

West Coast Glass Co.

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The West Coast Glass Co. incorporated at Los Angeles in 1918 and specialized in milk bottles until the Pacific Coast Glass Co. purchased the plant in 1930. The firm marked its bottles with its initials – WCGCO – and may have also used a C-in-W monogram, possibly in the earliest days of operation.

History

West Coast Glass Co., Los Angeles (1918-1930)

According to Toulouse (1971:536), the West Coast Glass Co. opened at Los Angeles in 1908 and made bottles by hand until ca. 1917, when it installed semi-automatic machines. This was apparently another Toulouse typo. The firm actually incorporated in 1918, with a capital of \$100,000 to make “glassware of various kinds.” H.R. Jones, Frank C. Ford, Arthur White, G.H. Bessemyer, and R.D. Tiffany were the incorporators (*Metallurgical & Chemical Engineering* 1918:218).

According to Swain (1935), the founding of the firm was caused by a solution to a local problem. Although there was plenty of “cheap foreign labor available,” it was restricted to agricultural contexts. In Huntington Park, a suburb of Los Angeles and the location of the West Coast Glass Co., “97 per cent of the school children are of American born white parents.” This created an empty middle area – meaning that few, if any, skilled glass blowers were to be found in the area.

When R. D. Tiffany was “appointed to straighten out the finances of a small flint glass factory located in Newport Beach,” he imported William A. Anderson, Fred Glassen, and Gus Conradsen – all experienced glass men from the East. Since the Newport Beach plant was “attempting to produce good glass in a poorly constructed melting unit made of inferior materials,” Tiffany and his backers formed the West Coast Glass Co. to “to manufacture a general line of pressed and blown glass” – primarily for local markets. However, because of the

heavy demand for milk bottles, the plant soon devoted its entire production to those containers (Swain 1935).

In 1919, Leslie Brannon, the union representative for West Coast Glass, bragged that “work has been steady here ever since our factory was completed and prospects look fine for the rest of the fire as the company have more orders than they can fill” (Brannon 1919:35). Another union rep, G.H. Gray, added that the firm, located at Boyle and Slossen Avenues had limited its production to “milk bottles exclusively, and the quality of their ware is such that can only be produced by specializing, as one’s efforts always attain a higher stage of art by confining their efforts to some one particular line.” Gray noted that the plant used three Teeple machines at one continuous tank to make its bottles and had a well equipped mold shop with two mold makers (Gray 1923:37).

By 1926, the plant made “exclusively, milk bottles of the pint and quart sizes, turning out thousands every 24 hours” (*Los Angeles Times* 8/15/1926). The factory was “the largest exclusive milk bottle manufacturing institution on the Pacific Coast” (*Los Angeles Times* 1/3/1928). In 1927, the plant only made “milk jars” at one continuous tank with three rings. The plant expanded its inventory to include “flint beverages, packers goods, fruit jars and milk jars” in 1930 (*American Glass Review* 1927:147; 1930:97).

The *Los Angeles Times* (1/9/1930) announced the January 8, 1930, purchase of West Coast Glass by the Pacific Coast Glass Co. (Figure 1). Upon the purchase, Pacific Coast Glass continued to produce only milk bottles at the plant (*Los Angeles Times* 3/16/1930). The Illinois Pacific Glass Co. merged with Pacific Coast later in 1930 and maintained the plant until closing the facility in 1939 (Toulouse 1971:536).



Figure 1 – West Coast Glass Co. ca. 1930 (Mallory 2006)

Containers and Marks

WCGCO (1918-1930)

Toulouse (1971:536) noted the “WCGCO” logo as possibly belonging to the West Coast Glass Co. He dated the mark for the entire tenure of the company (1908-1930) but noted, “The trademark has not been documented, but it has been found on milk bottles in the Los Angeles area. Except for tumblers and jelly glasses, which were made until 1921, milk bottles were the sole product.” With the exception of the first year or so, however, milk bottles remained the firm’s exclusive product. The “WCGCo” logo was probably used during the entire tenure of the company.

When the BRG examined the California State Parks milk bottle collection (Sacramento) in 2006, we found eleven milk bottles embossed on the heels with “WCGCO” – always with a capital “O” in “CO” (Figure 2). Many of these were also embossed on heels with single-digit numbers of 2, 4, 5, and 6. Whether these numbers have any temporal meaning is currently unknown. A final bottle was embossed 8 / T 31 below the mark on the heel. This may be a date code for 1931. If the firms followed a long-standing tradition in California (and elsewhere), Illinois-Pacific continued to make bottles with the “WCGCO” mark until all existing orders were filled and/or the molds wore out. Hull-Walski and Ayres (1989:86) reported a “WCGCO” mark followed by a “3” – completing the series between 2 and 6.



Figure 2 – WCGCO (California State Park)

Prescription bottles have been reported in the East – also embossed with “WCGCo” basemarks – but these apparently always had a lower-case “o” in “Co.” These could have been made by the Wightman Co-operative Glass Co. at Port Allegany, Pennsylvania. See the Other W section for more information. These were almost certainly not connected with the West Coast Glass Co.

W-in-C monogram (poss. 1918-1930)

Giarde (1980:128-130) discussed a WC monogram (“W” tucked into the curve of the “C”) that he listed as “unknown” (Figure 3). However, he remarked that “it is possible that [the WC monogram] is an alternative mark of West Coast Glass Company, the “W” and “C” standing for West Coast.” He further informed us that he only knew the mark from two milk bottles from Riverside, California.



Figure 3 – WC monogram (Giarde 1980:128-130)

However, he also noted that W.C. Blank left the Illinois-Pacific Glass Co. in 1919 to form “his own glass company in the Los Angeles area.” That same year, Joel Wacholder also quit Illinois-Pacific to start a company of his own in the Los Angeles area. “WC” could then be initials for Wacholder Co. William C. Blank was the founder of the Co-operative Glass Co., another milk bottle manufacturer in California. Thus, the W-in-C monogram could have been used by Co-operative. See the listing in the Cooperative Glass Companies section for more information.

Discussion and Conclusions

There is virtually no question that the “WCGCO” mark on milk bottle bases was the logo of the West Coast Glass Co. It was likely used during the entire tenure of the firm and probably for a year or so after the sale of the company. The W-in-C monogram, however, is a weak identification, although its location on a bottle used by a California dairy is compelling.

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