

WEBER

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From 1902 to at least 1937, the O.J. Weber Co. was a jobber of dairy equipment, including milk bottles. During the first 20 years – possibly later – Weber had its bottles embossed “WEBER” on the bases. Despite its location at Los Angeles, California, Weber purchased bottles from at least two Eastern glass houses, the Essex Glass Co. and the Standard Milk Bottle Mfg. Co. – although some were also made by the Pacific Coast Glass Works in California.

History

O.J. Weber Co., Los Angeles, California (at least 1906-1936)

The February 1902 issue of the *Rural Californian* (1902:82) announced the opening of the O.J. Weber Co., a creamery and dairy supply house, at 557 S. Los Angeles St. The article noted that Weber had “some seventeen years experience in outfitting creameries” and suggested that his equipment and prices would “be more than satisfactory. There is unlimited capital back of this firm which enables this house to carry a larger stock than any other concern of a like character on the Pacific Coast.” Weber’s ad in the same journal (p. 150) offered “Sanitary Milk Bottles” and “Sanitary Bottle Caps,” evidently supplying dairies too small to order directly from the glass factories (Figure 1).

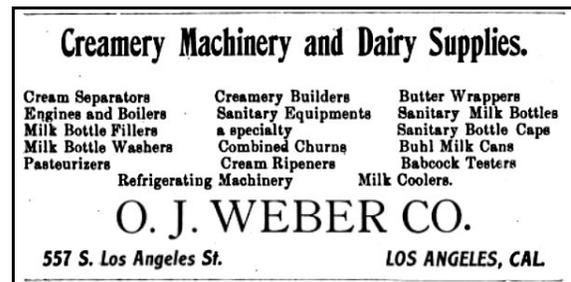


Figure 1 – 1902 ad (*Rural Californian* 1902:150)

The *Los Angeles Herald* for September 1, 1903, noted that Weber was the “secretary of the milk board of trade” and quoted him as saying that Los Angeles was “getting the purest and richest milk of any city In the United States.” In 1934, Weber advertised

A New Stimulant to Milk Sales – Applied Color Milk Bottles tell your sales story in such a way that everybody sees it and no one forgets it. Now made in Los Angeles exclusively by the Owens-Illinois Pacific Coast Co. and Sold by O.J. Weber Co. (*California Milk News* 1934).

The *California Milk News* (Volumes 33-34) carried regular weekly ads from the O.J. Weber Co., 512 E 8th St., by this time a corporation. As noted in the September 14, 1934, issue, the Owens-Illinois Pacific Coast Co. was the manufacturer by that time. The firm also carried amber milk bottles, embossed with dairy names. Some of these, at least, had “WEBER” basemarks (Dairy Antiques Site 2016). These should not be confused with amber bottles from the Weber Milk Co. – a dairy. The O.J. Weber Co. remained in operation until at least 1937 (*Farm Implement New* 1937:331; *Milk Trade Journal* 1917; *California Milk News* 1936; *Rural Californian* 1906:297).

Containers and Marks

WEBER (ca. 1910-ca. 1920)

We have seen several milk bottles embossed on the base with the name “WEBER” in an arch, an inverted arch, or horizontal (Figure 2). All are on bottles from press-and-blow machines and have plate labels for California dairies or are from California sites. One had a glass factory mark – “E - 4 EMPIRE 13” on the heel and “KEYSTONE PAT AUG 13 01 (arch) / WEBER (inverted arch)” with the two meeting to form a circle on the base. The “E-4” mark was used by the Essex Glass Co. which was in business from 1906 to 1919, operating several eastern factories. The first record we have found of the “E-4” mark was in 1914, although a “4E” logo was reported in 1913 (*Stevens Point Journal* 1913; *Milk Dealer* 1914). The mark, however, may have been used as much three years earlier, when the state of New York enacted the first number code requirement.



