



If you ask anyone who knows anything at all about the North Baltimore Bottle Glass Company, there are several things they are likely to tell you. 1) It was in North Baltimore, Ohio, then moved to Indiana. 2) They made bottles. 3) It was started by A.L. Pfau and I.W. Richardson.

The last of these statements is false. It was not started by these gentlemen, who wouldn't have known this little Northwest Ohio town from a bump in the road. Instead, it was created and promoted by a man who had connections to both the town and the men. His name was John J. Gehgan.

That man was son-in-law to one of the town's oldest and most respected pioneers, Levi Tarr. He was not a local though. He was a traveling man, calling Cincinnati home. He had married Sarah, Levi's



John J. Gehgan

daughter in 1885. John was therefore aware of the impending boom about to take place in this area. He knew people with money to invest, and kept them posted during his travels of any possible opportunities to increase their wealth.

John himself was not rich, but modestly well-off. He had in the past worked in the tobacco industry, was a soldier in the Civil War, and finally elected to the Ohio Legislature. He quit that and took a position as Assistant Food and Dairy Commissioner, which allowed him to travel extensively.

He realized that North Baltimore was virgin territory for manufacturers, and with the discovery of gas, was an opportunity not to be missed. Findlay was already getting crowded; North Baltimore was busy, but still had plenty of elbow room. John made arrangements with one of the town's most prosperous farmers, Jacob Dirk. Jacob agreed to sell his farm, provided that it was bought outright. This was in June of 1887. John returned to Cincinnati to pursue the means for funding a glass factory.

Several weeks spent down there were enough to guarantee this. The rights to the farm were secured the next month, and by the sixteenth of July the papers were proclaiming the forthcoming "novelty glass works" to be built. The next step was forming a company to make glass. This involved several steps, not the least of which was money.

The soon-to-be company was capitalized at \$50,000. The money for this needed to come from somewhere. This was found in ready supply from Cincinnati businessman A.L. Pfau, referred to by the local papers as a "French Capitalist". Mr. Pfau put forth the first capital, and found others to promise the rest.

The next thing he needed was talent. This he found in the form of Isaiah W. Richardson Sr., superintendent of the Hemingray Glass Company. Isaiah already

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knew about the boom from his boss, Robert Hemingray, who had already traveled the area. He had considered putting in a factory at Maumee, but declined for reasons unknown.

Both of these men, Pfau and Richardson, had more reasons to stay where they were than to move. Mr. Pfau was in business in the busiest city in Ohio. The move would have taken him to a town the size of several Cincinnati neighborhoods. Mr. Richardson had been in the employ of the Hemingray glass works for over twenty years, and was an established part of the business. The draw of the gas boom was the chance at prosperity beyond one's imaginations, and these men had plenty of imagination.

A Mr. Wood from Tontogony did the initial survey of the property. He also platted the first residential properties connected with the project, to be known as Gehgan's Addition. Later, Pfau had his two of his own additions surveyed. These two areas ran from Main Street across to Jewett Street.

Outside of the survey nothing was done physically with the project for several months. That time was spent organizing the needs, both financial and material, of the upcoming facility. Richardson was at the head of designing the factory, and his designs were to incorporate some novel and untested ideas. This wasn't unusual in this area, at this time, as the reduced expense for fuel allowed the glass companies more leeway in trying new ideas.

It was on December 2, 1887 that the land became the property of John Gehgan. He transferred it over to the corporation, now named the North Baltimore Bottle Glass Company. It was December that the men



involved started descending down upon North Baltimore. Mr. Pfau, and his family moved down to temporary quarters, as did the Richardsons. Isaiah was delayed in his arrival by illness. A complaint of pneumonia put him to bed, and doctors wouldn't allow him to travel for weeks. His family remained in Cincinnati until May of 1888.

A temporary office was put in with Frank Taylor, the firm's local lawyer, in November, so that all correspondence could be handled promptly. Work began on the foundation in December, with gas pipe laid in a few weeks later to provide heat for the construction crews. The first job was removing the top soil. It was known that the limestone bedrock was just a few feet below the surface here. Plans called for building the facility right on top of it.

