

The Dating Game: The C.L. Flaccus Glass Co.

By Bill Lockhart, Pete Schulz, Carol Serr and Bill Lindsay

The involvement of the Flaccus family with glass containers is complex and involved. While only Charles L. Flaccus actually manufactured bottles and jars, other family members used containers embossed with the Flaccus name. The name also appeared on numerous paper labels attached to glass jars. Thus, we address not only the C.L. Flaccus Glass Co. but also other Flaccus operations that used marked bottles.

History

C.L. Flaccus Glass Co., Tarentum, Pennsylvania (1879-1928)

C.L. Flaccus Glass Co., Leechburg, Pennsylvania (1880-some point before 1913)

C.L. Flaccus Glass Co., Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania (prior to 1893-1902)

C.L. Flaccus Glass Co., California, Pennsylvania (?-1919)

Charles L. Flaccus purchased the bankrupt Lippencott & Co. plant at Tarentum, Pennsylvania, in 1879. Despite the addition of other factories over the years, Tarentum remained the principal plant until the company's demise. In 1881 it had a single furnace with seven pots, making flint prescription ware. By 1890, production had diversified to include prescription ware, milk bottles, mustards, inks, nursing and perfume bottles, liquor flasks and bottles, and castor oils. Five years later, Flaccus was offering a full line of ware in flint and green (Creswick 1987:266; Humphreys 1882:57; Flaccus 1890; 1895; Teal & Wallace 2005:102; Welker & Welker 1985:54).

Flaccus opened a second factory in Leechburg, Pennsylvania, in 1880. At some point before 1893, he purchased the former Enterprise Glass Co. at Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania.

It was in the latter plant that he produced the first machine-made container glass in the United States. At the end of 1892, he received a license from the United States Glass Co. to use the two-mold Arbogast machine. After experimenting for a year, he began production in early 1894, the first product being Vaseline jars

(*National Glass Budget* 1910:1).

Flaccus enlarged the Tarentum plant in 1901 and incorporated in May 1904. At some time during the teens, he leased the California Bottle Co. plant in California, Pennsylvania, evidently until 1919. The business went into receivership in 1928, and the factory was sold the following year. The firm made prescription ware, whiskey, and proprietary medicine bottles, along with various types of jars in at least colorless and light green (*Glassworker* 1919:1; Teal & Wallace 2005:102; Welker & Welker 1985:54).

Toulouse (1971:190) noted that the first commercial ware made by Flaccus was a Vaseline jar and that Flaccus was the first company in the U.S. to "produce bottles on a mechanical device." Flaccus had closed the Beaver Falls plant by 1902. Toulouse (1971:191) also stated that Flaccus was first listed as producing fruit jars in 1918, a contention closely supported by the Thomas Registers (see below) which first listed fruit jars in 1917. He also blamed Prohibition for the demise of the Flaccus company, a strange statement considering that the company seems to have made numerous non-alcoholic bottle and jar styles – not to mention that Prohibition had been in effect for some time when the last plant closed in 1928.

C.L. Flaccus & Co. was listed as a non-union plant under the "Flint Bottle Factory" heading in 1897 and 1898, making glass in 40 pots (*National Glass Budget* 1897:7; 1898:7). In 1904, the plant offered "prescription and proprietary ware; machine packers' ware" (*American Glass Review* 1934:167). The company continued to be listed as making flint prescription and druggist bottles in the Thomas Registers (1905:104; 1907:161; 1909:202; 1912:482). By 1914, possibly earlier, the company made milk bottles, along with prescription bottles – and fruit jars by 1917. Until 1918, only flint bottles were listed, but the 1920 edition included "all kinds flint prescriptions druggists', packers in flint, amber and blue" with a continued listing for milk bottles and fruit jars. The listing changed slightly in 1921 (Thomas Register 1914:532, 536; 1915:579, 581;

1916:661, 664, 3782; 1917:731, 734, 4104; 191:811, 814, 4429; 1920:828, 830, 8616; 1920:828, 830, 4616; 1921:782, 784, 4573).

