

Louisville Glass Factories of the 19th Century - Part 2

by David Whitten

This article continues a look at early Louisville glass factories; part one appeared in the Spring 2005 issue, pages 45-49.

SITE No. 3: NS of Montgomery Street between 28th and 29th Streets (mistakenly listed as NS of High Street in one directory listing, also listed as "Montgomery at 4th Crossing" in some directories)

Louisville Plate Glass Works (c.1874-c.1888)

This factory was started in 1874 by Captain John B. Ford, and was located in the Portland area of Louisville. In "The Roots Grow Deep" by William Earl Aiken (1957), a letterhead from the company is reproduced, with the name given as "Louisville Plate Glass Manufacturing Company". Be that as it may, the factory was known in most contemporary records as the "Louisville Plate Glass Works."

The 1875 Louisville city directory lists John B. Ford as the company president, and the factory was referred to in some sources as "Ford's Glass Works." In 1875 Ford abruptly ceased his relationship with the company, and by 1880 the factory, or a majority of the interest, had been purchased by Washington C. DePauw who was already operating a glass factory in New Albany, Indiana at the time (W.C.DePauw's American Plate Glass Works).

Julian Toulouse (*Bottle Makers and their Marks*) states that the firm name was "Louisville Kentucky Glass Works" and he

seemed to promote the idea that it was a relatively smooth continuation of the Louisville Glass Works which had ceased the year before. Not so... this was a different company, under different ownership, which did not make bottles. This misunderstanding has caused confusion for researchers who did not carefully check and cross-reference their sources of information. Although this factory was listed as the "Louisville Glass Works" in a few directory listings, that was merely a shortened, more "familiar" form of the official company name. LPGW did not make glassware such as bottles or jars, but instead concentrated on rough plate glass and mirrors. The rough plate glass produced in Louisville was then sent over to New Albany and polished at the DePauw plate glass works.

In a newspaper article dated Saturday, Jan 31, 1880 (from the *LOUISVILLE COMMERCIAL*), the operation was apparently about to be sold (or more likely, leased) to French interests who were planning to bring over highly skilled workers from Europe to help revitalize the works. I did not find out what happened with this scenario, but W.C. DePauw was still involved in this factory as late as the mid-1880s, and probably until it's closing.

A survey of the surnames of employees show that the majority of the glassworkers at this factory were of English or French descent, in contrast to the bottle-making plants in Louisville in which case the majority of workers were of German heritage.

The plate glass works were often closed down for several months at a time. By approximately 1888, the factory had apparently failed, and on the 1892 Louisville Sanborn fire insurance map showing the site, a notation reads "Buildings Vacant- Machinery Removed". By 1905 (per the Sanborn map of that year), the factory had been completely demolished.

The site where this factory once stood is now the location of Portland Park, a small neighborhood park which occupies most of one city block.

SITE No. 4: NW Corner of 11th Street and Monroe (now Rowan) Streets.

SOUTHERN GLASS COMPANY, dba "Stanger & Company" (1877-c.1879).

SOUTHERN GLASS WORKS (c.1879-c.1885)

John Stanger, Sr. teamed up again with veteran glassblower Charles Doyle, (his son-in-law, who had married his daughter Rebecca in 1866) to start up a new firm doing business as "John Stanger & Company" (or just "Stanger & Company") in 1877. The factory name was referred to as either Southern Glass Company or Southern Glass Works, although the former name seemed to have been preferred in the first year or two of business.

Others involved in the company were John Stanger, Jr, Joseph Husak, Frederick Rau, Patrick Daly, Charles Thomasson, Philip Zell, Conrad Opperman and Joseph Markel Stanger (also a son of John, Sr.). John Schaupp, Thomas F. Stanger, Daniel Powell, John Zell, Edward Koegler, George P. Hess, Henry Geisel, Isaac Delph, James Cunliffe, Charles Cannon, Michael Doyle, and John Rau were some of the glassblowers who were employed there at one time or another. Other workers included William Woerner (watchman), Peter Kasheimer (fireman), John Pfarr and William Woods (packers) and Jacob Court (potmaker). Incidentally, in 1888 glassblower John Rau was to become involved in the startup of the Fairmount Glass Works at Fairmount, Indiana, and later (at least by 1904), was president of that company with several of his sons involved in the operation as well.

John Stanger held the position of superintendent of the window glass department of W.C. DePauw's "Star Glass Works" in New Albany, Indiana during the c.1871-1877 stretch and evidently decided to embark upon yet another venture, as a leading man, on the Louisville side of the Ohio River.

