

Perfection, Another Glasshouse In A Glass Town

By Barry L. Bernas

Overview

The Perfection Glass Company was an active business in Washington, Pennsylvania for about three years. Formed as a "stock company" in June 1903, it folded five months later. Revived quickly thereafter, its new owners continued with an extensive line of separating tableware and packing containers. A new style of fruit jar was even introduced.

Plagued by insufficient capacity for glass-making and product storage problems, operations were discontinued at the factory for Perfection Glass in the waning months of 1906. In name only, the firm hung on for another two years before it quietly slid into history. Little known to most collectors of early twentieth century pressed and blown glass, this corporation was just another concern in a town known far and wide for its glass-making prowess.

Roots

The lineage for the Perfection Glass Company travels backwards on two separate but related paths. On the jobber side, it calls the Perfection Manufacturing Company of Washington; the Perfection Bottle Company of Washington and Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania; and the Perfection Water Bottle Company of New York City all close relatives. For glass producers in its past, the Sterling Glass Company, Novelty Glass Works and the Blair Glass Company are direct ancestors as well.

Figure 1

<u>Stockholder</u>	<u>Shares</u>	<u>Director</u>	<u>Officer</u>
John Slater	Five	Yes	
A. M. Brown	Five	Yes	Treasurer
Jonathan Allison	Five	Yes	
B. F. Roberts	Five	Yes	
W. B. Fenn	Five	Yes	
John W. Donnan	Five	No	
G. W. Roberts	Five	No	
A. G. Happer	Five	No	

Location

The headquarters and plant for the Perfection Glass Company were located in the First Ward of the Borough of Washington. These rented facilities were situated on several plats of land between the intersections of West Strawberry Alley, South Franklin and West Maiden Streets. A glasshouse had been operating on the premise since 1893.¹

Company Formed and Incorporated

Eight people invested in the initial Perfection Glass Company. Six were businessmen from Washington. The other two weren't native to the Borough but were officers in both the Perfection Manufacturing and Sterling Glass Companies of that location.² Five of these individuals became Perfection's first set of directors. Figure 1 shows the original stockholders for this firm. Of note, only the two non-Washingtonians, William B. Fenn and Benjamin F. Roberts, had any glass manufacturing experience and it was limited at best.

On June 18th, 1903, the chosen directors stepped before a notary public in Washington and filed an application to incorporate their endeavor. Twenty-one days later the governor of Pennsylvania approved their request. With that action, the Perfection Glass Company was chartered as a corporation within the Commonwealth.³

Observation

This organization was established to underwrite expansion of the glass production capability at the plant of the former Sterling Glass Company. Yet the new corporation was capitalized at only \$10,000.

In addition to this paltry sum, there was another troubling aspect to the Company's start-up. Of the one hundred shares of stock available at founding only forty were purchased by the eight investors.

The result of both actions saw the Perfection Glass Company with perhaps \$4,000 in liquid capital of which a mere \$1,000 was available right away for corporate business.⁴ No matter how you look at it, this amount wasn't much money to upgrade a factory.

In my opinion, both issues may have put the fledgling concern on shaky ground from the beginning. The small number of shares purchased by the founders didn't express much confidence in their undertaking. Likewise, the placing of only the required sum in the hands of Alex M. Brown didn't provide sufficient financial resources to achieve the purpose for establishing the firm in the first place. When looking at these two actions from afar, the initial message sent by the incorporators wasn't very positive.

First Order of Business

Normally, the initiatory work of officers from any new glass company would be focused on construction of a plant. For Perfection leaders, this wasn't the case. A factory already existed. Hands there were making products for sale. Orders had been obtained and shipments were being forwarded. In a nutshell, operations were already well founded and were proceeding in a satisfactory fashion.

What the first order of business was for Perfection officials isn't known to me. However, if I was in their shoes, I'd have centered my attention on completing consolidation of functions then being performed by employees at the Sterling Glass and Perfection Manufacturing Companies. Once this was achieved, the united Perfection Glass Company would be firmly entrenched.

With Corporation ephemera in limited supply, I used the issuance of a promotion from the Perfection Glass Company as

AN IDEAL ACHIEVED!
Sparkling Crystal Separating Glass

"If it separates it's perfection."

The pride and glory of the housewife. Gives an air of refined elegance to the table or sideboard because of its originality and dainty gracefulness.

Rich in design—Beautiful in brilliancy of finish—Sensible in its separating features—Thoroughly sanitary—cleanliness unsurpassed—Easily filled and cleaned—Locked by hand—same nickel ring—More economical and satisfactory than the ordinary kind and sold at the same price.

Made in an endless variety of Water Bottles, Water and Claret Sets, Cruets, Syringes, Butter Dishes, Sugar, Cream and Spoon Holders, Bitters, Phosphate, Cologne and Barber's' Brushes, Document and Chilling Bottles, etc.

Handsome booklet, "Fruitful of Tenth Centuries," tells all about them—mail for the price of your order's name.

Crat. No. 232
At your dealer's, or sent prepaid for 35 cents

Crat. sent direct prepaid for 35 cents

**PERFECTION GLASS COMPANY
WASHINGTON, PA.**

Fig. 2

the indicator of when combined operations were accomplished. This happened almost two months to the day after the firm's directors filed their incorporation request. The first Perfection Glass advertisement appeared in the August 15th, 1903 edition of *The Saturday Evening Post*. **Figure 2** shows this announcement.

