

Bellaire Bottle Co.

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For the most part, the Bellaire Bottle Co. seems not to have used a mark – aside from an acorn symbol on some bottles. However, the firm embossed its initials on selected bottles.

History

Bellaire Bottle Co., Bellaire, Ohio (1882-ca. 1923)

The Bellaire Bottle Co. was incorporated on October 14, 1881, with a capital of \$25,000. Julius Armstrong was the initial president, with John Kelley as secretary and Thomas K. Sheldon as the factory manager.¹ The plant was under construction by November and planned to make vials, bottles, and flasks. By February 1882, the factory was operational, using 80 men and boys on the ten-pot furnace (Cranmer et al. 1890:485; Roller 1998).

The *Crockery & Glass Journal* (1883:18) reported that the factory was making prescription bottles in 1883. The plant was “flush with orders and are turning out flasks and prescription ware to their full capacity” in 1885 (*American Glass Worker* 1885:2). On January 15, 1885, *Crockery & Glass Journal* reported the Bellaire’s election of directors: Thomas K. Sheldon, J.R. Wickline, J.A. Evans, W.A. Boyce, N. Fox, T.K. Smith, and George W. Yost. Smith was now president, with Yost as secretary. Sheldon remained as manager (Roller 1998).

Later in 1885, Thomas B. Smith became president with George W. Yost as secretary, but Sheldon remained as manager (Roller 1998). The next year, the plant had two furnaces (*Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* 1886). By at least 1888, Bellaire used an acorn trade mark and made “Flint Prescription Ware, Flasks, etc.,” according to its letterhead (Tyson 1971:5-6).

¹ Toulouse (1971:396) only mentioned the Bellaire Bottle Co. in passing and claimed (incorrectly) that the firm was gobbled up by the Owens Eastern Bottle Co. as part of its acquisitions in 1912. It is strange that Paquette (2002) did not discuss the factory at all, despite 18 pages of references to the town of Bellaire.

D.A. Colbert had replaced Sheldon as manager by 1891, and Smith sold his interest in the firm to Yost, Colbert, and William Cleaver, the following year. The group elected W.C. Bergenthal president in 1893. The 1894 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map shows the factor between Monroe and Noble Streets, with a note that there was a watchman at nights and on Sundays. The plant had a 100-foot, two-inch hose for fires but no clock. A stove heated the factory, lighting was furnished by natural gas, and the fuel for the furnace was coal. The main building had a single central furnace with four glory holes and five lehrs. In addition, the complex boasted a mixing room, warehouses, and an office that included the molding repair and engineering sections (Figure 1).

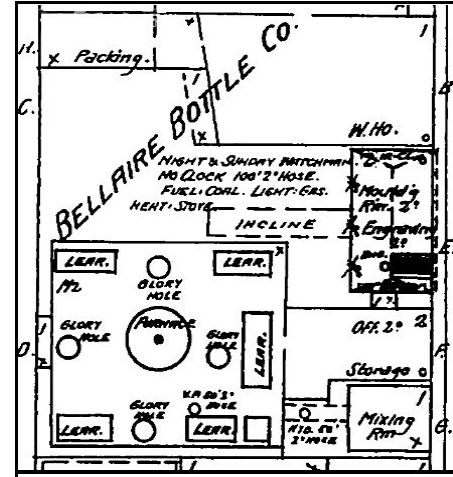


Figure 1 – 1894 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

An 1896 letterhead showed a spray of oak leaves and acorns and added colon bottles to the product list (Roller 1998). The following year, the company had “one 13-pot furnace in operation, making flint bottles,” and the number of pots varied from 10 to 12 during the rest of the century (*National Glass Budget* 1897a:7; 1897b:4; 1898:7; Roller 1998).

The *Crockery & Glass Journal* reported on October 5, 1899, that the firm was “trying to solve the boy problem by employing girls for carrying out (i.e., carrying bottles from the machine to the lehr. It is thought they will be steadier and pay more attention to their work” (quoted in Roller 1998). Boys were inclined to run away, prone to absenteeism, and frequently truculent.

The *Era Blue Book* (Haynes & Co. 1900) listed the Bellaire Bottle Co. as making “flint bottles & perfumers’ ware” in 1900, and Daniel A. Colbert remained as the manager. H.L. Dixon began building a continuous tank for Bellaire early in the year. The tank had been completed the next year, when the plant operated one furnace with ten pots and a single continuous tank with eight rings (Roller 1998).

