

## **The Olean Glass Co.**

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The Olean Glass Co. should have been called the Phoenix because it rose from the ashes of fires at least four times (plus at least one flood) and was rebuilt. Under various managements, the firm also failed four times only to be resumed by either the same owners or a new corporation. First opened by the Pancoast family in 1883, it failed the following year and was rented for a year as the Union Glass Works before that, too, went bankrupt in 1885. The Pancoasts successfully operated the plant from 1887 until Acme Glass Co. bought the factory in 1913, closing the plant the following year and moving the equipment into its own plant at Olean.

Two New Yorkers bought Acme Glass in 1926, but their business failed in 1929. In an ironic turn of events, a group of local businessmen acquired the factory in 1930, renaming the Acme firm as the Olean Glass Co. This business remained solvent until the Thatcher Mfg. Co. bought the enterprise in 1935 to expand its product line beyond its traditional milk bottle sales. Olean retained its identity until 1941, when it was fully absorbed into Thatcher, then Thatcher closed the factory in 1948.

### **History**

#### **Olean Glass Co., Olean, New York (1883-1913)**

The Olean Glass Co. incorporated in 1883 with a capital of \$25,000. George L. Winters was president with A. Fralinger as vice president, Charles Dolloway as treasurer, William Bryant as secretary, and Samuel W. Pancoast, Superintendent. Pancoast was an experienced glassworker from Millville, New Jersey. The firm built the Olean Glass Works on Buffalo St., near 13<sup>th</sup> St. – adjacent to the Olean & Salamanca Railroad tracks – in 1883.<sup>1</sup> The plant made its first glass on October 1 of that year. The factory shut down after less than a year after steadily operating at a loss. (*Olean Democrat* 10/9/1883; von Mechow 2018).

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<sup>1</sup>.The 1883 date is confirmed by a 1903 letterhead from the company that stated it was “organized 1883” (George L. Miller collection).

William Bryant and Charles Faatz leased the factory for a year in 1884, believing that they could operate at a profit and calling the plant the Union Glass Works. The firm officially failed in February 1885, its assets placed in the hands of a trustee for distribution to the company's creditors. The Olean Glass Co. still owned the property and physical factory, so that was unaffected by the bankruptcy (*Olean Democrat* 9/2/1884; 2/17/1885).

S. Pancoast & Sons (Samuel W. with sons Harry and Vernon) reopened the plant on September 1, 1887 – with a capital of only \$600 – producing Sizerville water bottles for P.H. Shumway, then receiving other contracts to keep the business afloat. They began with a single blower, adding more workers as the orders increased. Unlike the earlier incarnations, this plant survived and continued to grow with S.W. Pancoast as president and T.H. Pancoast as treasurer. The firm increased the capacity of the plant in 1888, 1890, and again in 1891, operating two large furnaces (Adams 1893:887; *Commoner & Glass Worker* 1908; *Olean Democrat* 9/15/1887; 1/26/1888; 9/4/1890; 7/30/1891; 10/22/1891; 9/6/1892).

In 1893, the plant opened a new “eight-ring continuous tank” bringing the total plant capacity to 19 rings. Tank No. 1 had six rings and was making “green” mineral water, beer, and soda bottles. Tank No. 2 had four rings, blowing amber wine and ginger ale bottles, along with flasks and druggists' ware. The newest tank, No. 3, produced green “druggists' glass bottles” that were “of a superfine quality” at eight rings. Fire destroyed several warehouses at the factory on September 8, 1894, destroying \$30,000 worth of blown bottles awaiting shipment – with only \$9,000 of the goods insured – although the plant was in production again by early October (*Olean Democrat* 3/10/1893; 9/14/1894; 10/5/1894; 1/1/1895; von Mechow 2018).

Oddly, the *Warren Weekly Democrat* reported on October 29, 1894, that Olean Glass struck oil while drilling a water well for the factory. The well produced a barrel a day. The company incorporated in November 1894 with a capital of \$50,000. Apparently, the younger generation gained control at this point. W.S. Pancoast was president with V.W. Pancoast as vice president, J.L. Clyde as secretary, and T.H. Pancoast as treasurer. Fire again destroyed the plant in 1896, but it was rebuilt by the following year. In 1898, the firm was listed as the Olean Glass Co. in the Green Bottle and Hollowware section and made its products in 19 pots (1903 letterhead; *National Glass Budget* 1898:7; *Olean Democrat* 12/7/1894; von Mechow 2018).