Another Issue - More Capacity

The next issue facing corporate leaders would prove to be less easy to resolve. The two prior concerns absorbed by Perfection Glass had developed and had been marketing a popular product line of separating tableware. The continuing demand for these items exceeded the glass-making capacity of the former Sterling works. Expansion of this capability was needed if orders were going to be filled on-time by Perfection hands in the future.

One option Company directors were exploring was to move-out of Washington to another municipality. Moundsville, West Virginia was a site under consideration. Perfection leaders wanted five acres of land donated to them along with a loan of \$75,000 to erect a factory. Town leaders in Moundsville couldn't reach an agreement on these terms.⁵

When the relocation deal turned sour, Perfection managers sought to build another plant close to the Washington area. About fifteen miles northeast of Washington in Bridgeville, Pennsylvania, a \$250,000 production facility was envisioned. The Bridgeville Real Estate Company even gave Perfection officials a tract of land as an enticement to continue with their plans.⁶ However, these didn't materialize either.

Observation Two

Any Perfection Glass upgrade or relocation required money. Clearly, the firm's investors weren't going to provide the necessary funds or they would have done so from the beginning. Either other entrepreneurs or mortgage loans would be needed to complete any plan. In my way of looking at this situation, more debt at this point wasn't a good idea. The specter of overextension was beginning to rear its ugly head.

Corporation Products

Even with a production limitation, an advertising campaign was kicked-off in August 1903 by Perfection managers. Four of the major magazines of that day would eventually carry their promotions.⁷ **Figure 3** contains an illustration from one of these

periodicals. Also, the glass-trade weekly, *Crockery and Glass Journal* ran at least four Perfection Glass ads over a several month period.

In addition, two batches of catalogs were printed in September and October 1903.⁸ Titled an *Evolution of Table Glassware*, these depicted all of the articles Perfection hands were capable of manufacturing.

Two different pieces of Company letterhead from the same era depict examples of products as well. A sample can be seen in **Figure 4**.

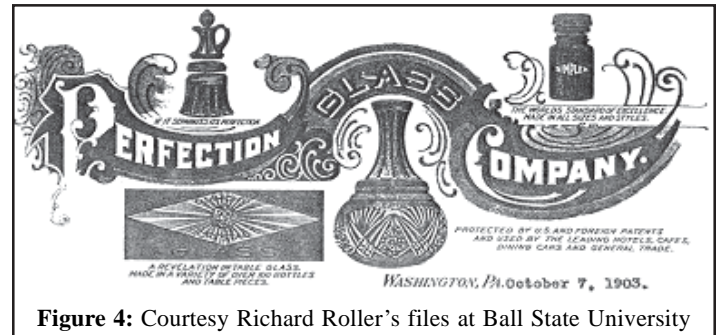


Figure 4: Courtesy Richard Roller's files at Ball State University

It is interesting to note a packer's jar appeared in the Perfection Glass brochure and on the firm's letterhead. It seems odd to me that Company officers would be advertising articles for the dining room table along with a pedestrian item intended for use by packers of prepared foods. The swath of utility between both makes it hard to explain why each was being turned out by Corporation employees.

Observation Three

Besides this strange circumstance, I'd like to make another observation. At this point in time, the Hazel-Atlas Glass Company of Wheeling, West Virginia had three factories within the Borough of Washington turning out fruit jars and glass containers for commercial products. Also, a major tableware manufacturer, the Duncan & Miller Glass Company, was in production within the town's limits. The line of wares being made by Perfection employees were in direct competition with those produced by these much larger firms. Regardless of the popularity of Corporation products, the head-to-head maneuvering between these concerns couldn't have been a good thing for a new business.

William Beach Fenn

At the beginning, Mr. Fenn was a prominent player in the amalgamated Perfection Glass Company. For one thing, his patents were the basis for the early success of this Corporation as they had been for others in the past. But with notoriety came the problem of expanding the new firm's production facilities to meet increased consumer demand. Upgrades or new sites required money. William B. Fenn played another key role here by spearheading Company efforts to acquire the financing. By doing so, he may have gotten in over his head.

A stranger to debt he wasn't. Around the time Perfection Glass was formed, William B. Fenn bought out the interest of his former partner, Russell Uhl; who was then the president of the Perfection Manufacturing Company. The total obligation to Mr. Uhl was \$17,500.⁹

It isn't known whether Mr. Fenn took the same approach with the owners of the Sterling Glass Company. Even though there was no public notification of this happening, I think we have a pretty good indicator it did. The tell-tale sign was the



Figure 3: The Munsey, November 1903.

non-involvement of the four former Sterling Glass owners in the establishment of Perfection Glass. My guess is they were bought out by William B. Fenn as well.

If the second situation occurred as I've theorized, it is easy to interpret what was going on. William B. Fenn secured control of the Sterling Glass and Perfection Manufacturing Companies in order to put both to work under his auspices as the new Perfection Glass Company. This would not only solidify his position of control; it would also facilitate growth under his direction.

On top of these payback commitments, Mr. Fenn had incurred \$49,600 indebtedness for 496 shares of stock in the Republic Glass Manufacturing Company in September 1902. Also, he reportedly paid \$40,000 for the Washington-based works of the Phoenix Glass Company in April 1903. Now in late September, he was involved in a \$250,000 arrangement in Bridgeville. Besides these entanglements, William B. Fenn had several short-term loans coming due to the tune of \$27,000.¹⁰

Even with this superficial overview, it is clear to me Mr. Fenn was over-stretched if not overextended financially. As the central figure for Perfection Glass, it was his responsibility to move the Corporation forward. I guess he was doing it the best way he could at the moment. Regardless of the visible signs of prosperity, the unrevealed truths about the solvency of the nascent Perfection Glass Company were yet to be made public. These all came to a head in late October 1903.

