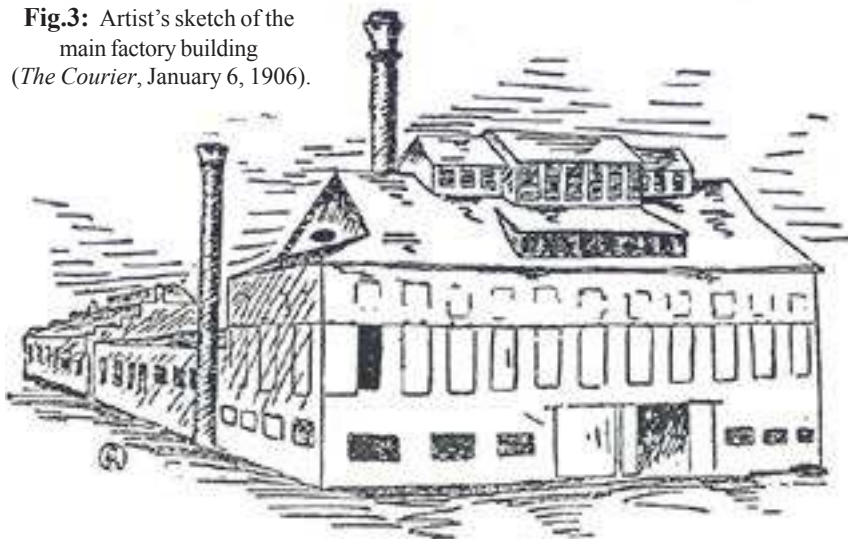


# Evansville Glass Company

1903 - 1908

by Marg Iwen

**Fig.3:** Artist's sketch of the main factory building  
(*The Courier*, January 6, 1906).



## Why Not Evansville?

Among the Indiana glass companies that produced tableware and utility ware around the turn of the century, the Evansville Glass Company (EGC) located in the "pocket" of southwest Indiana may be the least well known.

From the EGC, the city's first of five early glass factories, would come bottles as well as tableware. Founded by local businessmen, it differed from other 19th and 20th Century glass factories whose originators blew into a town, then left as abruptly when profit dwindled.

Evansville at the turn of the century held promise, enjoying a strong, growing economy. The boomtown atmosphere had the movers and shakers clamoring for still more industry in a city already smoke-filled

and sooty.

Always an outlier among the tableware factories, today its wares lack the distinction accorded to those made by gas belt companies such as Indiana Tumbler and Goblet, Greentown; Model Flint Glass Company, Albany; and Indiana Glass, Dunkirk. Only modestly successful, and later eroded by complex legal wrangling for nearly half its existence, the EGC foundered -- and fell.

Nevertheless, it turned out at minimum one attributable tableware pattern, as well as varied lines of wares mentioned in trade papers of the time. During its four-year life span, an eminent glass chemist and a prodigious designer appeared on its payroll.

Although information on this company

is patchy, and often disparate, the following historical review summarizes gleanings, with the hope that further research will fill in the gaps.