The 1903 letterhead listed “prescription ware, flasks, wines, beers, minerals, sodas. etc.” in “crystal, amber, and blue” colors. It showed factories in both Olean, New York, and Port Allegany, Pennsylvania. The following year, the plant used five continuous tanks with 32 rings, along with one day tank, to make its products (*American Glass Review* 1934:159). By 1905, a company in Olean (probably Olean Glass Co.) had installed “seven machines, making vaselines, inks, shoe polish and pint and half pint milks” (*National Glass Budget* 1912:1). These were some of the early semiautomatics. Unfortunately, we have not found the exact date for the installations. This was one of only five factories in the United States to make milk bottles by machine in 1905. At some point in 1905, fire again destroyed two buildings in the complex, and rebuilding may have precipitated the adoption of machines (von Mechow 2018).

In 1907, Olean made “Prescription; Beer; Wine; Soda; Brandy; Packers’; [and] Preservers” ware, along with fruit jars. At the same time, the Acme Glass Co. – also at Olean – made “Prescription; Beer; Soda; Wine; [and] Brandy” bottles (Thomas Publishing Co. 1907:159, 799). In 1909 a factory in Olean (probably Olean Glass Co.)<sup>2</sup> operated 13 semiautomatic machines making “vaselines, inks, etc.” (Hayes 1909:1). The *Newark Advocate* confirmed the use of machines by that time, saying that “both the blowing and machine departments” of the plant were “operating steadily” on May 13, 1911. By 1912, the senior Pancoast had died, and his sons apparently moved on. The *Olean Evening Times* reported on August 3 that F.L. Bartlett was the president with N.V.V. Franchot as vice president, J.L. Clyde as secretary and treasurer, plus F.E. Collins and Allen B. Williams as additional directors.

On April 11, 1913, the *Olean Evening Times* reported that the plant was open again after a flood that apparently did little damage. On July 11, the *Evening Times* announced that the Acme Glass Co. had purchased the Olean Glass Co., although it would not take possession until the end of the current season. An article on machine manufacture in 1913 noted that the Acme Glass Co., Olean, New York, made “prescription, beer, liquor and water (i.e., soda)” bottles, vials and flasks. The same article noted Olean Glass Co. plants in Olean and Port Allegany, Pennsylvania. The Olean plants used five continuous tanks with 35 rings to make a general line of bottles by both mouth-blown and semiautomatic machine technologies (*Journal of Industrial and Engineering Chemistry* 1913:953). Acme apparently continued to run the Olean plant under

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<sup>2</sup> The only other glass plant in town, the Acme Glass Co., did not begin using machines until 1920 (Toulouse 1971:35-37).

the Olean name for a while, possibly until all existing contracts were filled. For more information about the Acme Glass Co., see the section on that firm.

The *Olean Evening Herald* published an announcement from Acme on February 18, 1914, that it was closing the Olean plant on Saturday (February 21), citing the cost of operation as the reason. The *Evening Herald* followed up with a report on December 16, 1916, of a small fire in the former Olean Glass plant and added that “of late tramps have been making the place their rendez-vous.” Acme finally sold the property in June 1925 to the Jaekle Brothers, who planned to open a coal business on the site (*Olean Evening Herald* 6/25/1925).

The Eastern Glass Co. of New York City (owned entirely by Samuel Kostin and Samuel Glickstein) purchased the entire stock of the Acme Glass Co. on May 5, 1926. The directors elected Kostin as president. The new owners planned to enlarge the facility, eventually adding a new continuous tank. Although the firm refurbished the plant in 1927, the cheerfulness was premature. By April 9, 1929, just three years later, the firm was in bankruptcy, with Frederick W. Kruse, E.W. Fitzgerald, and W.D. Snell as receivers (*Dunkirk Evening Observer* 4/9/1929; *Olean Evening Times* 5/5/1926).

Kostin and Glickstein had apparently disappeared from the company, precipitating the firm’s drop into receivership. Police arrested the pair in late February of 1930 on charges of “defrauded a Brooklyn bottling house, Glickstein & Turner, of \$50,000.” Police told the *Olean Evening Times* (3/3/1930) that the pair had fled to Europe but were arrested upon their return.

### **Olean Glass Co., Olean, New York (1929-1941)**

On September 6, 1929, “local interests” purchased the Acme plant at the receivers’ sale and renamed the firm as the Olean Glass Co. W. B. Snell was the general manager, and Joseph B. McCormaick held “an important executive position” (*Olean Evening Times* 9/27/1929). The July 24, 1930, edition added that J.H. Meyers was vice president and general manager and that N.V.V. Franchot and W.A. Dusenbury were “principle figures behind the Olean Glass company.” An Olean announcement “assured a continuance of the same prompt service and the high quality packers’ ware [that customers] have been receiving in the past” (Olean Glass Co. 1929:430).