But before this happened, the firm suffered a serious setback. The alert for this problem started to sound when several bills from prior Perfection concerns went unpaid. Faced with mounting debt, Mr. Fenn took a course of action to resolve this issue. He withdrew \$2,650.45 from his personal accounts and had \$5,000 worth of Perfection Glass goods packed up and shipped to New York. Unannounced, he departed Washington sometime after October 26th, leaving the co-owners of the Perfection Glass Company to face the coming problems by themselves.¹¹

Wage Dispute - Workers Walkout

Right after Mr. Fenn fled, sixty of his employees filed suit in Washington civil court for wages due them. Two weeks worth of pay or about \$2,500 was to have been handed out on Saturday, October 24th but that day came and went without any recompense. According to the workers, they

were then told pay day would take place on October 27th. When no money was forthcoming from Perfection managers that morning, the workers walked off the job at noon and hired a lawyer to represent their interests in the matter. The plant was closed down shortly thereafter.¹²

With the linchpin for Company operations gone and available money to cover corporate expenses in short supply, the Perfection Glass Company was placed in the hands of the local constable and scheduled for sale. About three weeks later, one of the Borough's newspapers reported this event as follows.

"FIRES TO BE RE-KINDLED AT PERFECTION PLANT - Creditors Who Purchased the Fenn Interests May Resume Work at an Early Date. At the sale of the interest of W. B. Fenn in the equipment and ware, finished and unfinished, of the Perfection Manufacturing company by Constable G. V. Clutter \$3,597.95 was realized. The sale was made on labor claims filed by employees of the concern and the amount of the sale paid 78 per cent of the claims. The balance was made up by the purchasers of the Fenn interests who are two of his largest creditors. The sale included part of the machinery of the plant, some of the lehrs, molds, office fixtures, finished and unfinished ware. Among the molds sold were those for making a fruit jar invented by Mr. Fenn for which a patent is pending. The jar is said by the trade to be one of the best ever got out. Mr. Fenn has been out of town for several weeks. It is understood that the plant will be started in full in a few weeks under control of the persons who made the purchase."¹³

Conclusion One

It looks like some of my earlier observations about the five month old Perfection Glass Company were correct. For one thing, people owed money by the Company cared more about this concern than the founders did for their start-up investment. When funds were needed to cover problems within the firm, the original shareholders weren't the providers. Their support for this endeavor was sub-par.

For another, William B. Fenn became cash starved and financially over-extended in several lines of credit. His business philosophy of borrowing to cover immediate expenses while buying time to address upcoming bills got him further

behind with each transaction. A realistic long-term repayment scheme for these debts was non-existent. Considering his critical position at Perfection Glass and the lack of empathy from the stockholders, both factors eventually consumed him and in turn doomed the Corporation.

Perfection Glass Reborn

Ironically, the new owners of the Perfection Glass Company were members of the prominent Caldwell family of Washington. These same individuals had owned and managed the Sterling Glass Company a few short months ago. Charles S. Caldwell became the concern's president while George L. Caldwell took over a familiar position as the Company's treasurer. The only holdover from the failed Perfection organization was Benjamin F. Roberts. He transitioned to become secretary in the revamped Corporation.

Under the same Commonwealth charter, Perfection leaders called back to work their employees. In the buildings on the plots of rented real estate in the Borough's First Ward limited glass-making recommenced on December 2nd, 1903. There were indications the factory closed once more before hands restarted melting and forming processes around December 18th. Still not ready for full-up manufacturing, this facility was shutdown again over the Christmas and New Year holiday period.¹⁴

Partial production resumed at Perfection's plant on January 7th, 1904. Outside of a gas leak under the furnace which caused an explosion and minor fire in early February, workers at this site slowly brought operations up to full speed over the succeeding weeks.¹⁵

Another Try to Increase Capacity

Four months after they resurrected the Perfection Glass Company, the new leadership team decided it was time to address the capacity issue of their works. On this occasion, they agreed to install a multi-ton continuous tank. Here is how a reporter from *Commoner and Glassworker* explained this encouraging development.

"A contract has been let by the Perfection Glass Co., Washington, Pa., for the erection of a 30-ton continuous tank for the manufacture of fruit jars." "The Perfection Glass Mfg. Co., Washington, Pa., have a new fruit jar that is expected to outclass all others owing to its having a glass cap and not metal being used; only a rubber band to

help seal the glass screw cap. Manager Chas. N. Edmunds devised a new form of mold for pressing the caps, so that it can be produced almost as rapidly as a cap without the screw thread. A ratchet arrangement is attached to the mold for withdrawing the screw as soon as the cap is pressed. A patent has been applied for and the device may also be used on an insulator mold or for making any glass article requiring a thread. A shaker salt with a glass top and glass salt stirrer is another unique novelty requiring a specially designed mold. An all-glass separated decanter with screw and requiring no metal fitting, and also a pressed round holophane globe are a few of the other new things lately devised by H. W. Taudte, foreman of the mold shop, and Manager Edmunds, all of which should prove winners. The company propose erecting a continuous tank this summer at which several shops will be employed producing the new glass top jar for which some excellent orders have been secured, and Secretary B. F. Roberts says there is a market for all they can turn out. The pot furnace and a small continuous tank are at present being operated.”¹⁶

SIMPLEX MASON

The fruit jar which Perfection hands were going to make was most likely the one embossed on the front with the word SIMPLEX in arched letters followed below by the term MASON in a straight line. **Figure 5** has a picture of a pint example of this article.



