

Two Corners in Time

by Barry L. Bernas

The venerable adage “a picture is worth a thousand words” really applies to the set of images I will introduce to you. Taken from drawings completed between 1891 and 1914, these show the same intersections of West Strawberry Alley (then Avenue), South Franklin and West Maiden Streets in the Borough, and later City of Washington, Pennsylvania. On these parcels of real estate, no less than four glass makers and associated jobbers made and sold glass products between 1893 and 1907.

First A Church

Originally the site of a Presbyterian church, the first business to be situated on the plats of land between the above roadways was a carriage factory owned by Sheldon B. Hayes.

Formed in 1841 as S. B. Hayes and Company, this firm was the first major industry in the Borough of Washington. The Hayes concern made Conestoga wagons, farm wagons, carriages and square-bodied stage coaches to support freight hauling and passenger travel locally and on the National Pike.

Demand for the Hayes product increased, causing more expansion to their carriage making facilities over the next ten years. Unfortunately for them, their original carriage factory on West Cherry Alley burned on December 8th, 1851. Two days later, the Hayes owners “...purchased the old Presbyterian

Church on the corner of South Franklin street. The next day the seats were removed, and all employees were as busy as if nothing had happened.”¹

Nineteen years later, the depiction in **Figure 1** showed how the Company, then known as the S. B. & C. Hayes Carriage Works, appeared to Washington residents.² The three-storied building on the top right was the renovated Presbyterian church. It sat at the juncture of West Strawberry Alley (along its right side) and South Franklin Street (in the foreground with wagons and carriages). Down to the left was the intersection of South Franklin and West Maiden Streets.

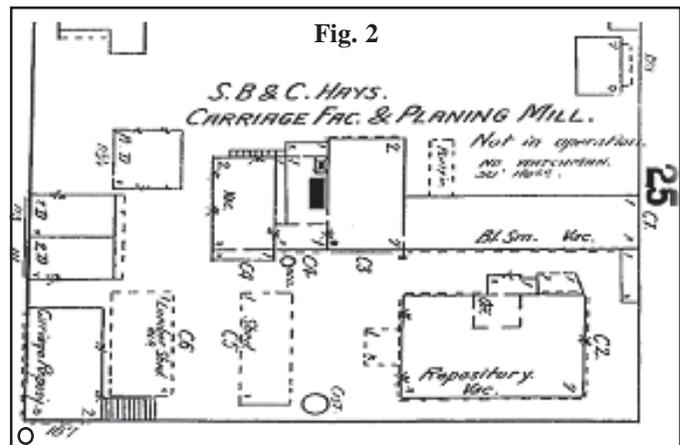
These same plots are presented twenty-one years later in **Figure 2**. By November, 1891, the Hayes business was not in operation; although, the idle buildings would soon house the sixth glass-making organization in the Borough of Washington.³

J. H. Blair & Company/Blair Glass Company

James Holmes Blair was born in the hamlet of Jefferson, Allegheny County,

Pennsylvania in 1864. The oldest of three boys, his father, George W. Blair, was a leader in the flint glass industry of Pittsburgh.⁴

Identified as a “Pittsburgh capitalist,” Mr. Blair became a shareholder in the Buttler Art Glass Company of Fostoria, Ohio when it was incorporated on August 13th, 1887. After the firm’s factory burned on November 9th, 1889, he turned his attention toward forming a new glass-manufacturing facility in Washington, Pennsylvania.⁵ Partnering with Charles N. Brady in this enterprise, the Jefferson Glass Company was set-up in 1890 to make cathedral glass.⁶



About two-years later, Mr. Brady bought out the interest of Mr. Blair in the Jefferson concern.⁷ After this, James H. Blair decided to form his own glass corporation in the Borough.

The first note of it came on March 25th, 1893. One of the town’s newspapers carried the following story.