The 1900 Sanborn map reflected the changes. The furnace remained in the center of the greatly-expanded main building, with three of the glory holes still surrounding it. The new continuous tank had been installed in the southeast corner, with a small lehr in the southwest corner and three large annealing ovens in the north end. An additional building to the east was

identified as Molding Room #2. The watchman remained, as did the hose, but the map added that the plant was on city water and had casks located at various places for additional fire control. Heat was now steam driven in addition to stoves, but lighting was still by natural gas (Figure 2).

In 1903, G.S. Armstrong was president (probably a typo for Julius Armstrong, the first president), and Sheldon was secretary (Roller 1998). The plant made “proprietary, liquor, prescription and packers’ ware” at one furnace, one continuous tank, and one day tank in 1904. R.M. Gilleland was the president, but Yost had resumed as secretary, and Colbert retained his position as manager (*American Glass Review* 1934:191). The first Thomas Register (Thomas Publishing Co. 1905:104) noted that the plant made “flint prescription [and] druggist’s” bottles, and that listing remained through the 1912 edition (1912:480).

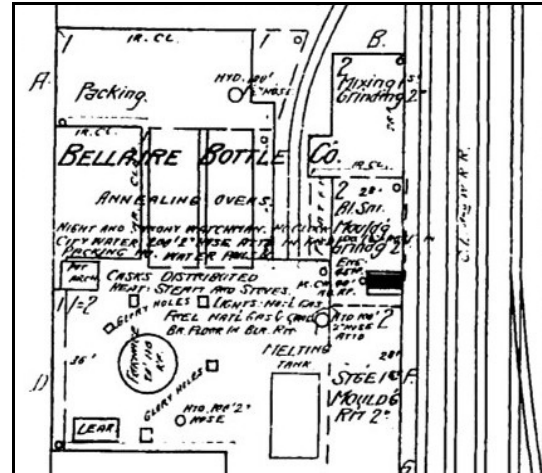


Figure 2 – 1900 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

By 1908, the factory had grown again, with two continuous tanks – the second in the place of the old furnace – and three lehrs to the north (Figure 3). Just north of the lehrs was the packing room, although the mold rooms remained to the east. The firm apparently acquired land to the north, where it erected three warehouses and a building with a sundry room and the office. The plant employed 100 men, who worked day and night. The firm heated the mold rooms with natural gas, but the packing rooms used coal. The engine room had electric lights, but the rest of the operation used natural gas for illumination. The warehouses had no light or heat (Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1908).

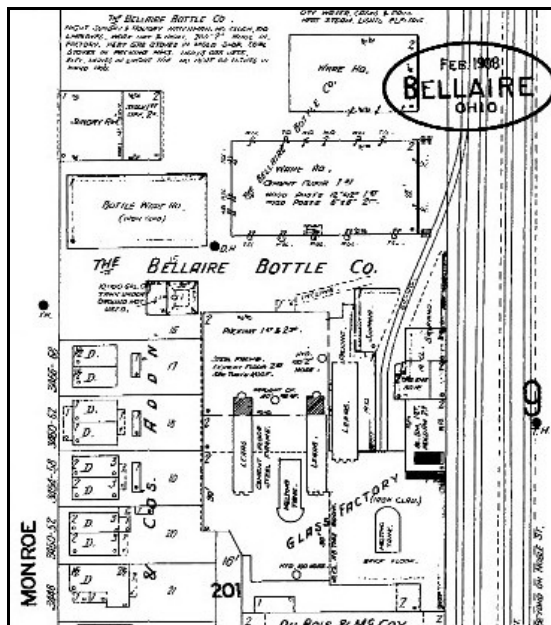


Figure 3 – 1908 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

In 1913, the firm used two continuous tanks with 20 rings to make a “general line” of bottles by both semiautomatic machine and hand methods (*Journal of Industrial and Engineering Chemistry* 1913:953). An undated catalog in our possession (Bellaire n.d.) was probably printed between ca. 1905 and ca. 1910. It had a small section on “Machine Made Bottles and Jars,” all of which were wide mouth and undoubtedly made by semiautomatic machines. Although the main products in the catalog were prescription bottles, drug store accessories, and perfume and other toiletry bottles, the company also made an extensive line of liquor flasks and bottles, some food (mostly catsup) bottles, soda, and beer bottles.

By 1914, the Thomas Registers added “perfumers & Wide & Narrow-mouth” bottles made by machine, and that listing continued until at least 1921 (Thomas Publishing Co. 1914:531; 1921:781). There were no major changes on the 1915 Sanborn map, except that the entire plan now used electric lights. A letterhead signed by Yost, dated June 6, 1922, stated that the firm was “Manufacturers of Hand and Machinemade Flint Glass Bottles and Jars” (Digital Shoebox Project 2011). The June 1924 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showed the factory as “Not In Operation” (Roller1998), but the plant actually closed in 1922, probably fairly late in the year.