Figure 5: Pint SIMPLEX MASON jar.

Shaped like a normal home-canning container of that era, the appeal of this vessel was its all-glass screw cap. This cover would eventually be patented by Russell Uhl, a former partner and loan provider to the absent William B. Fenn.¹⁷ **Figure 5** has a depiction of this sealing device on top of the pint.

Other Products

The April entry in *Commoner and Glassworker* also indicated Perfection officers were going to continue making separating tableware items. However, there was a difference to be noted. For the new line, officials moved away from the coupling technique seen on prior products made to the patents granted to Mr. Fenn. Instead of a metal ring that screwed down onto a base with a threaded finish, the Corporation's new tableware articles would join together by means of an all-glass method. Whether this process used a glass ring that was internally threaded or an internally threaded screw cap molded onto the bottom of the container's top isn't known. Either way, the adoption of this methodology certainly made a simple idea much more complex.

Unfortunately, no mention was made of the SIMPLEX in a diamond packer jar with an all-glass cover in the *Commoner and Glassworker* report. Nevertheless, it seems this article was still being made from metal in the Company's pot furnace.

Map Company Documentation

Planning for the upgrade continued as did glass-making at the Perfection works. The latter halted when the traditional "summer stop" was observed at the end of June 1904. During the break in operations, a representative from the Sanborn Map Company visited Washington to update their drawings of the Borough. The portion of his effort which deals with the Perfection Glass Company is shown in **Figure 6**.

Extended Break - Moosic Facility Used

The restarting of metal-making by Perfection Glass hands should have taken

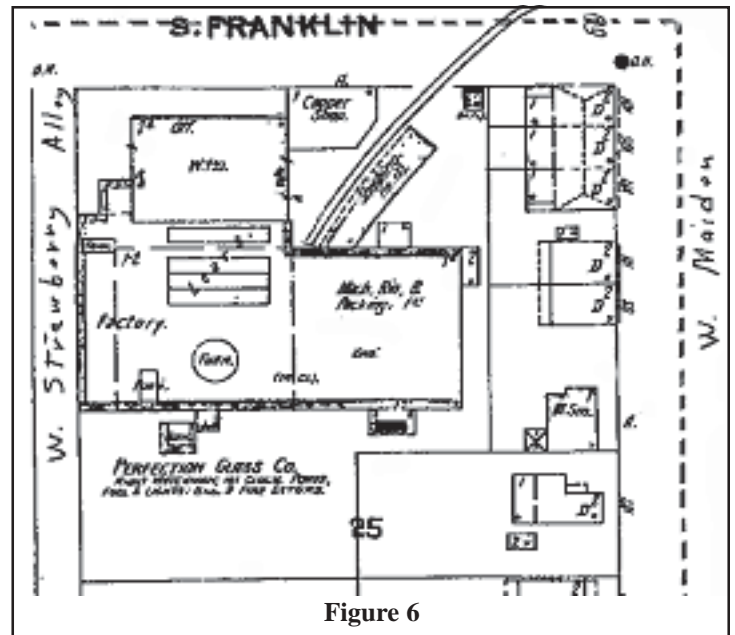


Figure 6

place during the first week in August. However, this didn't happen. A writer from *Crockery and Glass Journal* provided the reason it didn't.

"The Perfection Manufacturing Co. will not start up their plant at Washington till October. They are putting in a new continuous tank. It will require about six days to place it in running order. They will commence operating the plant at Moosic, Pa., August 15 on their new Simplex jar. They are not pushing their Perfection ware at present – merely taking care of their old patrons. B. F. Roberts, the manager, is now on a six weeks' trip, taking in big cities East and West, looking after the interests of their Simplex jar."¹⁸

The enhancement to the Perfection Glass Company's only plant in the Borough had finally commenced. Scheduled for about a three month period, the installation of a continuous tank would allow for a greater increase in production. In the meantime, another facility in Moosic, Pennsylvania would be used to continue the output of Perfection goods on a temporary basis.

The Moosic connection was with the Republic Glass Manufacturing Company. It was an idle firm formed in September 1902 by John P. Elkin and William B. Fenn. This concern was to have made the Simplex in a diamond style of container along with the all-glass, May 3rd, 1904-patented screw cap for it. Unfortunately, outside of a short-period of production and limited operations as a substitute for the Perfection factory in Washington, the Republic Glass facility was never in full operation.¹⁹

It looks like the Moosic portion of the plan kicked-off as intended. Unfortunately, as October came and went, the other piece wasn't completed. A three month project stretched into the next year and beyond. In February 1905, equipment previously shipped eastward to Moosic was uninstalled and sent back to Washington. With this step, the Republic Glass part of the vision was terminated and the site closed down. Eight months after the continuous tank installation began; glass-making was restarted in early April 1905 at the Washington works of the Perfection Glass Company.²⁰

A worker for *Crockery and Glass Journal* captured the firm's reopening in the following way.

