

## **Foster-Forbes Glass Co.**

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Thomas K. Sheldon, Adelbert M. Foster, Elmer G. Foster (Adelbert's father), Charles L. Dean, and their descendants were variously intertwined in a series of glass firms that produced medicinal containers, including prescription bottles along with a more general line of bottles and jars. All the succeeding companies can trace their ancestry back to Joseph Foster, who opened a factory in Stoddard, New Hampshire, in 1842 – leading eventually to the Foster-Forbes Glass Co.

### **History**

As alluded to above, the Foster-Forbes Glass Co. was the culmination of Foster family glass holdings dating back to Joseph Foster's original glass works at Stoddard, New Hampshire, in 1842. Although Foster's business failed twice, it cast the die followed by his sons, who founded the New Granite Glass Co. at Stoddard ca. 1860. George Foster opened a sales agency at Boston in 1862 to sell the plant's products. This led to several sales firms (Dean, Foster & Co., Dean, Foster & Dawley, and A.M. Foster & Co.). With the demise of New Granite Glass in 1874, the family left glass manufacturing for more than a decade – returning in 1888, with the opening of the Marion Flint Glass Co. That led to a series of glass houses, culminating in the Foster-Forbes Glass Co. (Table 1).

### **Foster-Forbes Glass Co., Marion, Indiana (1929-2000)**

In 1900, William C. Forbes became associated with Adelbert M. Foster in Chicago, Illinois. By 1929, the connection became stronger with the formation of the Foster-Forbes Glass Co. (Foster-Forbes [ca. 1966]; Toulouse 1971:45-46). The new company was almost certainly related to the demise of the older A.M. Foster & Co. Foster-Forbes seems to have been a confederation of the various older Foster companies, including the A.M. Foster & Co., the Marion Flint Glass Co., and the Upland Flint Bottle Co. (e.g., see Roller 1994:64, also see the respective sections for each of these firms). In fact, the firm initially operated under the corporate charter of the Upland Flint Bottle Co. (Foster-Forbes [ca, 1966]).

**Table 1 – Foster Family Glass Firms**

Firm	Location	Dates
Joseph Foster (glass works)	Stoddard, New Hampshire	1842-1843 1847-1850
Foster Brothers	St. Johns, Quebec, Canada	ca. 1855-ca. 1860*
New Granite Glass Works	Stoddard, New Hampshire	ca. 1860-1874
George W. Foster**	Boston, Massachusetts	1862-1874
Dean, Foster & Co.**	Boston, Massachusetts	1874-ca. 1911
Dean, Foster & Dawley**	Chicago, Illinois	1883-1889
Marion Flint Glass Co. Marion Bottle Co	Marion, Indiana	1888-1916 1916-1922
A.M. Foster & Co.**	Chicago, Illinois	1893-1928
Sheldon-Foster Glass Co.	Gas City, Indiana	1894-ca. 1902
	Chicago Heights, Illinois	1901-1912
Millgrove Glass Co.	Millgrove, Indiana	1898-1911
Upland Flint Bottle Co.	Upland, Indiana	1911-1923 or later
	Marion, Indiana	1923-1929
Sheldon Glass Bottle Co.	Shirley, Indiana	1917-1920
Foster-Forbes Glass Co.	Marion, Indiana	1929-2000

\* Joseph Foster opened the plant ca. 1854, keeping the old name of Canada Glass Works.

\*\* These were sales companies; not glass factories.

Foster-Forbes was first listed in the *American Glass Review* in 1930, when the plant made “prescription and proprietary ware; packers and preservers, private mold work” using one continuous tank (*American Glass Review* 1930:88). The company moved its Upland plant to the old North Marion Window Glass Co. site in 1923 and acquired the Standard Glass Co., Marion, Indiana, a decade later in 1933 (Roller 1994:61, 63-64).