“A NEW INDUSTRY - A Portion of the S. B. & C. Carriage Works to be Converted into a Glass Works. Washington is to have another industry which promises to be a productive one in the near future. From a reliable source it is learned that J. Holmes Blair has leased the blacksmith building of the S. B. & C. Hayes’ carriage factory, on South Franklin Street, and workmen are now engaged in remodeling it. The intention is to manufacture fancy colored glass ware, such as specimens, paper weights, etc. Pots will be erected and experienced men employed. It is the intention to have the works in operation in about three weeks. It is also probable that other portions of the carriage works will be leased by Mr. Blair.”⁸

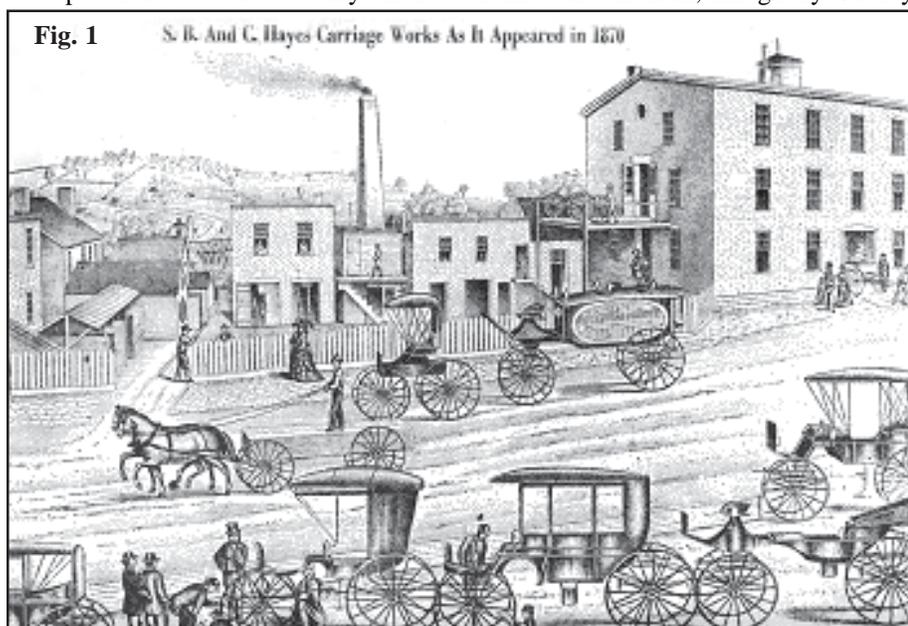


Fig. 1 S. B. And C. Hayes Carriage Works As It Appeared in 1870

May 1st saw the start-up of the factory of J. H. Blair & Company. Within six months of glass-making operations commencing, something occurred that caused Mr. Blair to take other partners into his organization. On September 22nd, he and four others filed to incorporate as the Blair Glass Company. The Commonwealth's governor concurred on October 12th. By the end of 1893, Blair Glass employed one hundred hands.⁹

Perhaps due to the lingering effects of the Panic of 1893, problems forced the Blair Glass Company into the hands of receivers on March 31st, 1894. The major stockholder, T. A. Gillespie of Pittsburgh, along with others, filed as the aggrieved parties.

The receivers couldn't correct the problems in this corporation. As a result, the firm was sold to Mr. Gillespie on November 17th. It was rumored the new owner would start-up glass-making in short order. That didn't happen. Instead, he transferred ownership to J. B. R. Streator and Samuel Hazlett of Washington.¹⁰ These men completed that action.

Novelty Glass Company/Works

On December 17th, 1894, the Novelty Glass Works opened.¹¹ Aside from a small fire in May, 1895, glass production proceeded along in a routine fashion. By the end of August, a new four-pot tank was being installed. It would increase employment to one hundred twenty-five persons.¹²

Functioning without much reporting, the Novelty Glass Works was surveyed by the Sanborn-Perris concern in June, 1896. As you can see in **Figure 3**, it occupied many more structures than the "blacksmith building" on the West Strawberry Alley, South Franklin and West Maiden Street intersections.

Drawn from a different perspective than Figure 2, Figure 3 picture tells us this facility had a separate box shop and warehouse (a former repository in Figure 2) astride South Franklin Street at the top left. In an adjoining building behind the warehouse on West Strawberry Alley was a room containing lehrs and one furnace with two glory holes. Connected to the right were other structures. In the order depicted, one was for mixing and packing. The next ones housed engine equipment, a mold shop, and a polishing facility. A shed of some sort stood to the right of the

rail spur that entered the works at the top-center section. For orientation purposes, the black dot in Figure 3 was the place where South Franklin met West Maiden.

The plant operated on a day and night shift. Steam was generated to power the equipment in the works. Natural gas was used for lighting and plant fuel.¹³

A year after the sketch in Figure 3 was completed, the Novelty Works burned. One Borough newspaper reported this event as follows.