"The Perfection Glass Co., started their plant again the past week, and are {sic - is} now in regular operation. They are devoting themselves to a tableware line which embraces in various pieces their celebrated "separating" ware, and to their patented Simplex jar, which seems to have a big promise of popularity. They have a nine-pot furnace and have just completed an eighteen ton continuous tank. B. F. Roberts, the secretary and treasurer, is also general manager."²¹

Observation Four

Why the Moosic facility was used by Perfection officials while their main factory was being upgraded isn't clear. Either John P. Elkin approached Company leaders with the option or he was somehow involved with the second Perfection Glass Company in a less-than public way.

Business is Good

With the upgrade completed and production moving toward a full state, the outlook for Company directors, officers and workers couldn't help but be bright. A steady demand for factory goods promised renewed profits. By all accounts, Perfection Glass should begin to thrive once more.

Early May 1905 brought a patent request for the screw cap to be used on the fruit jar embossed on the front with SIMPLEX (in arched letters) followed below it by MASON (in a straight line). The submitter was Russell Uhl. He assigned the eventual letters patent for it to the Perfection Glass Company.²²

Observation Five

I'm still puzzled as to why a merchant

from Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania with no known inventive proclivities suddenly submitted a patent request for an all-glass screw cap made to fit on a Mason-type of jar. Even more troubling is the fact that he signed over the eventual rights to the Perfection Glass Company; a firm he wasn't visibly associated with in any manner.

Mr. Uhl was the former partner of William B. Fenn in several endeavors. While involved, he didn't seem to take an active role in these concerns. Instead, he left the daily workings of them to his associate while he stayed in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, preferring to manage his own businesses there. Unfortunately, as a result of his involvement with Mr. Fenn, he lost much of the \$17,500 he invested. Recouping some or all of this money must have occupied a portion of Russell Uhl's time. The strange set of circumstances that led to his December 5th, 1905 patent must have had something to do with regaining his lost funds.²³

Another Problem Arises

Production at the renovated Perfection works continued unabated up through the middle of June 1905. At this point, another unanticipated problem developed. A columnist from *Commoner and Glassworker* described this situation in the below account.

"When the Perfection Glass Mfg. Co., of Washington, PA., endeavored to operate their plant on night and day turn recently it was found that they did not have room to handle all the ware that was produced, and as the present site will not admit of enlargement of the factory the firm are contemplating the erection of another works near Washington for the purpose of producing their new Simplex jar on a more extensive scale. A regular Mason jar body is used with a patent screw glass cap..."²⁴

The capacity issue was now replaced by a dilemma for the storage of pressed and blown goods. Since their rented grounds couldn't be tapped for more space, another factory was envisioned to take some of the production responsibility off of the Perfection plant. The division of effort between both would enable more articles to be turned out and stored than was currently possible. If successful, it looked like Company officers had come up with a win-win situation.

Production Continues - Fruit Jar Output Stopped

After the "summer stop" in July 1905, employees at the Perfection works quickly brought glass-making back to normal levels in August. A reporter from *China, Glass and Lamps* succinctly captured Corporate progress and management intentions when he wrote the following about a month later.

"The Perfection Glass Co., of Washington, Pa., are {sic - is} operating two shifts on their tank and pot furnace, running nine shops on one turn and eight on the other. The company note {sic - notes} a heavy demand for their glass screw caps, which are made on special machines, and will probably give their entire tank capacity to the production of this line of ware, abandoning the manufacture of fruit jars until they can increase the capacity of the plant."²⁵

Perfection - Anchor Connection?

In my opinion, the first step towards the elimination of the goods storage problem at Perfection Glass occurred in mid-October 1905. In a Borough roughly thirty-five miles east of Washington, the weekly newspaper in Mount Pleasant, Pennsylvania announced the formation of the Anchor Glass Company. This organization was to be one of several to build and operate manufacturing facilities on the Duncan Plan of Lots next to the town limits. The columnist who described this important event added the Anchor plant would be operating a day and night shift by January 1906, employing at least two hundred workers. Their labor would produce fruit jars, preserve bottles and packer's ware from valuable patents owned by this organization.²⁶

Curiously, one of the founders of Anchor Glass was Charles N. Edmonds. At this point in time, he was still the factory manager for the Perfection Glass Company in Washington.²⁷

Beside this fact, he and his two partners, William L. Harvey of Mount Pleasant and John W. Ely of Washington, had no patents issued to them by the United States Patent Office. The ones referenced in *The Mount Pleasant Journal* columns most likely belonged to Perfection Glass and not Anchor.²⁸ In all likelihood, these were for the Simplex in a diamond packing container seen in **Figure 7** with its May 3rd, 1904-patented closure. The other was undoubtedly for the soon-to-be-

patented, all-glass sealer by Russell Uhl. It and the SIMPLEX (arched on one line) MASON (straight line below) marked fruit jar were also candidates for production at the new Anchor plant.

By coincidence or more probably by design, Mr. Edmonds was soon to be replaced at Perfection. Here is how the glass-trade journal, *Commoner and Glassworker*, covered this development.

“Rumored Changes at Washington - It is reported that the Perfection Glass Co. at Washington, Pa., will be run under the general management of J. G. Quay, who formerly had charge of the Riverside Glass Co.’s tableware plant at Wellsburg, Pa. The capital stock of the Perfection company has been increased and new lines will be added which will greatly increase the output of the works.”²⁹

The change of factory managers could have been just one facet of a more comprehensive strategy by Perfection officials to put their goods storage hurdle behind them. An employee of good standing with the Company, Mr. Edmonds may have agreed to leave it to establish another glass factory. The new one would be affiliated with Perfection Glass.