By 1927, Flaccus made "prescriptions, vials, flint, green and amber beers and minerals, patent, proprietary, liquors, flasks, packers and preservers" by both machine and hand production at four continuous tanks with 34 rings and one day tank with four rings. The listing remained the same in 1928, and the company was "in hands of receivers" in 1929 (*American Glass Review* 1927:133; 1928:135; 1929:97). Flaccus was not listed in the 1930 edition.

Flaccus Brothers, Wheeling, West Virginia, and New Philadelphia, Ohio (1879-1906)

Creswick (1987:60, 266) placed the Flaccus Brothers in business from 1879 to 1906. She noted that the father had been a retail grocer since at least 1876, and the brothers began a wholesale business by 1878. Caniff (1997:45) basically agreed with Creswick, although he dated the end of the company at 1905.

Flaccus & Elliott, Wheeling, West Virginia (1897-1898)

Caniff (1997:42) told the story of Flaccus & Elliott:

Partner Edward C. Flaccus and bookkeeper George H. Elliott left the thriving Flaccus Bros. Company in 1897 to form the Flaccus & Elliott Co., a fact verified by trademark registration and articles of incorporation. The company operated for a little over a year, if that. On June 21, 1898, Edward C. Flaccus filed a trademark for "Chilimato" for the E.C. Flaccus Company.

E.C. Flaccus, Wheeling, West Virginia (1898-1920)

Creswick (1987:60, 266) placed E.C. Flaccus in business from 1898 to 1920. Caniff (1997:45-46) agreed with the Creswick dates but noted that the company used brand names of "STAG, STEERS HEAD, CHAMPION & OHIO

VALLEY,” although the same catsup, pickles, mustard, and other foods were probably placed in bottles and jars for all brands. Although the company offices were in Wheeling, Factory A was also located in Wheeling; Factory B was in New Philadelphia, Ohio; and Factory C was in Barnesville, Ohio. Unlike, the C.L. Flaccus glass plants, these were all food processing operations.

Creswick (1987:60) noted that “the Flaccus companies were in the food preserving business and did not make their own containers.”¹ She cited Flaccus descendants who stated that both the Central Glass Co. and the “Hobbs Glass Works” (probably Hobbs-Brockunier Glass Co., both of Wheeling, West Virginia) made jars for the companies. Creswick further speculated that “later the Hazel-Atlas Glass Company also made some of the Flaccus jars or lids” and offered a long but plausible explanation. Roller (1983:125), too, suggested that the Flaccus companies did not make their own jars, but he was less certain who did.

Bottles and Marks

C.L.F.G.CO. (1898-1899; 1902-1906)

The C.L.F.G.CO. mark was embossed on the bases of South Carolina Dispensary flasks and cylindrical bottles by the C.L. Flaccus Glass Co., Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania [Figures 1 and 2]. Pittsburgh refers to the office, however, not the factory. Huggins (1997:10) noted that there were several minor variations of the mark (although he did not describe them) as well as a capital “F” or “G” embossed above the mark on some bottles, although we have seen a “B” – and there were probably other letters as well. We have also noticed that the periods on many of the flasks are larger than those on typical marks [Figure 3]. Teal in Teal & Wallace (2005:102, 109) also noted the mark on Dispensary flasks and bottles and also attributed the marks to Flaccus. Flaccus sold a total of 19 railroad carloads of bottles to the Dispensary from 1898 to 1899 and an additional 1,000 carloads from 1902 to 1906.

This mark may have only been applied due to regulations demanded by the Dispensary. According to Teal in Teal and Wallace (2005:130):

The requirement for a glass house supplying bottles to the [South Carolina] Dispensary to have their



Figure 1: C.L.F.G.CO. on the Base of a South Carolina Dispensary Bottle (eBay)



Figure 2: South Carolina Dispensary bottle (eBay)



Figure 3: C.L.F.G.CO. on the Base of a South Carolina Dispensary Flask (eBay)

initials blown into their bottles was a quality control measure that resulted from having more formal and specific bids and contracts. All of the glass house contracts from 1897 forward in the Dispensary records at the State Archives carry this provision.

This may explain why the mark is only found on Dispensary bottles.

CLF

Whitten (2007) noted that he had seen these initials on the base of a “clear prescription/medicinal bottle” and dated the mark 1879-1928. This is the only report of the mark that we have seen.