This wasn't the only novel feature of the factory. The entire lower level was occupied by annealing ovens, which comprised the outer walls of the structure. These ovens were specifically for beer and soda bottles, which were thicker than most other glass receptacles. The factory was also going to turn out thousands of fruit jars, mostly of the Mason variety. These would be annealed on the same floor as the furnace. The lesser thickness of the jars required less heat and time to anneal, hence

the dual set of ovens.

There was more to do at the construction site than just raising a building. There was only one railroad in North Baltimore, the Baltimore and Ohio. The factory site was over a half-a-mile away to the north. The railroad was willing to connect them to the tracks, but refused to put in so extensive of a siding. Mr. Pfau put a crew of ten men onto the problem. They set to work making ties and grading the surface. The railroad met them part way by laying the rails, and putting in the switch. Once installed, the flow of building materials increased dramatically.

One of the largest single components shipped to the rapidly rising factory was the iron smoke stack. Once assembled, the stack was 60-feet long; when installed it rose 80-feet above the ground. This immense ferrous pipe was constructed in Findlay. It remained the tallest object in town until the Zihlmann factory was built.

As work progressed on the buildings, so to did the organization of the firm. Mr. Pfau was originally going to fill the position of secretary, and Mr. Richardson that of president. This was soon changed; Mr. Pfau became president, Mr. Geghan became vice-president, and Mr. Richardson took that which he was suited for – superintendent. The first secretary of the firm was M.B. Waldo, a position he essentially bought.

Mr. Waldo was head cashier of the People's Bank. He had wished to purchase stock in the bottle works. His wish was granted, and a transfer of ten thousand dollars bought him a seat on the top. It was not stated if this money was his personally, or the bank's. As the bank later went in bankruptcy due to improper financial dealings, the latter is quite possible. His position with the glass works was later filled by R.C. Wilson, and later still by Isaiah W. Richardson Jr.

The factory was up and running the first week of May, 1888. The same week the notice was given that blowing would commence, Mr. Pfau announced that another, totally separate glass factory would build on the site. This was to be the Enterprise Glass Company, manufacturers of window glass.

The bottle works started their blowing on fruit jars, presumably Mason's Patent jars. They were some filling orders for beers; both blob and crown tops, sodas; especially Hutchinson style, mineral waters, and carboys. There was talk initially

of manufacturing telegraph insulators, as this was a specialty at Hemingray. No evidence suggests that any were ever made here; if they were, then they did not carry the company's identification mark.

All of the North Baltimore Bottle Glass Company's standard molds were carved with a miniature "NBBG Co", placed on the rear heel of the bottle.

Private molds were different, and carried no distinguishing mark. For example, Frank J. Cheney, a Toledo, Ohio druggist/medicine manufacturer, had his bottles made in North Baltimore. In one year alone, the bottle works churned out nearly 500,000 of the 4-ounce Hall's Catarrh Cure bottles.

The blowers could turn out a reported 125 gross of fruit jars in a day. To put that in perspective, that comes to 18,000 hand blown jars. There were, at the time of the report, 60 blowers employed. That comes to 300 jars per man per day. If that were to be carried through a whole season, it would add up to nearly 4,000,000 jars, in addition to everything else they made.

Volume was important to Mr. Pfau, who preferred dealing with carload lots of bottles than smaller orders. Eventually, much of their business came from major brewers and bottlers in cities like Philadelphia, Chicago, and Milwaukee.

Officers were elected in January 1892. Albert Pfau retained his position as president, and also handled the secretary's position. Joseph F. Jewett was elected to the vice-president's station, Isaiah Richardson Sr. remained manager, and his son I.W. Richardson Jr. was made



Chas. Westerholm, Chicago, Ill



Close-up of Westerholm embossing

secretary. That same month, Albert Pfau lost his son Armin to an unknown but deadly ailment. His funeral and interment were carried out back in Hartwell Heights, the family home near Cincinnati.

Business was good for the factory. They had enough orders to keep them running full the whole season. This continued through the years, right into the time when natural gas became a scarce commodity. By the time the gas was turned off to the North Baltimore factories, the bottle works had built a second factory on-site to handle all of their orders. The gas problem was not easily solved, and the officers contemplated moving. Still, much time, effort and money had been put into their existing facilities.