In late November, the rumored change occurred in Perfection’s management group. As 1906 was dawning, the Company’s future was rosier than ever.



Figure 7

Observation Six

In the documents I’ve searched, there wasn’t any direct connection found between both the Perfection or Anchor concerns other than Charles N. Edmonds, the stated objective of Corporate officers to set-up a new factory and the undefined patents. Nevertheless, this circumstantial data certainly suggests the Duncan Plan industry was intended to be the associate facility to resolve the goods storage issue for Perfection Glass Company managers.

Perfection and Hazel-Atlas Connection

The *Directory of the Glass Trade* for 1906 carried the Perfection Glass Company as an operational concern. Charles S. Caldwell remained the president. B. F. Mevey was listed as the vice-president. With the departure of George L. Caldwell, Benjamin F. Roberts assumed both the secretary and treasurer positions in the Company. John G. Quay had succeeded Charles N. Edmonds as the plant manager. According to the Corporation’s entry, hands in the factory were pressing and blowing flint tableware, novelties, fruit and machine-made jars or bottles.³⁰

Unfortunately, the scheduled opening of the Anchor Glass Company’s works in January 1906 didn’t occur. In fact, materials hadn’t even arrived for construction to start by the first weeks of the New Year. This circumstance likely caused Perfection leaders to scrap this portion of their plan. Instead, they made an arrangement with counterparts in the Hazel-Atlas Glass Company to take over production of the Simplex in a diamond embossed, packing jar and cap along with the Russell Uhl-patented, screw closure. This deal would allow the Perfection facility to be put toward a new line of tableware at full capacity.³¹

Another Part of the Overall Vision

There was another less visible part of the scheme to increase the overall storage space for manufactured items within the Perfection Glass Company. This involved moving the firm’s current production facility out of Washington altogether. Among other things, this course of action was no doubt caused by a property lease that was about to expire in April 1907.³²

Towards this end, Perfection officers entered into a contract with John P. Elkin on January 13th, 1906. By the terms of this agreement, Corporation leaders purchased the land in Moosic, Pennsylvania on which the works for the Republic Glass

Manufacturing Company and Standard Graphite Company resided. Their intent was to tear down the Standard plant and erect one of their own to make glass.³³ This new concern would likely operate in conjunction with the adjacent but idle Republic Glass factory.

Trademark Registration Sought

As production continued at the Washington-based works of Perfection Glass, firm officials decided it was time to register the word SIMPLEX as a Company trademark. On April 4th, 1906, Charles S. Caldwell started the process by submitting the request.³⁴

Observation Seven

At first, Mr. Caldwell’s action didn’t make much sense to me. Why would he wait almost three years to register the term SIMPLEX? It wasn’t until I discovered the Hazel-Atlas arrangement that I began to understand his motive. When the popular SIMPLEX in a diamond-embossed packing container was being turned out solely by Perfection workers, there was no need for Company leaders to seek a trademark registration for the term used to describe their product. However, once another corporation started to manufacture and market it, the question of royalties could arise. Unless the rights to the name SIMPLEX were in the legal possession of Perfection officers, the payment of these on a long term basis could become a matter of contention. To head off any potential legal battles in the future, I’m convinced Mr. Caldwell took the belated step to secure the trademark rights for the word SIMPLEX shortly after the Hazel-Atlas deal was consummated.

Production Continued - Pot Bursts

While relocation preparations continued, production moved forward in the Borough factory of Perfection Glass. Just prior to the “summer stop” beginning, an impediment to continued operations occurred at the Company’s works. A Washington newspaper reported this event as follows.

“POT BURST AT PERFECTION WORKS – A twenty-five ton pot at the Perfection glass works on South Franklin street burst at an early hour this morning and an alarm was turned in from box 12 at the corner of West Wheeling and South Franklin streets. The department was soon on the ground

and had a stream of water playing on the molten glass as nothing in the factory had ignited. The employes {sic-employees} had the factory hose out and a small stream playing on the glass when the department arrived which kept the fire from spreading to the surrounding wood work. The pot had been placed in the factory about six months go {sic-ago} and had been considered in good shape but shortly before 1 o'clock she let go, pouring the molten glass on the floor. These pots are made of pottery clay and are supposed to last during one fire, or one year. The bursting of the pot will lay off about 60 employes {sic - employees} at the present time. The factory would have closed down in two weeks for repairs. The loss will not amount to a great deal, only the injury to the pot, as all the glass can be used again."³⁵

Repairs Take Longer Than Expected

With repairs scheduled for the traditional break in operations, the Perfection workers should have been back to making glass by the first days of August 1906. Unfortunately, the reconstructive job took longer than expected. Here is how a trade journal reporter covered this development.

"The Perfection Glass Co. here has an extra amount of repairs to make at the close of the last fire, and will not start until next week. Their furnace, tank and boiler all had to be overhauled. They are devoting considerable attention to their patent fruit jar, which is proving of great practical value. They will place an attractive new short line of tableware on the market this month. J. G. Quay is general manager, and is giving a good account of himself in the character of his productions and the operations of the factory. They will illustrate their new line in the JOURNAL as soon as ready for the market."³⁶

Perfection Plant Discontinues Operations

The August 9th, 1906 account was the last mention of the Perfection Glass factory I could find throughout the remainder of that year. Presumably, the plant was started back-up in the middle of August. However, no proof of that action could be located. In my estimation, the works never reopened.