F in a keystone (ca. 1914-at least 1920)

Giarde (1980:22) noted that the C.L. Flaccus Glass Co. used the F-in-a-keystone mark from 1900 to 1928 on milk bottles, although milk containers were not a major product of the firm. Toulouse (1971:190) was less certain, dating the mark, “Probably not before 1900” [Figure 4]. Aside from milk bottles, neither author mentioned other bottle types in conjunction with this mark. The mark was apparently not used on fruit jars and was not noted by either Toulouse (1969), Roller (1983), or Creswick (1987).

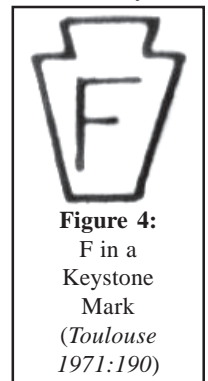


Figure 4:
F in a
Keystone
Mark
(Toulouse
1971:190)

When Giarde noted 1900 as a beginning date for the mark, he probably derived the date from Toulouse. Toulouse (1971:191) noted “side-lever pressed milks [Flaccus] started to make in 1902. This is the earliest reference we have found to machine-made milk bottles.

However, the Thomas Registers (see history section above), first list milk bottles at Flaccus in 1914, and the listing continued to at least 1920. However, the 1927 list did not include milk bottles. Schadlich ([ca. 1990]) noted that the keystone symbol was found on milk bottle bases, but the only example we have recorded (from the California State Parks milk bottle collection in Sacramento) had the logo embossed on the heel with “25 / 67” on the base. The milk bottle was from a Pennsylvania dairy and was made by a blow-and-blow machine (no ejection or valve mark).

FL in the Massachusetts Seal

From 1909 to 1947, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts required that all glass factories selling bottles to dairies within the state mark their containers with a Massachusetts seal. From some point after 1910, factories embossed the seal on the shoulder of each milk bottle, usually in a circular form embossed "MASS (arch) / {factory designator} / "SEAL (inverted arch)." These often appeared in a small plate mold. The mark used by Flaccus was "FL" (Blodget 2006:8; Schadlich [ca. 1990]). In at least some cases, the FL seal was placed on the center body of milk bottles in a plate mold (personal communication, Albert Morin, 3/4/2007), although the shoulder seal was more common [Figure 5].



Figure 5: FL Massachusetts Seal
(Albert Morin)

F 13

Albert Morin (personal communication, 3/4/2007), reported that all milk bottles with the FL Massachusetts seal that he has seen were marked "F 13" on the heel [Figure 6]. It is highly possible that the "F 13" mark has been seen on other milk



Figure 6: F 13 on a Milk Bottle Base
(Albert Morin)

C.L. FLACCUS PITTSBURGH (ca. 1879-ca. 1910 or later)

Creswick (1987:62) illustrated a grooved-ring wax-sealer jar embossed C.L.

FLACCUS / PITTSBURGH on the base [Figure 7]. She noted, however, that the company "made a variety of bottles and jars, including some of the Mason's Patent Nov. 30th 1858 jars." Roller (1983:125) noted the same jar and added that it appeared in a ca. 1895 Flaccus ad. He dated the jars "c. 1879-1910s." The ad also mentioned

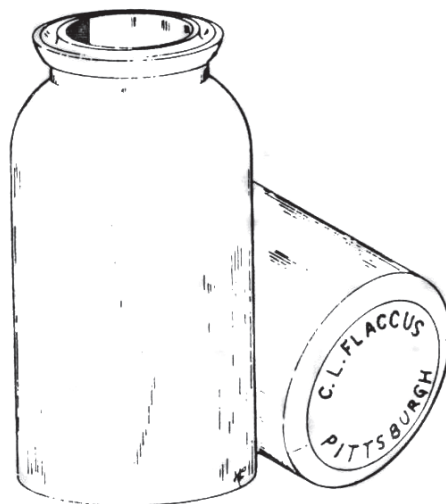


Figure 7: C.L. FLACCUS on the base of a grooved-ring, wax-sealer fruit jar (Creswick 1987:62)

FLACCUS BROS. (1880-1920)