This ad appeared in the 1878 Carson's Louisville City Directory a few months after Southern Glass Company (dba Stanger & Co.) opened for business.

According to *CROCKERY & GLASS JOURNAL*, an early trade magazine of the glass manufacturing industry, in the August 23, 1877 issue, mention is made that the first bottle production was scheduled to start about ten days later (September 2, 1877).

A brief newspaper ad first appeared for this company in the *Louisville Courier Journal*, dated Dec 2, 1877.

An advertisement also appeared a few months later (in the 1878 city directory) which reads:

"Southern Glass Company--Cor. Eleventh and Monroe Streets--Near the Canal--Louisville, KY.

Our new company is now well established and in full operation. All orders for wine, ale, beer and mineral water bottles, and also for flasks for druggists, and fruit jars, will be promptly filled at lowest rates. We also keep on hand a large stock of the above named goods. Our goods can not be surpassed by those from other factories. We employ only the most competent workmen. Stanger & Co."

Sometime in either 1879 or 1880, John Stanger, Sr, departed and T. H. Sherley & J. G. McCulloch then became proprietors

of the works. J. L. (John Lewis) McCulloch was listed as bookkeeper, but his relationship to J.G. isn't clear at this time. (John Lewis McCulloch was to become part-owner of the Marion Fruit Jar & Bottle Company of Marion, Indiana, in 1888).

The period of about 1880 to 1883 seems to have been the most prosperous time for this company, with a large variety of bottles and jars being produced.

Embossed identification marks used by Southern Glass Company on various articles (always found on the base) are:

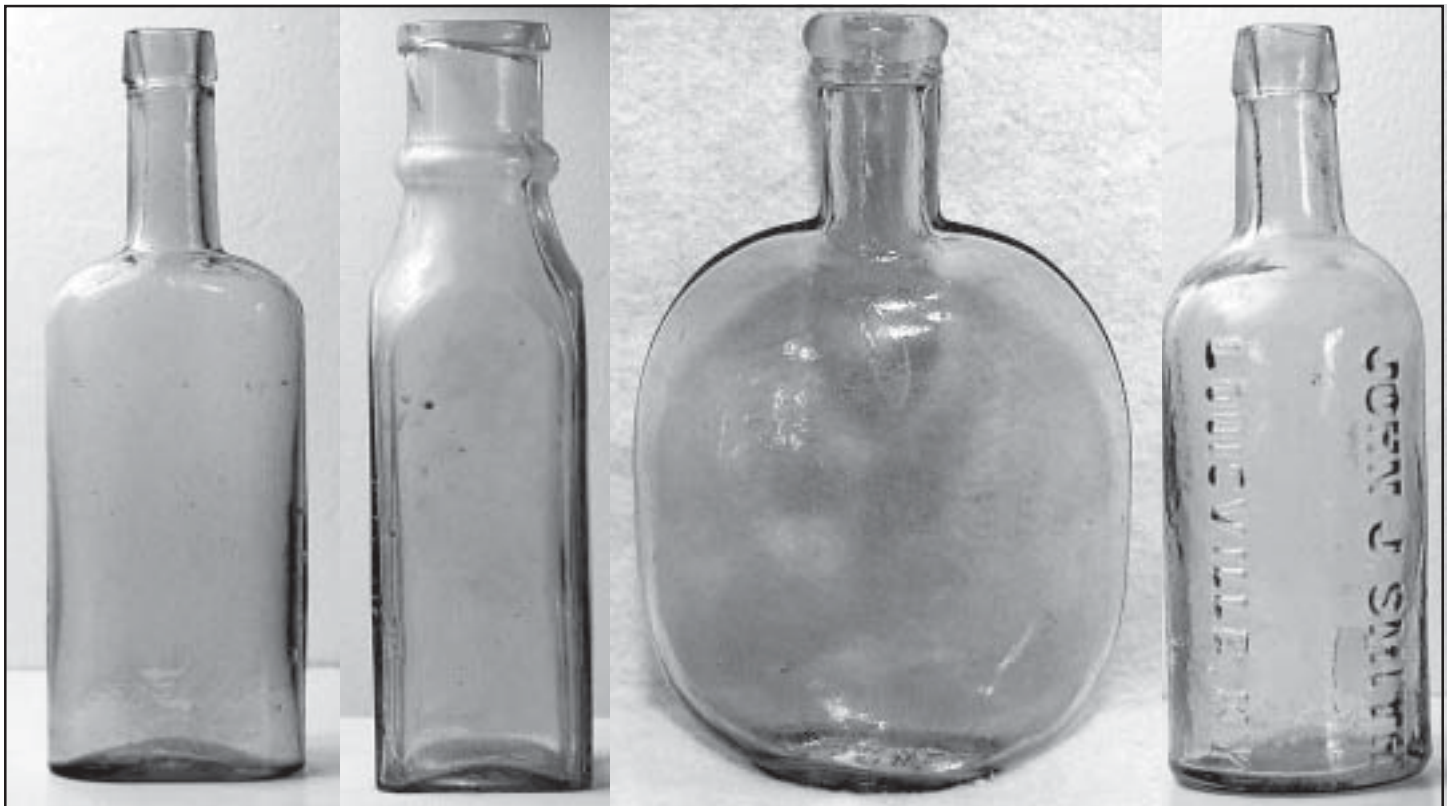
- 1) SOU.G.W. (Wax sealer fruit jars)
- 2) SOU.G.WS. (Square pickle bottles)
- 3) S.G.W.LOU.KY (Wax sealer jars, medicines, pickles, cathedral peppersauces, cylinder whiskies, hutchinson sodas, many others)
- 4) S.G.Co. (Chemical bottles, wax sealers, ginger ovals, John J. Smith tonic bottles)
- 5) S.G.W. (Pumpkinseed flasks)