Company Active - Factory Closed

The *Directory of Glass Factories* for 1907 carried the same listing for the Perfection Glass Company as the one seen in the 1906 edition.³⁷ Normally, this fact would indicate the Corporation was open for business and making glass articles at its facility. But I don't believe this was the case at all. Three other pieces of data point toward the firm's plant being closed for good.

The first was the *Washington Directory* for 1907-08. It didn't have a listing for the Perfection Glass Company in it. Besides this piece of compelling information, Perfection wasn't listed as an industry paying wages in the Borough during 1906. The final reference contained the most telling data of all. A January 16th, 1909 report in *The Washington Observer* stated the works for Perfection Glass hadn't been open since sometime in 1906.³⁸

By my best estimate, the manufacturing side of the Perfection Glass Company discontinued operations around October 1906. From that time forward, Corporation leadership likely wrestled with the option of whether or not to relocate their home office and idle facility to Moosic.

Nothing about Perfection in 1907

Outside of the *Directory of Glass Factories* entry and the completed registration for the Perfection trademark, there was no other mention of this organization throughout 1907. I assume the notion of moving to the northeastern part of the Commonwealth was still open and being debated by the remaining directors of the Corporation.

Moosic Option Goes Up in Smoke!

The *American Glass Trade Directory* for 1908 carried a listing for the Perfection Glass Company. The line item for this firm indicated it had a plant equipped with one furnace, nine pots, one continuous tank, and eight rings. C. S. Caldwell was carried as

FOR SALE.

1 Air Compressor 10x12x10,
1 105 H. P. Steam Engine,
1 35 H. P. Gas Engine,
1 150 H. P. Boiler,
1 Teeple & Johnson machine,
3 Miller Automatic Jar Machines,
Various presses, iron for lears, etc., etc.
For further particulars address

Perfection Glass Co.
Washington, Pa.

Figure 8

the president. B. F. Roberts continued to be the secretary-treasurer. Hands at the factory supposedly made flint tableware and novelties, fruit jars, packers and preserver's ware along with ink and paperweights. Also, there was a mold shop on the factory grounds.

The salient part of this entry was the asterisk before it. This marking device was placed in that position to caution the reader that Perfection's factory wasn't open and operating.³⁹ And as seen earlier, it hadn't been for over a year.

By mid-January 1908, the envisioned move to Moosic suffered a grave blow. A *Crockery and Glass Journal* writer reported on this development in the below account.

"The Republic Glass Co.'s plant at Moosic, Pa., which has been idle for some time, was recently destroyed by fire. Loss, \$30,000. It was owned by the Perfection Glass Co., of Washington, Pa. "Weary Willies" used the building for sleeping quarters, and the fire is blamed on the "guests"."⁴⁰

BUY CHEAP AT ONCE.

1 35 H. P. Bessemer Gas Engine
1 125 H. P. Multitubular Boiler.
1 10x12 Hamblin Steam Engine.
3 Miller Automatic Jar Machines.
4 Glass Presses—size 9 1/2 inches between uprights.
5 Glass Presses—size 14 inches between uprights.
1 6x6 Castis Air Compressor—Belt Driven
1 Buffalo Exhauster No. 4.
1 Commercial Dynamo—50 Amperes.
Iron Stack, Damper, etc. complete for 8-ring, 15-ton tank
Iron for five lears.
From the
PERFECTION GLASS COMPANY,
WASHINGTON, PA.
Figure 9

The End

Officers of the in-name-only Perfection Corporation now had to decide whether to continue to pursue their ultimate goal or dissolve the Company. Their answer came quickly. Figure 8 appeared in the February 29th and March 7th, 1908 editions of the *National Glass Budget*.

The initial equipment sell-off was followed by a final round one year hence. After the roof of the firm's factory collapsed,⁴¹ the remaining machinery in it was offered for sale in April 1909.⁴² See Figure 9. Once this gear was disposed of, the owners dissolved the organization. With this last act, the Perfection Glass Company took its rightful place as a brief chapter in the industrial history of Washington, Pennsylvania. BLB

Endnotes

¹ "Two Corners in Time," Barry L. Bernas, *Bottles and Extras*, Winter 2005,

pgs.66-71.

² *Complete Directory of Glass Factories and Potteries of the United States and Canada*, Commoner Publishing Co., Box 555, Pittsburg, Pa., 1903, pg. 18 and *R. L. Polk & Co.'s Washington Directory 1903-1904*, R. L. Polk & Co., Publishers, Pittsburg, Penna., pg. 139 and 292.

³ *Washington County Corporation Book 2*, pgs. 289-291.

⁴ According to Pennsylvania law, ten percent of the capitalization figure (\$10,000) had to be placed in the firm's treasury at the time incorporation papers were filed. This would mean \$1,000 in cash was given to Perfection's treasurer, Alex M. Brown, for deposit. The \$4,000 sum was the amount paid by the original investors for the forty shares of Perfection Glass Company stock when the firm was founded.

⁵ *Commoner and Glassworker*, August 1, 1903, pg. 1.

⁶ *National Glass Budget*, September 26, 1903, pg. 2 and *Crockery and Glass Journal*, October 8, 1903, pg. 35.