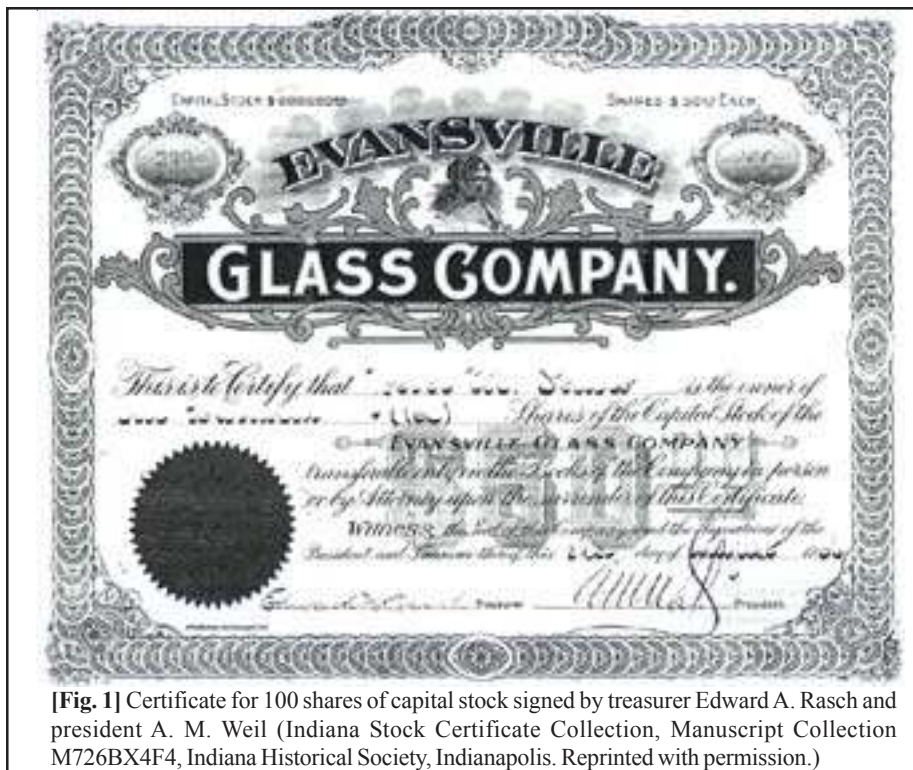
## City Ripe for Industry

During the summer of 1903, factories manufacturing a variety of goods were being raised in industrial Evansville. The EGC, incorporated in May 1903, in Indianapolis, was capitalized at \$200,000, with stock selling at \$50 a share [Fig. 1].

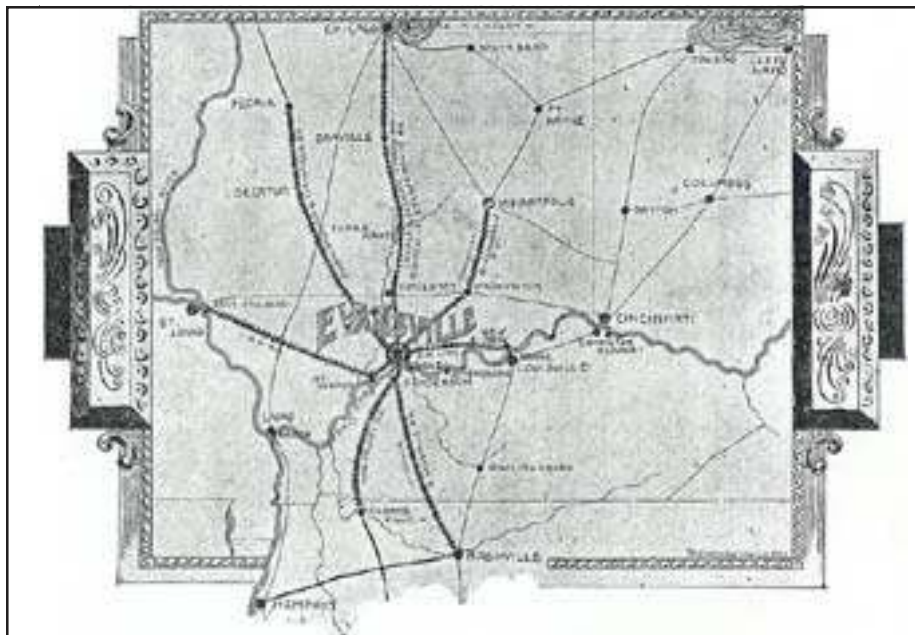
The first slate of officers included: Aaron M. Weil, president, responsible for originating this company and several others in Evansville; Dr. A. D. Booth, vice-president (the 1904 Evansville City Directory listed Fred W. Reitz as vice-president in 1903); M. L. Mayer, Shawneetown, Illinois, a major stockholder, secretary; Captain S. P. Gillett, treasurer of the Evansville Ice & Storage Co., treasurer; William F. Williams, general manager, who in 1906 organized the Williams Glass Company; and William Barris, formerly of Pittsburgh, assistant general manager (*China, Glass and Lamps*, [CGL], August 8, 1903). Dr. Booth and Mr. Williams previously had been connected with the Noblesville (Indiana) Bottle Company.

The EGC, a late comer into the tableware industry, sprang up on the east side of Evansville, about a mile and a half distant from the hairpin bend in the Ohio River which greatly enlarged the city's river front.

