2009:505) – although a 1962 report (U.S. Senate 1962) suggested 1952-1953 as the date of Victory’s closure. We have found no information on the end of Millstein’s glass business. Possibly, he moved into the real estate business soon after his acquisition of the Victory Glass factory in the 1952-1955 period and closed the plant.

Containers and Marks

The J.H. Millstein Co. embossed the entire company name on many of its products – as well as printing the name on paperboard stoppers for the candy bottles (Figure 11).



Figure 11 – Rabbit (eBay)

J.H. MILLSTEIN Co. (1940s-1950s?)

Numerous auction sites (including eBay and Etsy) clearly stated the use of the Millstein name on various candy jar figures – such as cars, ducks, chickens, and a variety of others. These follow two patterns: “MFG. BY J.H. MILLSTEIN CO. JEANNETTE PA. - PAT. APP. FOR” and “J.H. MILLSTEIN CO. JNT PA PAT’D.” However, these were embossed on the plastic parts of the toys/candy containers – not on the glass (Figure 12). The Millstein name was also printed on the paperboard closures. Consistently, the sellers date these figurines to the 1940s.

The only firm date we have found for the business was in a patent document. Leslie J. Poglein applied for a patent for a part for a “Torchiere Fixture” (lighting fixture) on November 23, 1951, and received Patent No. 2,714,654 on August 2, 1955. He assigned the patent to the J.H. Millstein Co.



Figure 12 – Telephone (eBay)

Acknowledgments

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Discussion and Conclusions

The Victory Glass Co. operated from 1920 to 1937 – when the firm reorganized with new owners as Victory Glass, Inc. – which in turn was purchased by the J.H. Millstein Co. at some point between ca. 1952 and 1955. Similar (or identical) glass candy containers are advertised on eBay and other antique sites with embossed and/or printed labels from all three firms.

An interesting candy container in the shape of an old-fashioned telephone was embossed “VICTORY GLASS CO.” on the heel and had a cardboard stopper on the base that noted the company as “VICTORY GLASS INC.” (Prices4antiques.com 2009). This may have indicated the use of an old mold with the new company name on the cardboard stopper. Since molds were

expensive, glass companies tended to use old molds until they wore out. This suggests a continuity between the two companies.

The term “AVOR” is also associated with the Victory Glass Co. name. Although there are dozens of definitions for the acronym online (e.g., angular vestibular ocular reflex), none of them seem to be associated with either candy or glass containers. The name may be something as simple as “A Victory Ornamental Receptacle” or some other name made up by the company. The acronym does not seem to be associated with the names of the members of the 1927-1929 Board of Directors. AVOR may have appeared on some candy bottles without the Victory Glass Co. name.

Victory Glass, Inc., Waukee, Iowa, incorporated in 1979 and markets antique juke boxes at least as late as 2009. There are also several independent glass stores (flat glass) with the Victory Glass name at various locations. We find no indication that any of these were ever associated with or descended from the Victory Glass Co. at Jeannette, Pennsylvania.

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