Creswick (1987:60-61) illustrated and described 11 jars and accompanying lids made or used by the Flaccus Brothers [Figures 8 and 9]. All of these bore the "Steershead" trademark. She did not include date ranges for any of the jars, and they were not marked by any manufacturer's logos. The Steers Head was first trademarked (# 21,314) by the Flaccus Brothers for a paper catsup label on June 21, 1892, with first use claimed in 1880. The mark was again registered (#67,527) for use on a large variety of products by Edward C. Flaccus on February 4, 1908, but there was no first use date (Creswick



Figure 8 (L): Flaccus Brothers Steershead Jar (Creswick 1987:61)
Figure 9 (R): Flaccus Brother Steershead Lid (Creswick 1987:61)

1987:258, 260).

Toulouse (1969:295-296) illustrated and described four variations of food jars with the FLACCUS BROS. and STEERSHEAD marks but noted that there were "many slightly changed versions of the decoration forms of each jar listed." Toulouse dated the jars ca. 1890-1898 and claimed that they were probably made by the Hazel Glass Co. or Atlas Glass Co.

A fifth Steershead brand illustrated by Toulouse (1969:296) was quite different from the one used by the others, showing more of the steer's body. He claimed the same dates and makers as in the other four.

These jars were apparently very common. According to Roller (1983:124-125):

The Flaccus jars were used to pack various types of condiments, and may be found with numerous styles of embossings, closures, colors, shapes and sizes. A complete listing of Flaccus jars would be a book in itself. . . .

E.C. FLACCUS CO. (ca. 1890)

Creswick (1987:61) only illustrated a single style of jar and lid for E.C. Flaccus with a fancy design on the embossed body label and the trademarked stag head of the Stag Brand [Figures 10 and 11]. Toulouse (1969:117-118) discussed three variations of the jars and illustrated the complex design. He dated the jars ca. 1890 and noted that they were probably made for Flaccus by the Hazel Glass Co. In his later book, he was more vehement, dating the stag head at "circa 1890 only."

Roller (1983:125) further discussed these jars:

The E. C. Flaccus Co., of Wheeling, W. Va., was in the food packing business from c. 1899 to 1920. Its parent company, Flaccus & Elliott, filed an application on May 18, 1897 for the



Figure 10 (L): E.C. Flaccus Stag Brand Jar (Creswick 1987:61)
Figure 11 (R): E.C. Flaccus Stag Brand Lid (Creswick 1987:61)

trademark FLACCUS (over a stag's head), claiming use since January 1, 1897. Edward C. Flaccus registered the trademark STAG BRAND FLACCUS (over a stag's head) on April 7, 1908.

Roller (1983:125) also noted that the maker was uncertain "but may have been Wellsburg Glass Co., Wellsburg, W.Va., c. 1906-1911, of which E.C. Flaccus was president.

STEERSHEAD

Toulouse (1971:488) claimed that this mark was used by Flaccus Brothers ca. 1890-1900, but we have been unable to verify the use of the logo except in conjunction with the drawing of the steer head.

Discussion and Conclusions

Although C.L. Flaccus Glass Co. was the only glass factory operated by any of the Flaccus relatives, we have included the Flaccus Brothers, Flaccus & Elliott, and the E.L. Flaccus Co., food packers that had their bottles and jars made by outside glass houses, because the jars were marked with the company names and are so common that they are likely to show up in the archaeological record. Many of the food jars may also have identifying paper labels.

Marks with clear company names (e.g., FLACCUS BROS.) are self-evident. However, the C.L.F.G.Co. logo was especially created for use on liquor bottles and flasks for the South Carolina Dispensary, which demanded such marks from the makers of its bottles. The F-in-a-keystone logo may only be found on milk bottles, although that is currently unconfirmed. If that conclusion is correct, the keystone mark was probably only used from ca. 1914 to ca. 1920 or later, but was not used by 1927. FL as the Massachusetts Seal is solidly confirmed by research, although we have not found Flaccus marks in connection with the seals from Rhode Island, Maine, Pennsylvania, or any other state. The use of F13 as a heelmark by Flaccus also needs more empirical research.