The new Olean plant made “prescriptions [*sic*] ware, flint beverages, fruit jars, packers and preservers,[and] private mold work” all by machine at two continuous tanks with 12 machines in 1930. Meyers moved into the vice president position in 1931, replaced as general manager by Walkerman D. Duncan. In 1934, the listing added “beers, wines, and liquors,” and that information continued until 1943, the last listing for the company (*American Glass Review* 1930:93; 1934:97; 1943:105; *Olean Evening Times* 5/16/1931).

Thatcher Glass Co. purchased the capital stock of Olean in 1935, although it announced that the Olean plant would continue to manufacture “containers for beer, carbonated beverages, cider, foodstuffs, oils, polishes, proprietary medicines and vinegars” (*Glass Packer* 1935:574). This opened up an entirely new venue for Thatcher. However, the Olean plant seems to have retained its own identity until Thatcher acquired complete ownership in December 1941 and the plant became a division of Thatcher rather than a subsidiary (*American Glass Review* 1942:172; *Wall Street Journal* 1944).

Thatcher closed the plant in June of 1948, laying off 285 people. The plant remained idle, its equipment either moved to other Thatcher factories or sold to other firms, until December 28, 1951, when the Olean Warehousing Corp. of Rochester, New York, purchased the property for an estimated \$200,000 (*Bradford Era* 3/9/1949; 12/29/1951). Another chapter of glass production had been closed.

### **Olean Glass Co., Port Allegany, Pennsylvania (1896-1913)**

Olean Glass opened the Port Allegheny factory in 1896 because of a freshly discovered supply of natural gas, a good supply of rock to make glass sand, and the presence of two railroads for shipping goods as well as bringing in raw materials. The factory made nursers and sterilizers the following year and used 12 pots to make bottles in 1898. As noted above, a 1903 letterhead for the company showed both plants making “prescription ware, flasks, wines, beers, minerals, sodas. etc.” – although the plant burned the following year, only to be rebuilt with a larger production capacity. The factory ceased operation on July 31, 1913 (*National Glass Budget* 1898:7; 1913:3; Roller 1997; Smethport History n.d.).

## Containers and Marks

It is certain that the neither Olean Glass Co. embossed its name or a logo on the vast majority of its products. Very few manufacturer's marks can be traced to Olean. Apparently, Olean only used a logo when it was required by law or by a customer – during either of its incarnations. All of the examples below seem to fall into that category.

### First Olean Firm

This includes the first two failed entities in the early 1880s as well as the successful company that remained in business until its purchase by the Acme Glass Co. in 1913. Two of these logos – bearing the actual Olean name – were certainly used by the firm, as was the number 12 on milk bottles. The initials were probably used by Olean. Aside from the Ottawa Glass Co., we have found no other glass houses that fit the criteria for possible users of the initials. All of these logos should only appear on mouth-blown bottles – *except* milk bottles (see below).

#### **OLEAN (1893-1896)**

According to Teal (2005:96, 109, 149), the name “OLEAN” was embossed on the heel of a pint Jo Jo flask from the South Carolina Dispensary, made during the 1893-1896 period. They identified the company as the Olean Glass Co. Olean shipped 54 railroad carloads of half-pint, pint, and quart flasks to the Dispensary during that period, but only the half-pints were marked with the name. Huggins (1997:11) illustrated an example on a Dispensary flask. See Teal (2005) for more on the South Carolina Dispensary.

#### **OLEAN GLASS CO. (1896-1913)**

Von Mechow (2018) discussed two champagne beer bottles embossed “OLEAN GLASS CO. (arch) / OLEAN, N.Y. (inverted arch)” on the base (Figure 1). The name insures the identification, and both bottles were mouth blown. Each was made with a one-part finish for the Lightning stopper.



Figure 1 – Olean Glass Co. (von Mechow 2018)

### **O.G.CO.I. (1894-1913)**

We have an example of the O.G.CO.I. mark on the heel of a Hutchinson-style bottle (Figure 2). The Olean Glass Co. was in business during three time periods – 1883-1884; 1887-1894; and 1894-1913 – all within the 1880-1929 period when Hutchinson bottles were produced. Because the company incorporated (the probable meaning of the “I”) in 1894, the mark should be dated between 1894 and 1913 – although the identification of Olean as the manufacturer should be considered as tentative.



Figure 2 – O.G.CO.I

### **(O.G. / (CO.)) (ca. 1880-1913)**

When the Bottle Research Group visited the office of the California State Parks in Sacramento, we discovered a single colorless, oval prescription bottle embossed “(O.G. / (CO.))” on the base – including the parentheses (Figure 3). We have no explanation for the unusual use or parentheses or the inconsistency between the two lines. The Olean Glass Co. was a known producer of druggists’ ware.