"A Destructive Fire – Novelty Glass Works Go Up in Flames. Flames discovered after mid-night in packing rooms of Novelty glass works, on S. Franklin Sts. near Maiden, formerly the S. B. & C. Hayes carriage works." Two shops or 12 men were at work. Packing room was in the second story of the building with the engine room and mold department underneath it on the first floor. The works consisted of three separate buildings. The first was the original carriage works on Franklin St. It was made of brick and was two stories high. The building where the fire started was in the back of this structure. North of the last building was a one story high frame structure built for the blowing and pressing department. Suspected cause of the fire was a gas jet igniting paper or some other flammable material... The Works made novelties and tableware. Business was said to be increasing. Nearly 200 hands were

employed there..."¹⁴

The owners had to decide whether to rebuild in Washington or relocate to another municipality in the area. As part of a deal which raised \$3,000 from Washington residents, Novelty officials decided to stay in the Borough. Reconstruction started in early August. The first metal was melted in the new plant on September 20th, 1897. One hundred men were reemployed.¹⁵

May of 1898 brought another change to Novelty. The former owners, Messrs. Streator and Hazlett, were replaced by new leadership. Members of the Caldwell family took over a primary role in directing this firm when incorporation papers were submitted. On June 8th, their request was approved.¹⁶ The Novelty Glass Works was now a registered corporation in Pennsylvania.

In November, a reporter for *Commoner and Glassworker* described the enterprise in the following way.

"AT LITTLE WASHINGTON – All Her Factories Are Operating, With Good Time the Rule. Washington, Pa., Nov. 8. Every glass factory in this city is in operation at the present time and as a general thing the employees are faring pretty well, as far as making good time is concerned... The Novelty Glass Works in charge of Supt. Charles Hobbs, formerly of the old Hobbs glass works at Wheeling, is giving employment to 12 shops and Mr. Hobbs reports orders enough to

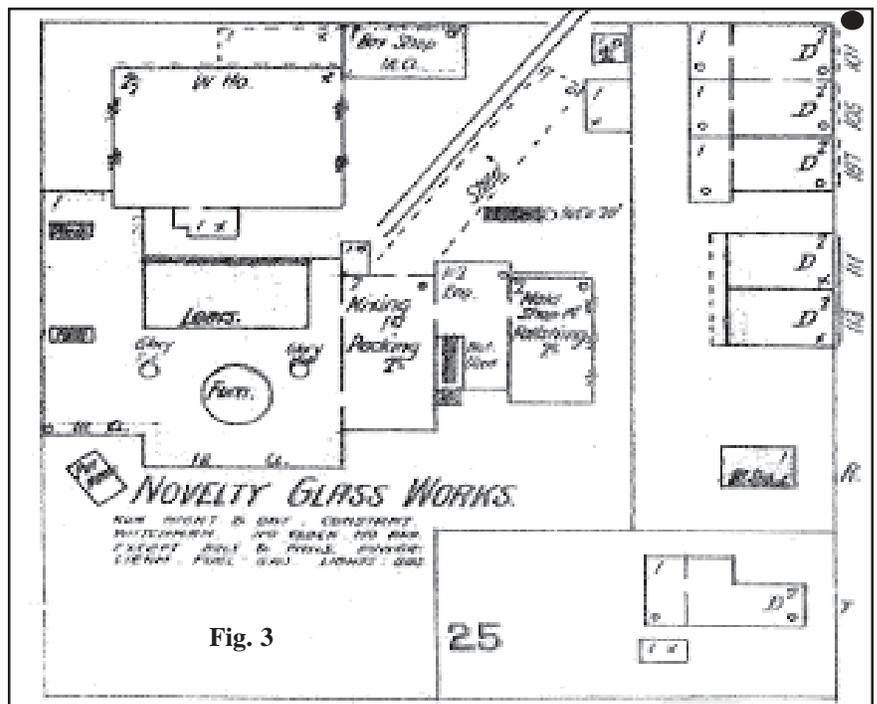


Fig. 3

keep them going all season. The men say they are doing better now than at any time this season, and intimate they are just getting down to their proper gait. Quite a number of new hands have been engaged at this place lately. The two tanks, as well as the furnace, are being operated here right along now.”¹⁷

Production continued on a fairly routine basis at Novelty through the turn of the century. **Figure 4** shows the layout of the Corporation when representatives from the same map business that completed the drawings in Figures 2 and 3 came back to Washington to update their records.

Aligned as the sketch in Figure 3, you can see the improvements that were made to the factory's physical structure as a result of the 1897 fire and subsequent enhancements.

