



Knox Glass and the Marks Toulouse Missed

by Bill Lockhart

In preparation for writing my e-book on El Paso, Texas, soda bottlers and their bottles, I looked at a lot of bottles that I had collected along with several other collections from the city. Because I was interested in the manufacturers as well as the local bottlers, I carefully examined each bottle and recorded all the information on it. Several times, I saw a mark that I could not find in any of my reference books, including *Bottle Makers and Their Marks*, the noted book used by collectors and archeologists both, written by Julian Harrison Toulouse in 1971.

Thus began my search for the T-in-a-keystone manufacturer's mark. Toulouse noted several other keystone marks, and that gave me an idea where to begin. So, I looked at the marks, always capital letters enclosed in a keystone, used by the Knox Bottle Company. Those included the letters, M, K, J, O, and others but not the letter T. I checked a few other books I thought had some information about manufacturer's marks and came up with a bit more information about Knox marks, but nothing about a T-in-a-keystone.

Both Toulouse and Jeffrey L. Giarde, in his book *Glass Milk Bottles: Their Makers and Marks*, mentioned two other Knox plants with no marks attached – in Palestine, Texas, and Lincoln, Illinois. I confided what I was looking for to my friend, Bill Lindsey, and he added to the mystery by sending me a photo of an L-in-a-keystone mark on the base of a beer bottle. Meanwhile, I had written to the museum at Palestine and received a letter from David Andrews directing me to Jimmy Odom, a former worker at the Knox plant. Jimmy kindly put me in touch with Jack Underwood, nephew of the Knox founder, Roy Underwood, former Knox plant manager, and later owner of the Underwood Glass Company.

Roy Underwood (Jack's uncle) was the power behind the Knox Glass Bottle Company. He began his career in glass as a boy at the Crescent Glass Bottle Company and soon learned glass blowing.

While still in his teens, he started organizing the Marienville Glass Company in 1914. Just three years later, in 1917, he moved to Knox, Pennsylvania, and organized the Knox Glass Bottle Company. Underwood either founded or purchased numerous additional plants as part of the Knox system including the Wightman Bottle & Glass Manufacturing Company at Parker's Landing, Pennsylvania, in 1921, a second plant in Knox in 1922, the Pennsylvania Bottle Company in Sheffield in 1928, and many later plants. Eventually, some were sold off. The Glass Container Corporation acquired the ten remaining Knox-organization plants in 1968.

Roy's younger brother, Chester, joined in the Knox management and eventually began a southern expansion of the company, beginning with the Knox Bottle Company of Mississippi at Jackson in 1932. Chester opened a second southern plant at Palestine, Texas, in 1941. After Roy's death in 1951, Chester took over the operation of Knox. However, he found himself in a difficult position. The company was in financial trouble, and he began selling off some of the Knox plants to retain solvency. The other stockholders executed a proxy raid and ejected Chester from power at Knox. Along with his sons, Dick and Jack, Chester started the Underwood Glass Company in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1956. The Southern Underwoods soon opened another plant at Memphis, Tennessee. Dick and Jack managed the two plants, and Jack sold the Memphis plant after his brother's death in the early 1970s. In 1978, he closed down the New Orleans plant due to the rising prices of natural gas to power the glass furnaces. The Underwood Glass Company always marked its bottles with a simple "U" embossed on the base.

The Palestine, Texas, plant opened on July 5, 1941, after only 80 days of construction. Eventually, the plant provided jobs for almost 500 local citizens and became the town's most important

industry. Both Jimmy Odom and Jack Underwood confirmed that the plant used the T-in-a-keystone manufacturer's mark on soda bottles and jars made at the plant. The "T" in the keystone probably stood for Texas, although it may have represented the "t" in Palestine, since the "P" was already in use by the Wightman Bottle & Glass Company, at Parker's Landing, Pennsylvania. The T-in-a-keystone mark was used by the Palestine plant from 1941 until the early 1950s, when the entire Knox system adopted the K-in-a-keystone mark. The Palestine plant used the generic mark from about 1953 until it closed in 1985.