Despite a sluggish market and waning interest in glass tableware after 1900, the Evansville venture promised profits, possessing the major ingredients necessary to make glass--cheap fuel, river and rail transportation, glass sand deposits, and dependable workers. Potash, a necessary ingredient in the batch, could be obtained locally from any of the wood-burning industries.



**[Fig. 1]** Certificate for 100 shares of capital stock signed by treasurer Edward A. Rasch and president A. M. Weil (Indiana Stock Certificate Collection, Manuscript Collection M726BX4F4, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis. Reprinted with permission.)



[Fig. 2] Early map showing seven rail lines running between Evansville and major metro areas, as well as the course of the Ohio River through the city and beyond (*Book of Evansville*, Special Collections, Willard Library, Evansville, Indiana. Reprinted with permission.)

### It's About the Coal

Lacking a source of natural gas, the EGC depended on Indiana bituminous coal to make producer gas (a combination of several gases) necessary to run both its pot and tank furnaces. Coal mines pervaded the extensive wedge-shaped deposit underlying the area beginning halfway between Louisville, Kentucky, and Evansville, and extending northward from the Indiana-Illinois border west of Lafayette.

Coal fueled factories, powered locomotives, and heated homes. Two veins of soft coal lay under the city. To say that Evansville was riddled with coal mines may be an overstatement, but 10 shafts were located in or near the city limits; within a radius of 30 miles, 60 shafts had been sunk.

Mines near the factory included Hill #1, Hill #2, the Sunnyside Mine at Maryland and 12th Avenue, and the Diamond Coal Mine. Other mines in Boonville and Newburgh also may have supplied coal, as well as the more northern coal deposits around Bicknell, Dugger, Terre Haute, and Brazil, and mines to the south around Sebree, Kentucky.

Coal and trains had become mutually dependent. Rail lines, with Evansville as a hub, fanned out across the landscape. Seven railroads entered the city [Fig. 2]. Some lines lived on the traffic to and from the glass factories, carrying only coal, which cost from fifty cents to one dollar per ton, or four cents by the bushel. Other lines called "miners' trains" transported workers to and from the southwest Indiana coal mines.

The railroads that served Evansville

offered favorable freight rates. Manufacturers in several glass belt towns alleged that coal carrying roads charged them higher rates, increasing the cost of their products and allowing plants located elsewhere to produce, and sell, their products more cheaply (CGL, May 21, 1904).

The Southern Railway, the Evansville and Terre Haute Railroad (E. & T. H.), now CSX Transportation Company, and the Ohio River, when navigable, largely moved the coal, sand, and other raw materials to the factory and the finished glass to market.

Initially, sand may have been shipped from the Loogootee Glass Sand Company, Loogootee, located about 70 miles by rail to the northeast, or the Acme Glass Sand

Company near Rosedale farther to the north. The sand from both of these companies averaged 96 to 99 per cent silica, with under one per cent iron, the mineral responsible for the greenish cast in otherwise clear glass. Later, a source of sand closer to home supplied the EGC.

The secretary of the Evansville Business Men's Association, Judge W. J. Wood, traveled to a newly discovered deposit located near Marion, Kentucky, and arranged to have sand shipped to the factory, about 48 miles by rail (CGL, July 23, 1904). Perhaps the factory also tapped a source closer to home. "Fine silica sand is found in abundance along the Ohio River near the city . . .," reported CGL, January 27, 1906.

By 1900, Evansville's booming economy had sent its population soaring to 59,100, making it the second largest city in Indiana.

However, few seasoned glass workers could be recruited from the otherwise large and reliable labor pool. To accommodate the experienced glassworkers and their families moving to Evansville in the midst of a critical housing shortage, President Weil appealed for information on houses to rent or buy.

### A Grand Factory, Residents Say

Construction began in June 1903 on a triangular plot of ground with Canal Street as the hypotenuse; East Franklin Street formed the EGC's northern boundary, and Kentucky Avenue bounded it on the west. Company buildings covered nearly eight acres.

At about the same time the EGC was being built, the Greentown, Indiana, factory (wood construction) succumbed to a suspicious, disastrous fire. While the cause of that fire remains uncertain, a live spark

## EVANSVILLE GLASS CO.,

### EVANSVILLE, IND.

Manufacturers of  
Table  
Glassware  
Stemware  
Tumblers  
Lamps  
Novelties, etc.,



FERNETTE BUTTER.  
Our new line for 1906.