⁷ The magazines were: *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *McClure's Magazine* and *The Munsey*. Advertisements may have appeared in other periodicals but I haven't found any of these as of yet.

⁸ District Court of the United States, for the Western District of Pennsylvania, Docket No. 2339.

⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁰ *Ibid* and *Commoner and Glassworker*, May 3, 1903, pg. 4.

¹¹ District Court of the United States, for the Western District of Pennsylvania, Docket No. 2339.

¹² *The Washington Observer*, October 29, 1903, pg. 1 and *The Washington Reporter*, October 29, 1903, pg. 1.

¹³ *The Washington Observer*, November 19, 1903, pg. 1.

¹⁴ *The Washington Observer*, December 3, 1903, pg. 1; *National Glass Budget*, December 5, 1903; *Crockery and Glass Journal*, December 10, 1903, pgs. 19-20; *Commoner and Glassworker*, December 12, 1903, pg. 1; *Ibid*, December 19, 1903, pgs. 1-7; and *Glass Trade Directory for 1904*, Commoner Publishing Co., Box 555, Pittsburg, Pa., pg. 22.

¹⁵ *The Washington Reporter*, January 6, 1904, pg. 1; *Ibid*, February 3, 1904, pg. 1; and *Commoner and Glassworker*, February 6, 1904, pg. 1.

¹⁶ *Commoner and Glassworker*, April 9, 1904, pg. 1.

¹⁷ United States Patent Office, application filed May 20, 1905, Serial No. 261,319, Patented December 5, 1905, No. 806,602.

¹⁸ *Crockery and Glass Journal*, August 11, 1904, pg. 28.

¹⁹ District Court of the United States, for the Western District of Pennsylvania, Docket 2339.

²⁰ *Commoner and Glassworker*, February 25, 1905, pg. 1.

²¹ *Crockery and Glass Journal*, April 13, 1905, pg. 25.

²² United States Patent Office, application filed May 20, 1905, Serial No. 261,319, Patented December 5, 1905, No. 806,602.

²³ *Cataloging a Russell Uhl-Patented, Glass Screw Cap*, Barry L. Bernas, *Bottles and Extras*, Spring 2004, pgs. 29-33.

²⁴ *Commoner and Glassworker*, June 17, 1905, pg. 5.

²⁵ *China, Glass and Lamps*, September 23, 1905, pg. 13.

²⁶ *The Mount Pleasant Journal*, October 12, 1905 and *Ibid*, October 26, 1905.

²⁷ *Anchor Glass Company A Maker of Fruit Jars and Other Glass Products*, Barry L. Bernas, *The Guide To Collecting Fruit Jars Fruit Jar Annual 2002*, Jerome J. McCann, 5003 W. Berwyn Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, pgs. 22-34 and *The Anchor Glass Company, A Southwestern Pennsylvania Corporation*, Barry L. Bernas, 239 Ridge Avenue, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, February 2003, pgs. xi-xii.

²⁸ Charles N. Edmonds, J. W. Ely and William L. Harvey were the founders of the Anchor Glass Company. These men didn't have any patents issued to them by the United States Patent and Trademark Office by 1905.

²⁹ *Commoner and Glassworker*, November 11, 1905, pg. 2.

³⁰ *Directory of the Glass Trade 1906*, Commoner Publishing Co., Box 555, Pittsburg, Pa., pg. 21.

³¹ *The Anchor Glass Company A Southwestern Pennsylvania Corporation*, Barry L. Bernas, 239 Ridge Avenue, Gettysburg, PA., 17325, February 2003, pgs. 20-21 and *Cataloging Process for the Fenn-Designed, 1904 Patented, Screw Cap*, Barry L. Bernas, *The Guide To Collecting Fruit Jars, Fruit Jar Annual Volume 10-2005*, Jerome J. McCann, 5003 W. Berwyn Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, pgs. 16-20.

³² *The Washington Reporter*, October 24, 1894, pg. 2. When the Blair Glass Company was sold, one of the terms of the receiver's sale was the inclusion of a rental agreement which could be extended up to April 1,

1907.

³³ Lackawanna County Deed Book, Volume 216, pgs. 280-281 and *Crockery and Glass Journal*, May 10, 1906, pg. 24.

³⁴ United States Patent Office, Statement and Declaration, Application filed May 9, 1906, Serial No. 19,393. Registered Feb. 19, 1907, No. 60,759.

³⁵ *The Washington Observer*, June 19, 1906, pg. 1.

³⁶ *Crockery and Glass Journal*, August 9, 1906, pg. 25.

³⁷ *Complete Directory of Glass Factories in the United States and Canada 1907*, compiled of the *Commoner & Glassworker* by H. W. Gauding and J. G. Kaufmann, McKenna Building, First Avenue and Ross Street, Pittsburg, Pa., pg. 22.

³⁸ *R. L. Polk & Co.'s Washington Directory 1907-08*, R. L. Polk & Co. Publishers, Pittsburg, Penna. and *The Washington Observer*, January 28, 1907, pg. 14.

³⁹ *American Glass Trade Directory 1908*, Commoner Publishing Company, Box 555, Pittsburg, Pa. pg. 25.

⁴⁰ *Crockery and Glass Journal*, January 16, 1908, pg. 34.

⁴¹ *The Washington Observer*, January 16, 1909, pg. 1.

⁴² *Commoner and Glassworker*, April 10, 1909, pg. 16.

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