Figure 3 – (O.G. (CO.)) (California Parks)

## **12**

In January 1910, the State of New York began issuing numbers to glass houses desiring to sell milk bottles within the state. Each milk bottle had to emboss the initials or logo of the glass house as well as the issued number on the bases or heels of each bottle. Neighboring states began adopting similar or identical systems until the numbers became a de facto national identification system. The State of New Jersey enacted a milk bottle law in 1913 requiring the number but not the logo or initials. Olean received the number 12, although we have not found the glass house listed in any other state. At this point, we have never discovered a milk bottle that was recognizable as being made by Olean (Waldron 1913:17).

The timing of this event is interesting. New Jersey – the only state for which we have found a citation for Olean’s application for a milk bottle number – enacted its law in 1913, the year Acme purchased the Olean glass house. It is thus unlikely that the glass house *actually* produced any bottles with the number. We have found no listings for Olean Glass as a milk bottle producer.

## Second Olean Company

The two monograms listed below were identified by Toulouse (1971:400). As we have no better suggestions, we have accepted the Toulouse assertion as correct.

### **OG monogram** (probably 1929-1935)

Jones (1965:[22]) first identified this mark in print as belonging to Olean; however, she failed to add any dates. Toulouse (1969:229) dated a Mason jar with an OG monogram embossed on one side ca. 1929-1939. In his second book, Toulouse (1971:400) accurately identified the OG monogram as being used by the second Olean company, and dated the mark from 1929 to 1942. Creswick (1987:154) noted that the “trademark patent #271,692 was issued on June 17, 1930, to the Olean Glass Co., Inc. Olean, NY.” The text of the trademark registration indicates that the mark was first used on October 1, 1929, and consisted of the monogram in a circle (Figure 4). Giarde (1980:75) showed the mark both by itself and in a circle, although he followed Toulouse’s dates. We have seen an example of the circle mark on a motor oil bottle from the 1930s. The mark should only appear on machine-made bottles.



Figure 4 – OGCo monogram (eBay)

Although Thatcher gained control of Olean in 1935, the plant continued to operate independently as demonstrated by a 1938 Olean ad (*Glass Packer* 1938). Because Olean continued to operate as its own entity until 1943, the Toulouse date of 1942 for the last use of the Olean monogram may be correct or very close. Scholes (1941:129) also showed this mark as being used by Olean in 1941. The mark was probably only used on liquor bottles and would thus

only be found with the plant, date, and distiller's codes required by federal law from 1934 to 1964. It is also possible that Thatcher adopted the OGCo monogram to replace the OG monogram in 1935 but almost certainly left the earlier logo on bottles until the molds wore out. Scholes may have been using old information.

### **OGCo monogram (1935-1941)**

Toulouse (1971:400), also claimed that the second Olean Glass Co. used an OGCo monogram virtually identical with the one used in the 1880s by the Ottawa Glass Co. (see the Ottawa Glass Co. section or Lockhart et al. 2006 for more about the older logo). This monogram had a large “O” in the center flanked by a “G” to the left and a “Co” to the right. The “o” in “Co” was nestled inside the “C.” Unlike the 19<sup>th</sup> century monogram, this one was surrounded by a circle in the only example we have seen.



Figure 5 – OGCo monogram

The only photo we have of the OGCo monogram shows a base embossed D-230 {OGCo monogram in a circle} 2-6 / 7 (sideways) M-845 B.

The “2” was the glass house code for Olean, and “6” was a date code for 1936 (Figure 5). This mark, too, was probably only used on machine-made liquor bottles. It was likely adopted by the Thatcher Mfg. Co. upon the acquisition of the Olean Glass Co. in 1935 and used until Thatcher completely absorbed the Olean plant in 1941.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

As noted above, it is apparent that neither incarnation of the Olean Glass Co. embossed any kind of mark on the vast majority of its goods. The exceptions were almost certainly required by law or by a customer. The early firms – from 1883 to 1913, certainly used the terms “OLEAN” and “OLEAN GLASS CO.” – the former only to fulfill the requirement of the South Carolina Dispensary – and may have used at least two slight variations of the O.G.CO. initials. It is also possible that the initials were used by a small glass house that we have not identified and/or for a very short time.

The two marks directly attributable to second Olean Glass Co. – both monograms – were probably only used on liquor bottles and flasks. These were required by the 1934 federal law and were probably only used by Olean Glass because of necessity.

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