Full line of  
Samples  
shown at the  
Monongahela  
House  
Pittsburg, Pa  
January 1,  
1906.

REPRESENTATIVES: Western—A. W. BOGGS. Southern—K. A. ROCK. New York—W. B. WEDDLE.  
25 W. Broadway. Room 57

[Fig. 4] Ad for the Fernet tableware covered butter (*China, Glass and Lamps*, January 6, 1906).



from a Toledo, St. Louis, and Western Railroad Company locomotive may have set off the blaze.

The EGC's builders used either wood from the area's unlimited hardwood supply or brick from any of 14 local brickyards. On November 14, 1903, CGL stated that "the works is composed of two-story brick buildings."

*The Courier*, September 9, 1903, described their construction differently: "The main buildings are constructed of wood in order that during the warm weather they may be opened up and as much air as possible admitted for the comfort of the blowers."

Sanborn Maps show the buildings to be of iron-clad wood frame construction. A siding of the Southern Railway neatly bisected the factory grounds, enabling coal carrying cars to unload directly at the gas producer house.

When in full operation the capacity of the plant was projected to be between \$800,000 to one million dollars worth of goods per year. Forty percent of the output had been contracted before production began.

The EGC's glass tanks, the largest in use at that time, held 160 tons of molten glass. The original plans had called for two separate companies, each making different wares, to be located in different parts of the city. However, after further investigation planners found that consolidation saved \$10,000 to \$15,000 per year when, for example, the common power plant and the common gas producer plant, built between the tableware and bottle departments, could be shared (*The Courier*, September 20, 1903).

Dimensions of the various plant buildings, as reported by *The Courier*, September 20, 1903, include: main building bottle department, two story, 108 feet x 148 feet; warehouse for same, 196 feet x 84 feet; main building tableware, two story, 196 feet x 84 feet; warehouse for same, 112 feet x 100 feet; batch house, 55 feet x 72 feet; mold shop, 96 feet x 50 feet; mold storage, two-story, 22 feet x 30 feet; gas producer house, 40 feet x 96 feet; boiler and engine house, 40 feet x 80 feet; box shop, two story, 64 feet x 96 feet; office, two story, 40 feet x 60 feet [Fig. 3].

**Evansville Glass Co.,**  
EVANSVILLE, IND.

Manufacturers of  
Table Glassware  
Stemware  
Tumblers  
Lamps  
Novelties, etc.,  
in both Pot and  
Tank glass.

Full line of Samples shown at the  
Monongahela  
House,  
Pittsburg Pa.  
January 1, 1906.

Representatives  
Western—A. W. DODGE.  
Southern—K. A. ROSE.  
New York—W. B. WEDDLE.  
25 W. Broadway, Room 51.

PROPERTY: SUGAR AND COVER.  
(One new line for 1906)

CATALOGUES AND PRICES FURNISHED ON APPLICATION

[Fig 5] Ad for the Fernettableware covered sugar with reference to the 1905-1906 catalog (*China, Glass & Lamps*, December 30, 1905).

Although planners designed the plant so that the tableware department coexisted with the bottle department, each branch hired its own manager. William Barris, the assistant plant manager and highly respected glass man formerly with the National Glass Company, Greentown, oversaw the tableware branch. He became the general manager in January 1905. Park McGee and Joseph Engomar managed the bottle branch (CGL, June 4, 1904).

At various times, 300 to 600 people worked at the EGC; of that number, between 25 and 50 were women. Some of the workers received from \$9.00 to \$12.00 a day, considered to be good wages at that time (*The Courier*, August 6, 1903).

Unionized from its inception to its demise, the EGC's local affiliation with a national labor organization such as the American Flint Glass Workers Union (AFGWU) or the National Association of Manufacturers of Pressed and Blown Glassware has not been discovered (*Annual Report of the Dept. of Inspection*, 1904). Trade papers said only "union" or "glassworker's union."