When Foster died in 1934, Forbes became president, but John M. Foster, Adelbert’s son, remained on the Board of Directors (Toulouse 1971:197-199). That same year, despite the Great Depression, the plants expanded, making “prescription and proprietary ware; toilet ware; packers and preservers, liquor ware, private mould work” at two



Figure 1 – Foster-Forbes 1930s (WikiMarion)

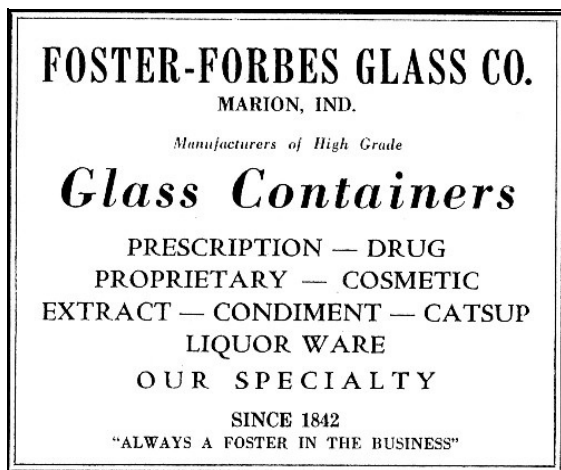


Figure 2 – Foster-Forbes 1939 ad (*American Glass Review* 1939:99)

continuous tanks with 12 rings (*American Glass Review* 1930:88; 1934:92; Foster-Forbes [ca. 1966]). The company also produced numerous beer bottles after the repeal of Prohibition in 1933 (Figure 1). The listing removed toilet ware from the list in 1935 and added beverage bottles – and remained the same until 1942. A 1939 ad said, “Since 1842, Always a Foster in the Business” (Figure 2). In 1943, however, the plant had added another ring bringing the total to 13 (*American Glass Review* 1935:84; 1942 100; 1943:100).

Foster-Forbes erected a new building in 1952, equipped with four continuous tanks. In 1956, the company installed a new tank, followed by a sixth tank in 1958, although the oldest tank was dismantled soon afterward. Foster-Forbes completed a new plant at Burlington, Wisconsin, with one tank and four machines, in early 1966. The firm operated a total of 30 machines at that time (Foster-Forbes [ca. 1966]).



Figure 3 – Foster-Forbes 1970 (Wiki Marion)

The National Can Co. purchased Foster-Forbes in 1970, acquiring factories at Burlington, Wisconsin; Oil City, Pennsylvania; and Milford, Massachusetts – retaining the Foster-Forbes name (WikiMarion 2007 – Figure 3). In 1982, the division had five manufacturing plants with a total of 39 Individual Section (I.S.) machines and various decorating devices. The factories made “one-way & returnable beer & beverage; cosmetics, drug and pharmaceutical; food; household chemical; liquor; packers ware; perfume; private mold” containers by that time (*Glass Industry* 1982:28). By 1985, the division consisted of eight manufacturing plants, using I.S. machines as well as ten decorating machines and one “spray booth.” The factories made the same products as in 1982 (Perrine 1985:23).

American Can Packaging and the National Can Corp. merged in 1987 to form the American National Can Co, then Pechiney Plastic Packaging purchased American National Can in 1988 (Pechiney Plastic Packaging 2000). Meanwhile, the Indianhead Container Corp. merged with the Ball Corp. in 1988 to form Ball-Incon and renamed the company Ball Glass Container Corp. in 1994 (Whitten 2015). In 1995, Saint-Gobain Containers, Inc., Muncie, Indiana (headquarters in Paris, France), purchased the Ball Glass Container Corp. and Foster-Forbes Corp. creating Ball-Foster Glass Container Co. (WikiMarion 2007). According to the Texas National Resource Conservation Commission (2001), Foster-Forbes closed in March 1996.<sup>1</sup> This probably referred to the older Marion plant; four of the factories remain open in 2015 – under the St. Gobain name. A recycle division of Foster-Forbes, however, remained open until at least 2007. Table 2 shows the factories as of the 1980s.

## Containers and Marks

### Connected Fs (ca. 1929-ca. 1940s)

The mark appears to be a capital “F” (no serifs) attached to an upside down capital “F” (also no serifs) and was described by Whitten as “backwards Z with a horizontal slash through the middle” (Figure 4). According to Scholes (1941:129) the mark was used by Foster-Forbes in 1941. He



Figure 4 – Connected-F logo

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<sup>1</sup> According to Wiki Marion (2007), the Marion plant did not close until 2000.

did not include either of the logos described by Toulouse or Peterson. This may have been the earlier mark used by the company (until the early 1940s).