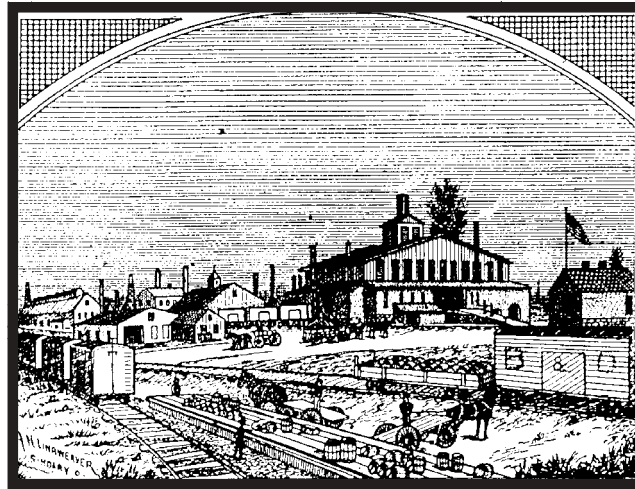
Indiana beckoned; so tempting was the offerings in that state that the bottle works actually had stationery printed up showing their address as Albany, Indiana. This town's offer was tabled, and a refitting of the North Baltimore facility was undertaken.

A new technology was installed, utilizing a fuel that was still abundant in the area – oil. Several large boilers were installed, as well as an air compressor. The oil was heated up, and then blown through the burners via the compressed air. The system worked well enough for them to continue operating in North Baltimore for a little while longer.

One drawback with using oil actually came from the town fathers. Many had grown jealous of Mr. Pfau, who by now was the richest man in town. The factory began their oil experiment using tanker car loads delivered to the factory daily. To streamline the process, a pipeline was laid into the factory. The problem with it was that it crossed a street, and as soon as the mayor found out, he sent the marshal down to stop the work. All the men there were arrested, and the pipe already laid was torn up.

This created very hard feelings; this animosity increased a short while later when Mr. Pfau hired more men to drill under the road. This too was stopped. Eventually, the line was laid, but not before threats were hurled threatening lawsuits and more.

The oil apparatus worked surprisingly well, and attracted a fair amount of attention. One group of interested sightse-



ers was headed by Solon Boughton, the president of the then defunct Crystal City Glass Company of Bowling Green. He was impressed with the oil burners, but not enough to ever install them in his own factory.

In 1895, the firm finally took up Albany on its offer, and moved the plant to Indiana. The name remained the same, and did so for the remainder of its existence. The bottles too retained the distinctive initials, so distinguishing those from Ohio and those from Indiana are difficult. A few years later, a new plant was built in Terre Haute, and the Albany plant eventually was phased out of business.

The Terre Haute plant ran into trouble in 1920, with the passing of Prohibition. They had carved a niche for themselves in the brewing market, and with the outlawing of alcoholic beverages, they nearly collapsed. They struggled for many years, finally succumbing to defeat in 1933. To add insult to injury, that was also the year that the Prohibition Amendment was repealed.

An interesting side note on the North Baltimore Bottle Glass Company concerned one of their employees. In 1899, a fellow by the name of Chapman J. Root was hired on as secretary of the firm. He had come from another glass factory, which he had managed since 1894. He was with the firm only a short

while before creating his own company, the Root Glass Company, also of Terre Haute.

The Root Glass Company achieved fame by winning a contest sponsored by the Coca Cola Company. Coke was looking for a bottle that would be recognizable to everybody, even by touch in the dark. Chapman Root's design team came up with the winning style. Even today the "hobble skirt" design is incorporated into modern plastic bottles. The concept was supposed to be based on the cola nut, but was mistakenly drawn from a picture of the cocoa bean.

One of the members of Root's design team was Alexander Samuelson, who had temporarily moved to Terre Haute for the work. His permanent address at the time was Newark, Ohio. He was given one of the first bottles from the design, which remained with the family for many years.

One thing that you won't read anywhere else about C.J. Root is this – he was already an employee of the North Baltimore Bottle Glass Company as far back as 1892.

He appears on the employee roster, though his job description is not mentioned. So the originator of the famous Coca-Cola bottle was actually a resident of North Baltimore, Ohio, at least for a short while.

In December of 1898, Mr. Richardson's friend and former employer, Robert Hemingray Sr. passed away at his home at 219 Garrard Street in Covington, Kentucky. Isaiah, accompanied by Mr. Pfau, went back to Cincinnati to attend the funeral. Mr. Hemingray was 79.