All of the Southern Glass Company bottles I've encountered bear applied lips (that is, a ring of glass has been added in a second step to form the lip of the bottle, but with no further "tooling" evident which

would have otherwise smoothed over the clearly visible line of separation between the lip and the body of the bottle), and they usually show a rather crudely-made appearance more characteristic of the bottles of a somewhat earlier period of time (i.e. the Civil War era). They often contain very prominent bubbles as well as smaller seed and tear bubbles, and exhibit "drippy lips", swirl or "whittle" marks, faint amber wisps, and other irregularities so attractive to the antique bottle collector.

Presumably the "S.G.Co." marking was used mostly in the first two years or so of operation, although it is likely that some of the bottle molds with that marking were used into later years until they wore out.

The S.G.CO. marking was also used by at least two or three other glass companies, including the Scranton Glass Company, Scranton, Pa., and Southern Glass Company of Los Angeles, Calif. (1916-1931). Swayzee Glass Company of Swayzee, Ind. used an "S.G.CO." but always in the form of a monogram which appears only on fruit jars. In the case of the Louisville-made bottles, I suggest that if a bottle or jar seen with this mark is handblown with a true applied lip, is crudely made, aqua, is base-marked, and found primarily in the



From L to R: 1. Example of a generic bluing, or "ginger oval," bottle, made by many glass factories of the period. This one is marked "S.G.W.LOU.KY." 2. Plain square "American Pickle" bottle made by Southern Glass Works. These have been found in four sizes, ranging from 7 inches to 11 1/2 inches in height. An "F.C.G.CO." marked pickle bottle is known which is 13 1/2 inches tall. 3. Aqua pumpkinseed ("picnic") flask with the marking "S.G.W." on the base. 4. John J. Smith tonic bottle manufactured by Southern Glass. This is one of a great many variants known of this commonly found bottle. These bottles are also found marked "KY.G.W.CO.," as well as key-mold versions believed to have been made by the Louisville Glass Works in the 1860s and '70s, not to mention the much earlier open- and iron-pontiled versions.

Louisville and surrounding area of Kentucky and southern Indiana, it is likely a product of Southern Glass Works.

Some notable bottles with the "S.G.W.LOU.KY" mark include a variant of the K C & CO hutch sodas (Klee, Coleman & Company, bottlers of mineral water with offices in Dayton, OH and Louisville, KY); Ameliorated Schiedam Holland Gin; S.S. Clarke's Diamond Family Tonic/R.H.Higgins & Co.; Brown, Thompson & Company whiskey; and Thos.A. Hurley's Compound Syrup of Sarsaparilla.

The Southern Glass Works was certainly not in operation for at least part of the time during the years 1884 and 1885. No individual employee listings were found for glassblowers employed by Southern in the city directories from those two years, although the company itself was still listed in the business section. All glassblowers employed by Southern in 1883 are listed as employed elsewhere in '84 and '85 so I assume that the factory was not actually in operation for all or much of the time during the period, or at least during the period of

time when the data for the city directories was being collected. According to 1884 city directory listings, some of the SGW employees were listed as then working at the Falls City Glass Company, and I feel this serves as strong evidence that the Southern Glass Works shut down operations at some undetermined point in time during 1884, and in fact may have continued to remain idle into the early months of 1885.