Tableware was produced from both pot glass and tank glass, the metal being melted in either the 12-pot furnace or the 8-ring continuous tank furnace. The bottle department included one 12-ring flint (clear) glass tank furnace and one 8-ring amber glass tank furnace. Before the first fire was set in the larger of the two bottle factory tanks on September 19, 1903, the managers invited Evansville residents to tour that department; the tableware branch was not yet operating (*The Courier*, September 20, 1903).

### Renowned Glass Chemist Arrives - and Departs

Jacob Rosenthal, who formulated Chocolate glass and Holly Amber (originally Golden Agate) at Greentown and put out of work when that factory burned, accepted a job soon after with the EGC where he assisted with factory construction and later became the general manager. He lived at 113 Powell Avenue while in Evansville.

During his lifetime, Rosenthal worked at no less than a dozen glass factories.

Frank "Baldy"

Jackson, the foreman of the mold room and designer at Greentown responsible for most of the later Chocolate glass patterns, joined Rosenthal at the EGC. (Jackson registered no design patents for the period 1903 to 1908.)

Under Rosenthal's management, the first tableware, both pressed and blown, was made in February 1904 in crystal and colors (CGL, February 13, 1904). After Jacob Rosenthal died in 1933, J. Stanley Brothers, Jr. corresponded with Mrs. Susan Rosenthal who remembered that EGC made both light green opaque and light blue opaque tableware and novelties.

About two months after the first successful run of tableware, in April 1904, Rosenthal resigned as factory manager and accepted the general manager's job with the Crystal Glass Company, Bridgeport, Ohio. Theodore Creighton, night shift manager, took over his position.

Before Rosenthal resigned, CGL, March 27, 1904, printed his brief commentary on experiences at EGC: "At first, with 'green' help and everything new, it was quite a task to get matters in shape and moving properly." (Could a more candid comment really be expected from a gentleman of the old school?)

Researchers continue to speculate about Rosenthal's departure after only nine months to one year with the EGC. Possibilities include: the tableware department became the poor relative of the bottle department; production of colored glass decreased; improved benefits and conditions existed elsewhere; or Rosenthal simply yearned to return to the upper Ohio Valley.

In 1906, Rosenthal began working at the Fenton Art Glass Company, Williamstown, West Virginia, to manage construction. He remained at Fenton as factory manager until his retirement in 1929.

### The EGC Running Smoothly

The June 4, 1904, CGL disclosed that "A large force is employed in the mold shop and many new designs are being shaped for the coming season . . . each part of the different molds is made under the direction of Fred Stewart" (who received a patent for a non-refillable bottle in 1906).

Ferdinand Vitte, a well-known Pittsburgh mold maker, visited the factory and observed ". . . the factory is arranged in a manner which reflects great credit on the management, every detail having been given attention."

About the same time, a new 12-ring continuous tank to make tableware was installed as well as a new 15-ring continuous tank for bottles.

The June 11, 1904, CGL reprinted an interview with a tour group member that previously had appeared in "a recent issue" of *The Courier*: "The visitors looked in wonderment at the melted glass poured into molds from which it came out (as) goblets, cups, glasses, butter and fruit dishes, bread and cake plates, pitchers, vases, candlesticks . . . as well as a great variety of fancy goods in cool greens, blues, chocolates, whites, yellows, etc., that are both useful and ornamental. Those who wonder that the glittering object can be made to look so much like cut glass that only an expert could tell the difference without noting the weight would cease to be surprised should they see the care and skill used in the manufacture."

The visitor continued: "Though the building seems spacious accommodating as it does 300 workmen, the company will begin work on the new building which will enlarge the plant two times its original size."

The factory output averaged two rail cars per day. By August 1904, capital stock had been increased from \$200,000 to \$300,000 (*Crockery and Glass Journal* [CGJ], August 4, 1904).

In September, 36 press shops were working. The September 24, 1904, CGL reported, "The company are

making preparation for the installation of fruit jar machines on one of their tanks in the press department and it is expected they will have them in operation by the middle of next month (October 1904).

Roller (1994) included "proprietary and packers ware" along with general tableware and flint beers. The EGC may have made jars for other companies, but never marked them--or the CGL reporter erred.