The box shop at the top along South Franklin Street was enlarged. The factory building behind the top-left warehouse was somewhat larger than the pre-fire edifice. The right-hand side of the plant was enlarged to match the left on West Strawberry Alley. Some kind of “iron clad” material had been placed on the outer surface of the conjoined buildings. The Works was undoubtedly a success. According to verbiage appended to the map in Figure 4, one hundred twenty-five people were employed in the factory.¹⁸

In February, 1902, the management of the Novelty Glass Works had difficulty making ends meet. County Court action placed the firm into the hands of a receiver, William B. Fenn. At this time, trade paper reports indicated that the sole product output of the Company was a water bottle.¹⁹

A few months later in June, Mr. Fenn and the same Caldwells who had previously controlled Novelty since 1898 purchased the works at public sale. By late September, the new crop of officers decided to change the name of their operation to the Sterling Glass Company. Instead of only one product, the Sterling works started to produce an expanded product line consisting of different pieces of glassware, mostly made to the designs of William B. Fenn.²⁰

Sterling Glass Company

Over the next year or so, more people were hired. New lehrs were built. Better floors were laid. Approximately ninety

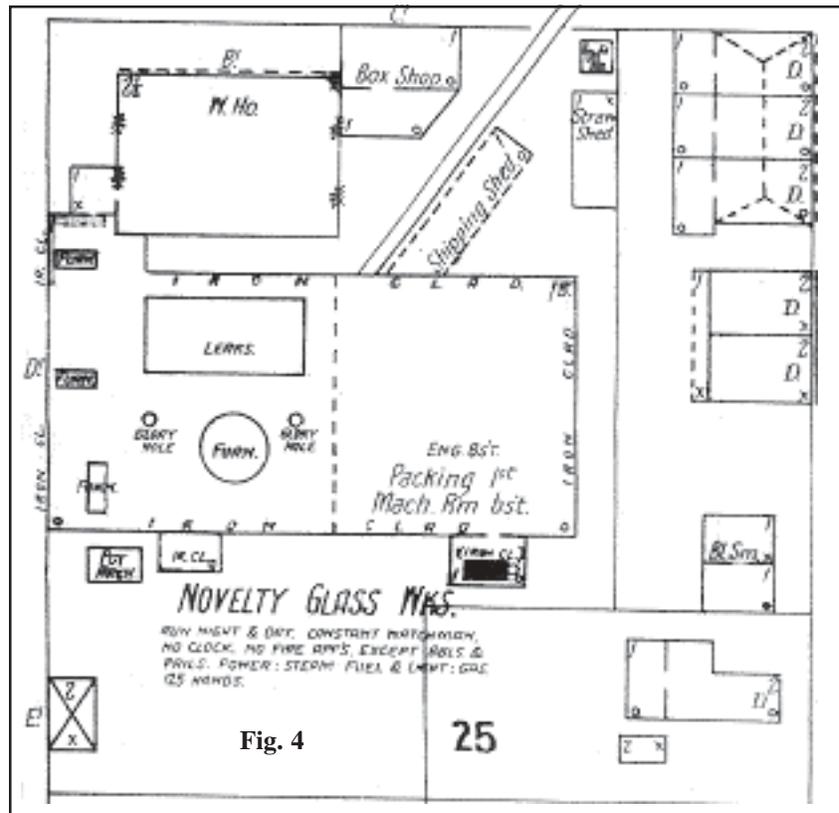


Fig. 4

per-cent of the machinery in the plant was changed out. It was reported by March, 1903:

“...there has been spent almost enough to have built a new factory... At the local factory are made each day from 10,000 to 12,000 complete pieces of separable table glassware, in oils, vinegars, etc., and also from 400 to 500 patented, scalloped and flanged tumblers. In the packing room and the storage room near the Petroleum Iron works is carried from \$18,000 to \$20,000 worth of stock.”²¹

The upgrades forced by increased product demand were costly. In an effort to raise more capital, another organization was formed in June, 1903. It was the Perfection Glass Company.²²

Perfection Glass Company

On June 18th, 1903, eight men from Washington, including William B. Fenn, applied to incorporate the Perfection Glass Company in the Commonwealth. Official concurrence was received on July 9th.²³ This organization soon absorbed the Sterling Glass Company along with a satellite firm, the Perfection Manufacturing Company.