**Table 2 – Foster-Forbes Factories (1982-1985)**

Factory	Tanks	Dates	St. Gobain*
Burlington, Wisconsin	2	1982; 1985	
Los Angeles, California	2	1985	
Marion, Indiana	5	1982; 1985	
Milford, Massachusetts	2	1982; 1985	SG 04
Millville, New Jersey	3	1985	
Oil City, Pennsylvania	2	1982	
Pevely, Missouri	2	1982; 1985	SG 05
Waxahachie, Texas	2	1985	SG 07
Wilson, North Carolina	2	1985	SG 09

\* St. Gobain plant numbers/manufacturer’s marks in 2015

**FF (in stylized italics) in a circle (1942-1983)**



Figure 5 – Circle-FF logo

According to Toulouse (1971:197) this mark was used “possibly from 1929, but may be later.” Peterson (1968:49) cited the mark as being in a circle and claimed a beginning date of 1942. This may be another case where Toulouse received faulty data; Peterson took his information from trademark records.

Jones (1965:[22]; 1966:16) showed both the stylized double-F in a circle and the “backwards Z” or “connected Fs” (see above) along with a date of “since 1842,” possibly her typo for 1942 (Figure 5). Owens-Illinois distributed a chart with manufacturer’s marks in 1964 (Berge 1980:83) that shows the Circle-Double-F mark (Figure 6). Foster-Forbes ([ca. 1966]) showed the same logo on the front and back covers of the pamphlet for its Millville plant. This

suggests that the circle-FF mark may have been a later mark, possibly used from the early 1940s until about 1983 when National Can acquired the company. The Circle-FF was certainly still in use in 1982 (Emhart 1982:74).

### Triple-Triangle Logo (1987-1995)

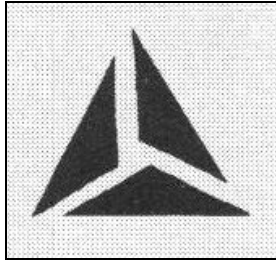


Figure 7 – Triple-Triangle logo (Emhart 1942:48)

American National Can marked its glass products with a logo consisting of three elongated triangles separated from each other but arranged together to form a three-dimensional triangle, somewhat reminiscent of a sailing ship (Emhart 1996). American

National Can was formed in 1987 and became Ball-Foster in 1995, creating a date range for the mark (Figures 7 & 8). The 1996 Emhart pamphlet was likely a year out of date for its record of the triple-triangle mark in that year.

### BF (1995-ca. 2005)



Figure 9 – BF logo (Powell 1990)

With the creation of Ball-Foster in 1995, the mark changed to BF. According to Emhart (2005), the logo was still used in 2005 (Figure 9). Although information from Dick Cole, curator of the Minnetrista Museum, in Muncie, Indiana (personal communication to David Whitten) indicated that the BF mark was discontinued in 2000, the mark remains listed in the Emhart punt mark file in 2015 (Emhart 2015:38).<sup>2</sup>

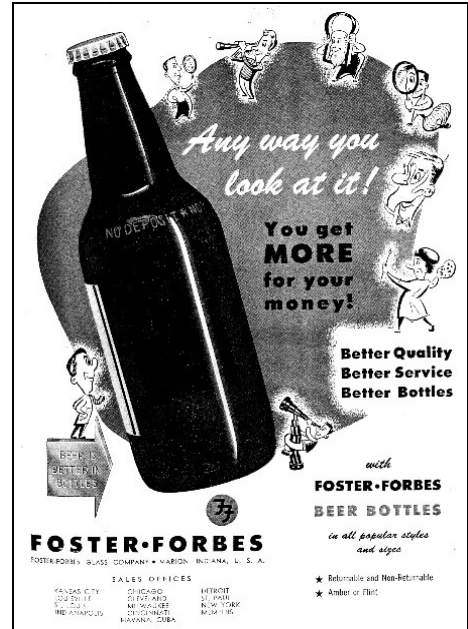


Figure 6 – Beer ad (*American Brewer* 1955:21)



Figure 8 – Triple-Triangle logo

<sup>2</sup> The date no longer appears on Emhart's list of punt marks in 2015. It is impossible to determine when the page was last updated.

SG (ca. 2000-2015)

Although the 2015 Emhart punt mark list still illustrated “BF” as one of the logos, several of the former Foster-Forbes plants used the SG mark with a two-digit numerical code that identified the factory



Figure 10 – SG logo

number (Figure 10). See Table 2 for the plants remaining open in 2015 and their numbers. The date range above is only for containers made at the former Foster-Forbes plants.

## Discussion and Conclusions

It seems likely that the “connected Fs” mark was the earliest one used by Foster-Forbes, and the Circle-FF mark is soundly documented from the 1940s-1980s period. The latter marks are probably not of much interest to today’s archaeologists or collectors, except to show that a site is recent. They may, however, be useful for future studies.

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