Figure 2 – WEBER (eBay)

Another bottle was embossed “KEYSTONE PAT. AUG. 13, 01 / WEBER” around the outside of the base and “EMPIRE / B 5 // ONE PINT / S.C.S.D.” on the heel. “EMPIRE” was the logo of the Empire Bottle & Supply Co., a jobber of milk bottles, based in New York City. Charles T. Nightingale, president of the operation, received Patent No. 34,919 for a bowling pin shaped milk bottle on August 31, 1901 – the date on our examples. Weber may have been Nightingale’s western distributor. Although the “KEYSTONE” logo was frequently associated with “EMPIRE” and the 1901 patent, we do not know its significance. For more on Empire, see the Other E section.

“S.C.S.D.” was a “seal” code for one of the cities the state of Ohio. Beginning in 1909, various states required these “seals” to be embossed by glass houses selling milk bottles within their borders, although Ohio shunted that chore to individual cities. The first three initials indicated the Sandusky City Sealer, with “D” to represent a currently unknown glass house. Weber may have dealt with Eastern glass houses, although the initials may have been on the mold used for the bottle. See Lockhart et al. (2017) for more information on milk bottle seals.

To make the situation more complicated, “B” was the symbol of the Butler Bottle Co. (1909-ca. 1916), open during the correct period for both EMPIRE and WEBER. However, the number for Butler was 24; 5 was the number for the Winslow Glass Co. Since the numbering system did not appear to begin until ca. 1910, this “B 5” may have been used earlier, with the “5” unrelated to the later numbering system. The “5” may be a mold number or other code. In fact, the entire “B 5” mark may be something other than a manufacturer’s logo. Buck used the B1 mark, but that was much later.

Giarde (1980:134) also encountered such bottles and considered them a mystery. He noted:

During the course of research WEBER showed up on the bottom of a small group of bottles and has left a mystery as to its significance. While at first, WEBER seemed to represent a maker’s mark, it is now doubtful.

WEBER appears on milk bottles without any known manufacturer’s mark but also on bottles made by Standard Bottle Manufacturing Company. The Group of Weber marked bottles all were from Southern California Dairies and all seemed to

pre-date 1920. There were enough different dairies in different locations with WEBER on the bottles to greatly reduce the possibility this referred to the owners.

The Standard [Milk] Bottle Manufacturing Co. was in business at Parkersburg, West Virginia, from 1910 until 1913, when it was absorbed by the Essex Glass Co. (*Commoner and Glassworker* 1910:1; Giarde 1980:109-110). It seems reasonable that Weber's original orders were with Standard, and that he switched to Essex after the latter plant's acquisition. See the sections on Standard and Essex for more information on those firms and marks.

An eBay auction offered a milk bottle embossed "SMBMCO" (the Standard Milk Bottle logo) on the heel and "KEYSTONE (arch) / PAT. AUG. 13, 01 (inverted arch)" on the base. The dairy was in Kalamazoo, Michigan. The same seller offered four bottles with the Keystone and patent base (although only one with SMBMCO), all from Michigan dairies.

We have also discovered a milk bottle embossed "WEBER" in an arch on the base with "P.C.G.W." on the heel (Pacific Coast Glass Works – see that section for more information). Another variation was embossed "KEYSTONE (arch) / WEBER (horizontal) / PAT AUG. 13, 01 (inverted arch)" on the base, but the "KEYSTONE" was narrow at both ends then wider in the middle.

In summary, "WEBER" could be in an arch, an inverted arch, or horizontal – although there was probably no temporal attachment to any of them. In all likelihood, the differences in format came at the whim of the individual mold maker. In most – if not all – cases, the horizontal configuration had a taller letter in the center, tapering toward each end.

Discussion and Conclusions

Given the general limitation of the "WEBER" mark to Southern California milk bottles, it seems virtually certain that the mark indicates the O.J. Weber Co., one of the region's largest dairy equipment supply houses. Association with the marks of Standard and Essex suggests that the "WEBER" logo was in use by 1912 until at least 1914 – possibly continuing for a few years made by the Pacific Coast Glass Works.

Acknowledgments

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