Plans for the accelerated expansion of Perfection's over-all production capacity resulted in larger debts for the new operation. This situation only worsened

as the months passed. Eventually in October, 1903, the man who was the driving force behind the Perfection business, William B. Fenn, left town unexpectedly. Within a week, Company employees sued for back wages. By the middle of November, Perfection Glass folded. A newspaper reporter captured this event in the below account:

“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. W. 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.

The new owners, the Caldwell family members of the former Sterling Glass Company, revamped the firm's charter. Next, they reopened the plant briefly in early December on the same pieces of land between West Strawberry Alley, South Franklin and West Maiden Streets. Full production resumed the first week of January, 1904²⁴

The Sanborn firm once again returned to Washington in July, 1904, to revalidate their maps. **Figure 5** shows some of the improvements made to the plant when it was under Sterling management.

In addition to the structural and equipment upgrades, power for the factory was changed from steam to gas. A night watchman was employed at the works, so only day turns were scheduled at this time.²⁵

Under Caldwell supervision, the Perfection Glass Company moved away from the Fenn-inspired line-of-ware to one modeled from it. Along with this product, an all-glass packer and fruit jar was made.²⁶ The popularity of the later item caused another refitting of the plant to take place between August, 1904 and March, 1905. During this period, at least the SIMPLEX in a diamond-embossed, packer jar and closure making continued at the Republic Glass Manufacturing Company's facility in Moosic, Pennsylvania.²⁷

Change once more came to Perfection in November, 1905. A new plant manager was hired. With him came another vision from Company officers. The Caldwell owners now wanted to make a line of tableware in addition to their all-glass packer and fruit jars. Capacity at the works was limited. In order to accomplish this objective, the production of the packer container along with the cover for it and the fruit jar were probably shifted to the Hazel-Atlas Glass Company in early 1906.²⁸

As far as I can determine, the owners of the Perfection Glass Company were never able to achieve the tableware part of their objective. Come August, 1906, repairs to the factory were in order. There was no indication the plant ever reopened for business. Even though the 1907 *Glass Factory Directory* and *Thomas' Register of American Manufacturers* listed

Perfection Glass as an active firm, I think these entries were based on old information. This was undoubtedly valid when it was submitted but became inaccurate when other events overtook it.

In my opinion, two more reliable and up-to-date sources were the 1907 *Directory* for Washington and the Borough newspaper. The first carried no entry for this concern. Additionally, the second didn't mention Perfection as a business that paid wages in the Borough during 1906.²⁹ With no other credible data to work with, it seems to me Perfection Glass went out of business in late 1906.

By the time Sanborn surveyors came back to Washington in 1909, the Perfection Glass Company was a piece of history. The **Figure 6** drawing aptly shows this fact.

As you can see, the Hazel-Atlas Glass Company occupied the cooper shop. Since the adjoining office or warehouse contained paper, boxes and jars, it is presumed Hazel-Atlas was either using that building for storage or owned it outright. Gone from the Figure 6 drawing is any trace of a glass-making plant. In fact, it appears the building that housed that facility was torn down.³⁰

H-A and Perfection

Did officers from the Hazel-Atlas Glass Company buy the Perfection Glass Company and incorporate its plant, situated between the now familiar "two corners in time," into their production capability?"

The 1934 reprint of the 1904 *Glass Trade Directory* suggested this was what happened. The entry which caused this thought is quoted below.

"Perfection Glass Co., Washington. C. S. Caldwell, president; B. F. Roberts, secretary; George L. Caldwell, treasurer. General

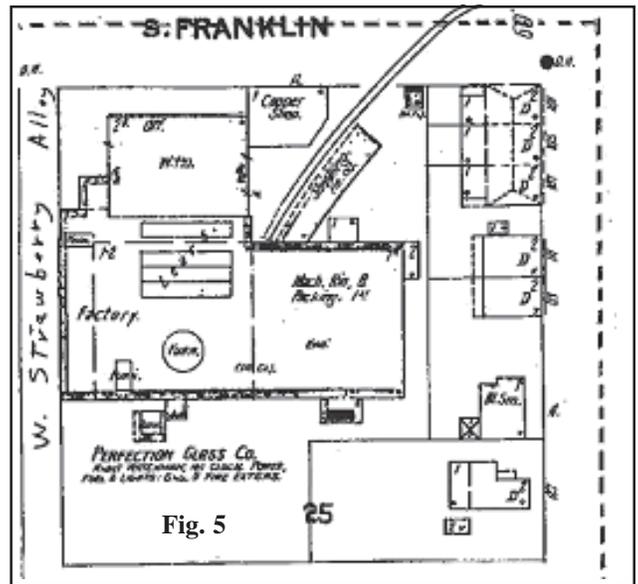


Fig. 5

tableware, novelties and insulators. 1 furnace, 4 day tanks. (Later part of Hazel-Atlas Glass Co.)"³¹

In my opinion, the factualness of the last statement, the one in parenthesis, is debatable for several reasons.