A slight postscript makes it clear that the Bellaire factory never made milk bottles and solidifies the closing date. In January 1923, the *Bottle Maker* (1923:13) announced that Harry Neff and others were planning a new bottle plant to move into the old Bellaire Bottle Co. location. Starting with a capitalization of \$200,000,

the present Bellaire Bottle Company will take \$75,000 he said and \$50,000 additional has already been subscribed. The plant of the Bellaire Bottle Company which has been idle for the past few weeks would be remodeled and placed in operation. Milk bottles would be manufactured exclusively as there is a ready market for this product.

There is no evidence that the plan was placed in operation. This was almost certainly an attempt that failed before it was born. Since the article noted in January 1923 that the plant had been idle “for the past few weeks,” that factory had to have ceased operation in late 1922.

Containers and Marks

The *Crockery & Glass Journal* (1883:18) stated that “the card of the firm [i.e., the mark of the Bellaire Bottle Co.] is neatly blown in each bottle.”

Acorn (ca. 1882-ca. 1890)



Figure 4 – Acorn logo (David Whitten collection)

The only example of the acorn mark that we have recorded is in the David Whitten collection. The acorn logo was embossed on the base of a colorless, cylindrical bottle, with a wide-mouth “packer” finish. The container was mouth blown and had a cup bottom, but it was otherwise generic with no additional identifying features (Figures 4 & 5).



Figure 5 – Packer bottle (David Whitten collection)



Figure 6 – 1888 Bellaire letterhead (Tyson 1971:5)

in 1888 (Figure 6). In an undated letter that could have been sent no later than 1904, T.K. Smith, the Bellaire representative, instructed mold maker Charles Yockell not to “cut acorn on bottom of the Colonge (*sic*) Moulds for us that I ordered of you – unless I advise you differently – think they will look better with plain bottom” (Tyson 1971:6). This letter unquestionably places the use of the acorn on medicinal and other bases as the logo of Bellaire. The mark did not appear anywhere in the 1910 Bellaire Bottle Co. catalog.

This symbol was embossed on colorless prescription bottles. The acorn logo, along with the words “Trade Mark,” was part of the Bellaire Bottle Co. letterheads



Figure 7 – 1896 Bellaire billhead (eBay)

The firm replaced the acorn on the letterhead with a spray of oak leaves and acorns by at least 1896 (Figure 7) and continued to use the same logo on letterheads until at least 1910 (Roller 1998). We are unsure whether or not this implies the continued use of acorn logo after the 1890s. It is probable that the acorn was used from ca. 1882 to ca. 1890, but the use is only certain for 1888 and earlier.

B.B. (early 20th century)

Whitten (2013) attributed this mark to Berney-Bond (1905-1930). Jones (1966:15) suggested Bryce Bros., 1880-1910, but also noted Butler Bros. We have found no reference to the Butler Bros. as such, and the mark is not listed by any other source we have found. We have only seen this mark on a colorless, wide-mouth, machine made bottle, probably intended for food, household products, or medicine and on solarized amethyst, Curtice Brothers catsup bottles, both from eBay and in our possession. These two bottle forms should be discussed separately.

Packer Bottle

The colorless round, machine-made bottle was embossed “BB” – with no serifs and no punctuation (Figure 8). While the letters *could* indicate Berney-Bond, Bell Bottle, or Bellaire Bottle, we would expect such initials to be at least fairly common on bases, if the bottles were made by any of these firms. However, we have only found this single example. It is thus likely that the “BB” initials indicated the manufacturer of the *contents* of the bottle – rather than a glass house.



Figure 8 – Round household bottle base with BB (El Paso Coliseum collection)

Curtice Brothers Catsup

Curtice Brothers catsup bottles were made with a large variety of manufacturer’s marks that are not found on any other bottle types (Figure 9). Although the study of such bottles is in its infancy, it appears that Curtice Brothers required their bottle manufacturers to emboss the initials or logos of the glass houses on bottle bases. This likely began ca. 1900, although it may have been slightly earlier or later. The earliest Curtice Brothers bottles had unmarked bases, but the

firm soon required an embossed number. The use of logos or initials followed and continued until such marks had become commonplace on all glass containers. The use of logos began on mouth-blown bottles and continued into the machine era.