Jack also shed light on the L-in-a-keystone mark. It was used by the Lincoln Glass Bottle Company, a Knox plant established in Lincoln, Illinois, in 1942. The branch made beer bottles for Anheuser Busch and was open from 1942 until 1952 when it was sold to Obear-Nester Glass Company in East St. Louis, Illinois. The company used the mark during its entire existence as a Knox affiliate.

Jack also explained the components of the Knox system of mold numbers on bottle bases. The numbers are embossed in three sections: a two-digit numeral followed by a dash; a single, capital letter followed by another dash; and a final two-digit numeral (e.g. 54-B-10). The first two-digits identify the "number for the set of molds"; the letter represents the type of container (B = Beverages); and the final two numerals signify the capacity of the container (e.g. 10 = 10 ounces). Even if the first two digits seem to note a year (as in the 54 example from an El Paso soft drink bottle), it is coincidental rather than a date code.

Other companies besides Knox have used the keystone as part of their logos with or without a letter in the center. The C. L. Flaccus Glass Company used an F-in-a-keystone, and the Newborn Glass Company used an N. The accompanying table shows all the known keystone marks, the companies that used them, and the

approximate dates of use.


The Lummis Glass Company of New York, New York, also used the LP-in-a-keystone mark from 1940 to 1955, although the letters were in italics. However, Lummis was a distributor for the Pennsylvania Bottle Company and not an actual manufacturer. The bottles, themselves, were actually made in Pennsylvania. Another mark, not represented on the table is an upwardly slanted, script "Lustre" in a keystone found on the shoulders of some fruit jars. This was probably used from about 1890 to about 1900 by the R. E. Tongue & Bros. Company of Philadelphia, a wholesaler in glassware, lamp chimneys, and pottery.

A bit of mystery, however, still remains. The Marienville Glass Company was established in 1914 and came into Underwood's control in 1929. Toulouse does not mention any manufacturer's mark for this company, and I have been unable to track one down. Apparently, Marienville used the K-in-a-keystone mark after it became part of Knox. The Mid-West Glass Company in Gas City, Indiana, (formerly the Slick Glass Co.) became part of Knox in 1951, and Knox plants were established in Danielson, Connecticut, in 1959 and Atlanta, Georgia, in 1961. Also, in 1961, Knox acquired the Buck Glass Company of Baltimore, Maryland. No specific marks are known for any of these plants. It is

likely that all of them only used the K-in-a-keystone mark that was apparently used by all Knox plants after about 1953.

When the Knox conglomerate finally sold to the Glass Container Corporation in 1968, it ended an interesting era. From the 19th century to the middle of the 20th, glass was rich in the diversity of its marks. As more and more companies merged, and giants grew, an intriguing era vanished.

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Mark	Company	Location	Dates
	C.L. Flaccus Glass Co.	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	1900-1928
	Knox Glass Bottle Co., of Miss.	Jackson, Mississippi	1932-1953
	Knox Glass Bottle Co.	Knox, Pennsylvania	1924-1968
	Lincoln Glass Bottle Co.	Lincoln, Illinois	1942-1952
	Pennsylvania Bottle Co.	Wilcox, Pennsylvania	1940-1952
	Metro Glass Bottle Co.	Jersey City, New Jersey	1935-1949
	Newborn Glass Co.	Royersford, Pennsylvania	1920-1925
	Oil City Glass Co.	Oil City, Pennsylvania	1930-1952
	Wightman Bottle & Glass Co.	Parkers Landing, Pennsylvania	1930-1951
	Seaboard Glass Bottle Co.	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	1943-1947
	Knox Glass Bottle Co. of Miss.	Palestine, Texas	1941-1953
	Pennsylvania Bottle Co.	Sheffield, Pennsylvania	1929-1951