In the first place, the *Glass Trade Directories* for 1904, 1905, 1906 and 1907 carried a separate entry for the Perfection Glass Company.³² This shouldn't have happened if Perfection was a part of the Hazel-Atlas conglomerate.

Next, the *Washington Directories* for 1907-08, 1909-1910, 1911, and 1912-1913 didn't have a listing for the Perfection Glass Company. At the same time, the records in these documents for the Hazel-Atlas Glass Company didn't show a plant listed under the Perfection name or located within the "two corners of time" as one of their three production sites in the Borough.³³ To me these facts show that in late 1906, Hazel-Atlas didn't

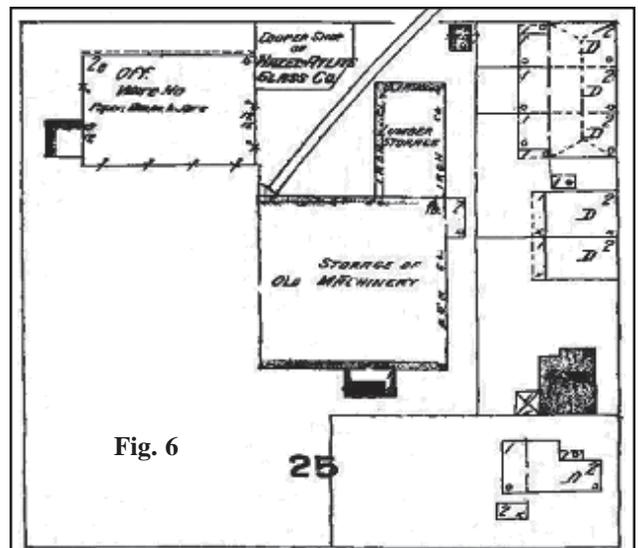


Fig. 6

own the Perfection Glass plant.

And finally, the annual review of industries in Washington for 1907 didn't list the Perfection Glass Company. Also, its works wasn't one of the three Hazel-Atlas production sites in the municipality.³⁴

The three elements of evidence I've provided seems to substantiate my claim that neither Perfection Glass nor its factory was ever a part of the Hazel-Atlas Glass Company.

Since 1893, a glass works had been located between the corners of West Strawberry Alley, South Franklin and West Maiden Streets in Washington, Pennsylvania. The last one, Perfection Glass, went out of business before 1907. As the final survey will show, no other company relocated to this spot in the intervening years.

The **Figure 7** sketch was done in December 1914. It has no trace of Hazel-Atlas' involvement, or interest from any other manufacturing concern, to occupy this piece of real estate. The wording on the depiction alludes to the buildings falling into disrepair from long term neglect.³⁵ It was at least seven years, and perhaps longer, since any glass company did business at this location.

Overview

As we've witnessed, glass-making firms occupied the land between the "two corners in time" for about thirteen years. In that period, they competed against several other larger, more nationally-recognized, local, glass-manufacturers for a piece of the product market about a century ago. While using Sanborn sketches as the main anchor for my story, other sources were employed to fill-in the history of those companies doing business inside the intersections of West Strawberry Alley/Avenue, South Franklin and West Maiden Streets in the Borough of Washington.

If you have any questions about the four concerns or care to share evidence about them, please contact me.

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References

¹ *History of Washington County From Its First Settlement to the Present Time, First Under Virginia as Yohogania, Ohio, or Augusta County Until 1871, and*