Future research needs to confirm which marks were actually used on milk bottles and during what periods. Another area for investigation is a more solid dating for the manufacture of milk bottles by the C.L. Flaccus Glass Co.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Albert Morin

for contributing the photo of the Massachusetts FL seal and for information about Massachusetts bottles. As always, we are grateful to Douglas M. Leybourne, Jr., for allowing us to reproduce drawings from the books created by Alice Creswick in 1987.

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Continued to page 65.

which still stands as a major Alexandria tourist attraction. Robert and Henry Downham by now were responsible for the daily operations of the liquor business. By 1915 they had moved the company to 1229 King Street.

In 1918, Henry Downham died at age 50, leaving a grieving mother and father. In 1920 National Prohibition closed down E.E. Downham & Co. forever. Downham himself died a year later at his Washington Street home, age 82. His obituary in the local newspaper stated that his "long life of usefulness entitled him to the esteem and affection" of all Alexandria citizens.

During Prohibition, with liquor banned, his son Robert turned to a new business as a clothier, hatter and haberdasher to the town. Robert's enterprise does not appear to have succeeded and several years later he was recorded working as a clerk in another store. In 1936 the Lee-Fendall house was sold to John L. Lewis, the famous head of the United Mine Workers. In 1937 E.E.'s wife, Sarah, died of the complications of old age at 92, still living at the family's Washington Street address.

North and South United

No evidence exists that Shawhan and

Downham ever met, but their lives bear similarities. Both got their start during the tumult of the Civil War. Both found prosperity in the whiskey trade in the post-war period. Both became recognized and respected figures in their respective communities. Both businesses they built by dint of hard work and dedication were killed by National Prohibition. Finally, both whiskey men have left us with a legacy of collectable items to remember them and their remarkable stories.

Reference Notes: Material on George Shawhan was drawn principally from a family Internet site that contains informative articles by Ronald Shawhan and Robert Francis. The site also contains several of the illustrations that appear here. The shot glass photo is courtesy of Robin Preston of *pre-pro.com*. Information about E.E. Downham was gathered from a number of sources, using the Internet and the Alexandria, Virginia Public Library. The pictures of Downham and his Washington Street home are courtesy of the Library. The pictures of the Belle Haven Rye bottle and corkscrew are through the courtesy of Dr. Richard Lilienthal. Portions of this article previously have appeared in the *Ohio Swirl* and the *Potomac Pontil*.

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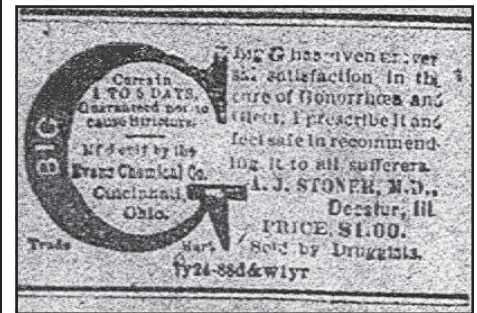
Footnotes:

¹ This did not include C.L. Flaccus, who most certainly made his own glassware.

Clap On...Clap Off? or The Dangers of Indiscretion

By Joe Terry

Continued from page 38.



Malydor. Evidence to suggest this includes the sheer number of Evans Chemical Company bottles that can be found in dumps and privies. In general, they come in two styles, the earliest bearing the trade mark, and the latter having it removed. The trade mark was the selling point, in its simplicity and its reference. Newspaper ads could be found in a wider variety of newspapers, but like Malydor, they were restricted to the tiny side margins, often fighting for space with similar products.

The Evans Chemical Company lost its incorporation status in 1930, and the author's information doesn't extend past that date. It is possible that it continued on, as many such remedies were still being marketed to an unsuspecting market. The FDA began weeding them out, and individual states began banning them altogether. The state of Maryland passed regulations outlawing venereal remedies in the thirties and forties, but it was penicillin and sulfa drugs that actually finished them off.

Like all patent medicines, the trick was to convince the buyer of its worth. Had the public been better informed, nary a drop would have been sold. But ignorance was bliss, especially for the manufacturers. Venereal disease still remains active today, despite the effective treatments of modern science. It remains, like in the Victorian period, a social disease, and those who have it do not wish that fact to be known. In the past, it has killed many famous people; artists, thinkers and leaders. But while they have died, the products that preyed on them; or, at least their bottles, live on.