In the spring of 1885 the factory re-opened for a short time under the name "Louisville Glass Works Company", as discussed below.

Louisville Glass Works Company (c. April 1885-January 1886)

A listing for the "Louisville Glass Works Company" appears in the 1886 Louisville city directory. This company was a re-opening of the Southern Glass Works factory location at 11th and Monroe streets, with a new---and confusingly similar---firm name. Joseph M. (Markel) Stanger, son of John Stanger, Sr., was listed as the superintendent, and a number of the

employees of the Southern Glass Works operation were employed there as well.

The operation evidently was quite unsuccessful and in January of 1886 an item appeared in the *COURIER JOURNAL* stating that two employees, George Coleman & John Flynn, both glassblowers, were suing the defunct company in Common Pleas court for wages due them which they had not received.

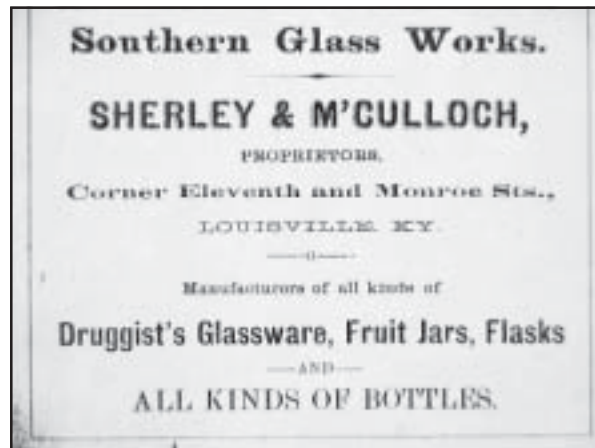
No marked bottles or jars are known as far as I am aware, but there is a good likelihood they continued to use some of the old molds with the Southern Glass markings on them. One reference (Edelen) states that they produced bottles with an "LGWC" intertwined logo, but I know of no evidence to show there is any truth in that statement and I suspect that to be a non-existent mark.

The Sanborn fire insurance maps shows the glass factory was in "ruins" in 1892. By 1905 the Sanborn maps indicate the factory was no longer in existence and Illinois Central railroad tracks covered much of the site.

The location of this factory is now (2004) a gravel parking lot used by the Kentucky Container Service, and the Interstate-64 highway passes overhead just a few feet to the north of the site.

I would like to thank Hemingray Glass Co. researcher/historian Bob Stahr for generously sharing articles he found in early issues of the glass trade periodicals *COMMONER & GLASSWORKER*, *NATIONAL GLASS BUDGET*, and *CHINA, GLASS & LAMPS*. His assistance is very kindly appreciated.

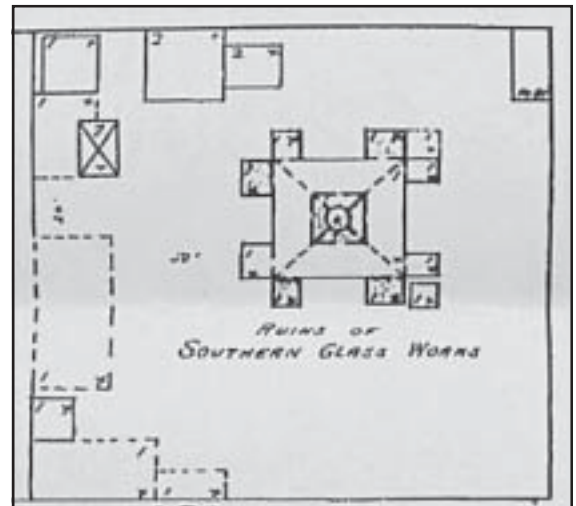
Part three, which will appear in the next issue, concludes the series. David Whitten may be contacted by E-mail: drw90459@iglou.com.



Southern Glass Works advertisement which appeared in the Jeffersonville, Indiana 1880 directory.



Left: Ribbed (or "fluted") peppersauce bottle made by Southern Glass Works, probably circa 1878, marked "S.G.W.LOU.KY." This is a classic shape often found in earlier pontiled versions from the 1850s-1870s. **Right:** Close-up showing the mark on the bottom of the bottle.



Section of Sanborn map showing the defunct Southern Glass Works site (1892).