### EGC Displays Its Wares

At the January 1905 pottery and glassware exhibition in Pittsburgh, Andrew W. Boggs, the western road man, managed the first ever EGC display in Parlor A of the Monongahela House hotel. (Boggs missed the 1904 exhibition because his samples weren't ready.)

"The Evansville company showed 12 full lines of tableware and who can beat that? All are in plain crystal and some are in pot metal and some are in tank metal. One line with a 'grape design' is quite pretty."

The "Puritan" line in pot metal and a plain line in tank glass were also shown (CGL, January 14, 1905). The January 12, 1905, CGJ reported that the EGC showed "eight or nine new lines of tableware, a line of common lamps, and a good line of novelties."

During the summer of 1905, the EGC added a cutting shop. By November 1905, the company was in full production with 24 shops making an assortment of jellies, tumblers, lamps, lantern globes, fish jars, molasses cans, medicine bottles, and salts in addition to the tableware (CGL, May 13, 1905).

Weekly updates in CGL and CGJ assured members of the trade that the rapidly expanding factory was running smoothly

and booking orders steadily. Capital stock was increased from \$300,000 to \$450,000 (CGJ, August 24, 1905).

By October 1905, a favorable report in CGL, October 28, stated "Evansville glass works . . . is now very busy in both departments and is said to be making a great deal of money for its stockholders." At year's end, 24 shops were still working full time, and with orders ahead for several months into 1906, the company's financial outlook seemed solid.

Boggs debuted the "Fernette" (factory name) line during the annual Pittsburgh exhibit held at the Monongahela House hotel in January 1906. This pot glass line with a fern design imitating a cut glass design received high praise from *Glass and Pottery World*, May 1906 (Vol. 14, No. 5).

"Among the newcomers, tableware lines that have reached market this year, none have been received with greater warmth than the fern-leaf pattern. . . . It exploits an idea in design that is refreshingly dissimilar to the host of other cut and colonial patterns that have been presented." (Figures 4, 5, 6, and 7).

The leading retailer of glass and china tableware in Evansville, Jacob Lunkenheimer, part owner of Blackman & Lunkenheimer, and enthusiastic about the Fernette line reportedly opined that he ". . . would not be surprised to see it prove as successful as the 'Colonial' line produced by the Heisey Company of Newark, O. . ." (CGL, January 27, 1906).


K. A. Rock, EGC's southern road man, sold 2,000 barrels of Fernette in a few days (CGL, January 27, 1906). W. B. Weddle, 25 W. Broadway, New York, included Fernette in his offerings along with bar goods and other company wares (CGJ, January 4, 1906).

By March, the EGC began producing opalescent (color not specified), crystal, blue, and green vases, along with crystal, blue, and green nappies. "This line contains a host of goods excellently adapted for the department store and the five and ten cent trade," wrote CGJ, March 15, 1906.

At the company's annual meeting held in January 1906, Aaron M. Weil and Fred W. Reitz returned as president and vice-president, respectively; Edward A.

**Evansville Glass Co. Evansville, Ind.**

**TABLE  
GLASSWARE  
STEMWARE  
TUMBLERS**



Plain Shallow Bowl

**LAMPS  
NOVELTIES  
PACKERS  
SUPPLIES  
ETC.**

**The Fernette  
Pattern herewith  
Illustrated, is The  
Hit of the Season.  
It has outdis-  
tanced all com-  
petitors.**

**Dealers should  
handle lines that  
are popular with  
the consumer. It  
pays to do so.  
Ours are the  
ones.**

Representatives: Western—A. W. Boggs, Southern—K. A. Rock, New York—W. B. Weddle, 25 W. Broadway

[Fig. 6] Ad for the 9-inch shallow bowl (true open compote),  
*China, Glass & Lamps*, April 20, 1906.



Rasch became secretary-treasurer. In addition to Weil, Reitz, and Rasch, the board of directors elected in 1906 included: William Barris, Alexander Hutchinson, A. J. Milligan, Gilbert Walker, Frank Zipp, and John C. Zutt (CGJ, February 1, 1906).

Although the composition of the board of directors changed slightly from time to time, most of the members were Evansville men deeply entrenched in the community.