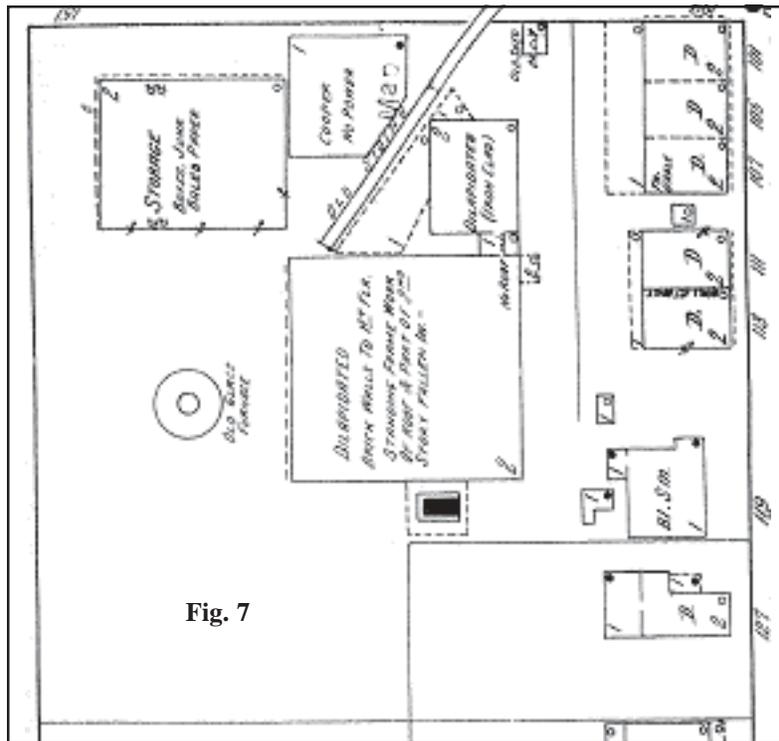


Fig. 7

Subsequently Under Pennsylvania, Alfred Creigh, LL.D., B. Singerly, Printer, Harrisburg, Pa., 1871, pgs. 353-354 and *The Washington Reporter, Sesquicentennial Edition*, August 15, 1958, Section II, pg. 1 and Section VI, pg. 27. This company wasn't the first to make Conestoga wagons in Washington, Pennsylvania. Alpheus Murphy and John Morrow had a well-known wagon making businesses in the Borough from 1820 until the middle of the 1850s. However, S.B. Hayes and Company and its successor S. B. & C. Hayes became the largest concern there to make these sturdy wagons.

² *The Washington Reporter, Sesquicentennial Edition*, August 15, 1958, Section III, pg. 57. This was an 1870 sketch.

³ *Sanborn-Perris Map Company*, 117 Broadway, New York, NY, November 1891. In order of establishment, the other five glass-manufacturing concerns were: the Hazel Glass Company; the Washington Glass Company; the Jefferson Glass Company; the Crescent Glass Company; and George Duncan's Sons & Company (later Duncan and Miller Glass Company).

⁴ www.familysearch.org, United States Census 1880 and *Commoner and Glassworker*, February 10, 1906.

⁵ *Blowpipes Northwest Ohio Glassmaking in the Gas Boom of the 1880s*, Jack K. Paquette, Xlibris Corporation, 2002, pgs. 184 and 187.

⁶ *Commoner and Glassworker*, March 15, 1890.

⁷ *Commoner and Glassworker*, April 6, 1892.

⁸ *The Washington Reporter*, March 25, 1893.

⁹ *The Washington Observer*, May 3, 1893 and January 1, 1894 and Washington County Recorder of Deeds, Deed Book 183, pgs 211-212.

¹⁰ *The Washington Observer*, April 2nd, 1894 and November 19, 1894 and *The Washington Reporter*, November 17, 1894 and December 18, 1894.

¹¹ The firm was listed as either the Novelty Glass Company or Novelty Glass Works, depending on the reference. It wasn't until after it was incorporated that the name consistently became the Novelty Glass Works.

¹² *The Washington Daily Reporter*, May 9, 1895 and August 31, 1895.

¹³ *Sanborn-Perris Map Company, Limited*, 115 Broadway St., New York, NY, June 1896.

¹⁴ *The Washington Daily Reporter*, June 1, 1897.

¹⁵ *National Glass Budget*, June 5, 1897 and June 19, 1897; *China, Glass and Lamps*, June 23, 1897, July 14, 1897, August 11, 1897 and September 22, 1897; *The Washington Daily Reporter*, July 8, 1897 and September 28, 1897; and *Commoner and Glassworker*, August 7, 1897 and August 28, 1897.

¹⁶ Washington County Corporation Book,

Volume 1, pg. 30.

¹⁷ *Commoner and Glassworker*, November 12, 1898.

¹⁸ *Sanborn-Perris Map Company, Limited*, 115 Broadway St., New York, NY, May, 1900.