Figure 10 – Two-piece mold

machines, bottles were mouth-blown into a two-piece mold with a baseplate (Figure 10). In the case of all Curtice bottles we have examined, the baseplate was cup-bottom. The two mold pieces were side hinged. The gaffer blew the bottle into the mold, then removed it; an assistant applied a snap-case to the body of the bottle; and the gaffer broke off the blow pipe from the upper end.



Figure 11 – Improved-tooled finish

two examples were embossed “5 / BB” (with no punctuation) and “B.B. / 1493” on the bases (Figure 13). We only have a single example of a machine-made bottle, with a base embossed “B.B. / 1498” (Figure 14).

Although our sample of Curtice Brothers catsup bottles is small, we have seen examples that were mouth-blown into molds and those that were machine made. To review, from the mid-19th century to the use of



Figure 9 – Curtice Bros. bottle

The assistant reheated the broken end, and the finisher used a tool to complete the process. In the case of these catsup bottles, the top was called an improved-tooled finish (Lindsey 2013). The continuous-thread section was formed in the mold, then the remaining ca. ½-inch to the rim was tooled (Figure 11). The final step was to fire polish the rim or lip by placing it back in the furnace until the rim melted slightly. This created a very smooth rim (Figure 12) Our



Figure 12 – Fire-polished rim



Figure 13 – BB basemark

Machine-made bottles began with a parison or blank mold that created the finish in the ring mold and formed an opening in the gob of glass. The ring mold remained on the parison or blank and transferred it to the blow mold, where the



Figure 14 – B.B. basemark

bottle was blown into shape. This created a bottle with a horizontal seam at the base of the finish and two side seams that continued to the top of the finish and usually extended over the rim or lip (Figure 15).

In view of the other marks used by the Berney-Bond Glass Co., we consider a use by that company unlikely. However, the mark could have been used by the Bellaire Bottle Co. or the Bell Bottle Co. However, the B.B. mark was used the Berney-Bond Glass Co. on the heel of at least one cottage cheese jar, although we have never seen the logo on another dairy container. It is likely that the mark was either an engraver's error or was used for a very short time. The position of the initials on the heel instead of the base and on a cottage cheese jar versus a catsup bottle suggests that the uses were unrelated.



Figure 15 – Machine finish

Our probabilities are thus reduced to the Bell Bottle Co. or the Bellaire Bottle Co. However, we have found no evidence that the Bell Bottle Co. ever used machines to make narrow-mouth bottles. Bellaire, however, adopted narrow-mouth machines and was a certain manufacturer of catsup bottles. It is thus likely that the Bellaire Bottle Co. used the B.B. logo.

BBCo

As we noted in the Bell Bottle Co. section, Bell Bottle almost certainly embossed the BBCo mark on milk bottles and was the likely user of the BBCo logo on catsup and possibly other containers. See that section for details.

Discussion and Conclusions

Primary source evidence (i.e., the “card” of Bellaire being blown into each bottle) from 1883 indicates that a Bellaire logo (probably initials) was used in 1883. Unfortunately, we have no examples from that early period. Both the letterhead and the letter from the Belleville Bottle Co. in 1888 make it clear that the acorn was an icon for the firm. It is thus virtually certain that the acorn logo on prescription and possibly other bottle types was used by Belleville.

The temporal span for the acorn, however, is less clear. The acorn may have been used from the beginning of the firm, and the logo was certainly being used during 1888. By at least 1896, however, the single acorn on the letterhead had been replaced by a spray of oak leaves and acorns, and that continued until at least 1910 but was gone by 1922. Thus, ca. 1882-ca. 1890 is a estimate for the embossed use of the acorn.

Each “B” in all of the logos discussed in this study (B.B., BB, BBCo) – on every bottle type – was sans serif and somewhat “boxy” in shape. The use of periods, however, was inconsistent. Two examples of the “B.B. / 1498” Curtice bottle logo had strong punctuation, and there was a notable period at the end of “Co.” in the diamond logo (with possible periods after each “B”). However, there are no periods in the “BB” logo on the round bottle and none on either “BBCo” mark.

The first recorded instance for packers’ ware we have found was in 1904. We can thus hypothesize that catsup bottles were not produced prior to ca. 1900. By 1913, the plant had at least one machine, but the continuous tank had been built in 1900. Although this falls into the realm of speculation, it is likely that Bellaire made the early Curtice Brothers catsup bottles by hand but switched to machine-made bottles ca. 1914. Based on the hypothesis discussed in the Bell Bottle Co. section, the Bellaire Bottle Co. probably used the B.B. logo.

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