Aaron M. Weil and his brother, Jesse C. (sometimes spelled Jessie), sold insurance, acting as general agents for New England Life Insurance Company and Union Savings Company. At the same time, Aaron Weil was president of the National Pottery Company. In 1889, he served the city as alderman from the Third Ward. He belonged to the Ancient Order of United Workmen, formed to unite all classes who worked in the mechanical arts.

Fred W. Reitz (Clemens Reitz Sons Company) ran a saw mill with his father and brothers and dealt in hardwood lumber, as well as assuming the presidency of the Crescent Furniture Company. Edward A. Rasch was the Vanderburgh County Recorder from 1906-11, with an office in the court house. He later became a realtor and lived to celebrate his 100th birthday.

Alexander Hutchinson, also in the insurance business, managed the district office of the Mutual Life Insurance Company. Gilbert Walker, a native of Scotland, served as the founder and president of Fowler, Dick & Walker, a prominent dry goods and women's apparel firm. Frank Zipp was the president of the Southern Sweat Pad Company (made sweat pads for horses), and John C. Zutt carried out the duties of secretary of the Evansville Mirror and Beveling Company, and became a director of Bockstege Furniture Company.

President Weil reported an unusually prosperous 1906 with the factory running at full capacity and orders stacking up. The plant had been closed during the week of Christmas 1905, but had received a special dispensation from the "glassworkers' union" which permitted the men to work on New Year's Day readying the factory for the next-day tour by the Evansville Business Association (CGL, January 6, 1906).

In early March, the Evansville City Council granted permission to the E. & T. H. to run a switch into the plant. Previously only the Southern Railway served the plant, and it had turned a deaf ear to company requests for better service, refusing to put in another switch.

The E. and T. H. bought a strip of ground near the factory and began to build. When Southern discovered its competitor's enterprise, it rushed to begin its additional

switch. However, reports CGL, March 3, 1906, "An injunction against Southern was gotten in the courts . . . by the glass co., restraining it from laying the switch and that same night a large force of workmen of the E. & T. H. went to work during the night and put in the switch, by this coup winning the fight and settling the matter."

Excerpts from CGL, April 28, 1906, indicate a rapidly growing company, contented workers, and few if any labor problems: "Good wages are paid in all departments and the employees are a prosperous lot."

William Barris was praised for business exceeding expectations and replied "... we have all the orders we can handle for some time, and indications are that the present season will be by far the busiest one ever."

### Problems Presage Plant's Future

Accidents crippled the factory somewhat during 1906. In May, fire completely destroyed both houses of the bottle department and all the machinery, resulting in \$110,000 worth of damage, but insurance covered the loss fully.

"The tableware department . . . was saved by excellent work on the part of the fire department, although at one time it looked as if nothing could save any part of the plant from total destruction. The tableware factory caught fire several times, but the flames were speedily extinguished . . . with only slight damage to the exterior" (CGL, May 5, 1906).

During June 1906, the Southern Railway sued the EGC, alleging that loaded rail cars had been held overtime in the EGC yards. The company responded saying that the Southern Railway had not provided proper service which resulted in costly delays. The jury found in favor of the railroad, awarding them \$150 of the \$300 requested (CGL, June 2, 1906).

The plant always observed the summer stop, closing from June 30 until August 6. The heavy load of advance orders for Fennette tableware went unfilled before the Summer 1906 shutdown, but Barris explained, "We are not grumbling about this, for we would rather close the season with a basket full of orders than with none" (CGL, June 23, 1906).

Some time during that shutdown, presumably near the end of July 1906, General Manager Barris resigned. (During 1908, he became the vice-president of the American Pressed Glass Company, Staunton, Illinois, making pressed and blown crystal and opalescent tableware.)

Edward A. Rasch assumed Barris' duties while continuing as company treasurer. President Weil considered not hiring a new general manager to replace Barris if orders

continued to flow in. Forty press shops were turning out a variety of goods. Also in July, the directors decided to rebuild the bottle plant, and awarded the contract to George A. Brakeman, Anderson, Indiana, the plant's original contractor (CGL, July 28, 1906).

Later that fall, a gas main supplying the pot furnace in the tableware department became clogged, resulting in considerable damage, including broken clay pots. While the repairs cost over \$2,000, the idle factory itself meant lost revenue. Employees affected by the mishap went to work elsewhere in the plant, leaving none unemployed (CGL, November 27, 1906). Both the tableware and newly rebuilt bottle operation had reopened by January 1907 (CGL, January 26, 1907).