¹⁹ *Commoner and Glassworker*, December 7, 1901; *National Glass Budget*, March 1, 1902; *China, Glass and Lamps*, March 1, 1902; and Washington County Equity Book 7, pgs. 208-209 and 221.

²⁰ *Crockery and Glass Journal*, May 30, 1902 and September 4, 1902; Washington County Equity Book 7, pg. 209; *China, Glass and Lamps*, September 13, 1902; and *Commoner and Glassworker*, September 20, 1902.

²¹ *The Washington Reporter*. March 26, 1903.

²² *The Washington Reporter*, March 26, 1903 and Washington County Corporation Book 2, pgs. 289-291.

²³ Washington County Corporation Book 2, pg. 291.

²⁴ *National Glass Budget*, September 26, 1903; *Crockery and Glass Journal*, October 8, 1903; *The Washington Reporter*, October 29, 1903 and January 6, 1904; *The Washington Observer*, October 29, 1903, November 19, 1903 and December 3, 1903; *Commoner and Glassworker*, December 12, 1903, December 19, 1903 and January 2, 1904; and *Glass Trade Directory For 1904*, Commoner Publishing Company, Box 555, Pittsburg, Pa, pg. 22.

²⁵ *Sanborn Map Company*, 11 Broadway St., New York, NY, July, 1904.

²⁶ The packer container was embossed SIMPLEX in a diamond with an all-glass, screw cap made to the May 3, 1904 patent granted to William B. Fenn. Of note, the rights to both were transferred to the Republic Glass Manufacturing Company (read the Honorable John P. Elkin) in a mid-1904 ruling that happened during the United States District Court trail against Mr. Fenn. The fruit jar was marked SIMPLEX MASON. It took the all-glass, screw cap made to the December 5, 1905 patent granted to Russell Uhl of Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania.

²⁷ *Commoner and Glassworker*, April 9, 1904, May 7, 1904, August 13, 1904, September 24, 1904, November 19, 1904, February 25, 1905 and April 15, 1905; *Crockery and Glass Journal*, April 14, 1904, May 19, 1904, August 11, 1904, December 1, 1904, March 2, 1905 and

April 13, 1905; *The Washington Reporter*, August 22, 1904 and September 17, 1904; and *The Washington Observer*, April 10, 1905.

²⁸ *Commoner and Glassworker*, November 11, 1905; *China, Glass and Lamps*, November 11, 1905 and April 21, 1906; *Crockery and Glass Journal*, November 16, 1905 and November 23, 1905; and *Fruit Jar Newsletter*, Dick Roller, 607 Driskell, Paris, Illinois, June 1983, pg. 175.

²⁹ *Crockery and Glass Journal*, August 9, 1906; *Complete Directory Of Glass Factories in the United States and Canada 1907*, Commoner and Glassworker, McKenna Building, Pittsburg, PA., pg. 22; *Thomas' Register of American Manufacturers Volume 3, 1907-08*, Thomas Publishing Company, New York, NY, pgs. 664 and 799; *R. L. Polk & Co.'s Washington Directory 1907-08*, R. L. Polk & Co. Publishers, Pittsburg, Penna.; and *The Washington Observer*, January 28, 1907.

³⁰ *Sanborn Map Company*, 11 Broadway St., New York, NY, December 1909.

³¹ *Glass Trade Directory For 1904*, Commoner Publishing Company, Box 555, Pittsburg, Pa., pg. 22. The 1934 reprint had this information on page 169.

³² *Glass Trade Directory For 1904*, Commoner Publishing Company, Box 555, Pittsburg, Pa., pg. 22, reprint pg. 169; *Directory of the Glass Trade 1905*, Commoner Publishing Company, Box 555, Pittsburg, Pa., pg. 22; *Directory of the Glass Trade 1906*, Commoner Publishing Company, Box 555, Pittsburg, Pa., pg. 21; and *Complete Directory of Glass Factories in the United States and Canada 1907*, Commoner & Glassworker, McKenna Building, Pittsburg, Pa., pg. 22.

³³ *R. L. Polk & Co.'s Washington Directory 1907-08*, R. L. Polk & Co. Publishers, Pittsburg, Penna.; *Ibid*, 1909-1910, pg. 197; *Ibid*, 1911, pg. 169; and *Ibid*, 1912-1913, pg. 189.

³⁴ *The Washington Observer*, January 27, 1908.

³⁵ *Sanborn Map Company*, 11 Broadway St., New York, NY, December 1914.