The southern route man, K. A. Rock, resigned January 1, 1907, to sell for the Monongah Glass Company, Fairmont, West Virginia, a company that made high-end tank glass, and a lot of it.

### Trouble in "River City"

The EGC's minor skirmish with the Southern Railway over retained freight cars could not begin to compare with the multifarious litigation and newspaper notoriety that began in April 1907, continued throughout that year, and dragged on into 1909.

On April 17, 1907, the EGC declared bankruptcy and shut down, in spite of previously reported financial soundness. The receiver for the EGC, Percy C. Hopkins, was ordered by the court to continue business until all prior orders were filled or the raw material to fill them was exhausted.

The May 11, 1907, CGL hinted that a law suit filed by Weil and other minority stockholders against some directors would charge them with conspiring to freeze out small investors and ask for damages.

In early October, intimations became reality when 26 stockholders representing \$130,000 of \$367,000 capital stock pressed charges in circuit court citing fraud, conspiracy, and illegal proceedings by certain directors.

The suit named seven company directors: Alexander Hutchinson, Leonard C. Bomm (owner, L. C. Bomm Drug Company), Edward A. Rasch, Fred W. Reitz, Gilbert Walker, Frank Zipp, and John C. Zutt.

The warring directors were divided into two factions, one led by President Weil who maintained the company could operate profitably; Alexander Hutchinson led the other faction, arguing that the company was operating at a loss.

In his charges against the Hutchinson faction, Weil said that the decision to

declare bankruptcy was illegal, brought before the court without his knowledge or consent. He referred to the company bylaws which stated that the president must be in attendance at all meetings, and the secretary must notify all members of the board regarding upcoming meetings by letter.

President Weil claimed he received no written notice of the meeting, and therefore was not present when the bankruptcy action was taken, making the decision to close the plant an illegal act.

Weil estimated the company to be worth \$700,000—a sum fully twice as large as the liabilities, of which \$150,000 was in long term bonds that would not mature for several years.

“The trouble,” he said, “is lack of sufficient working capital; \$25,000 would have put the company on a good working basis” (CGJ, April 25, 1907). Reported amounts of assets and liabilities vary according to the sources examined; CGJ June 6, 1907, listed company assets at \$341,907 and liabilities at \$403,727.

Weil explained that the company had spent large sums of money while building and expanding the plant; heavy borrowing did not allow the company to show a profit or pay stockholders dividends early on. But, he added, by January 1, 1907, the company had satisfied its debts and was operating on a paying basis.

Contractor Brakeman supported Weil, testifying in court that the plant could not be built for the \$475,000 it had originally cost, and that the value of the buildings far outweighed the liabilities of the company.

In a written reply, the Hutchinson faction countered, saying they were “. . . victims of circumstances with a hopelessly insolvent company on their hands.” They continued, “. . . we have been struggling for the past year with the indebtedness of the company and a constantly increasing loss. We had nothing to continue the business except our individual credit already strained beyond the limit to which prudent businessmen . . . should have gone. Time and time again we have appealed to the stockholders—those who are now objecting to the steps taken—for

financial aid in proportion to their holdings. These appeals have been practically unheeded and whenever money was required the solvent men on this board, together with certain stockholders, were required to put their names to obligations, and in this behalf it is unnecessary to say they were not benefitted or assisted by . . . those who were . . . financially irresponsible.”

The directors further defended their position saying, “We were confronted with the utter insolvency of the company, creditors (who) demanded immediate settlement, (there was) no money with which to continue operations, and that upon us . . . rested the burden of raising the necessary funds by pledging our individual credit.”

Signed by Hutchinson, Rasch, Reitz, Zipp, and Zutt (*The Courier*, May 5, 1907). Four other directors, Weil, James E. Cuning of Indianapolis (who submitted a reorganization plan), Bomm, and Walker did not sign the document.

Evidence put forth by Weil revealed that Hutchinson had been put in charge of commodities valued at \$150,000 and accounts due amounting to \$45,000. He was responsible for liquidating these commodities, thereby freeing up about \$100,000 which would have run the plant through the June 30 fire, or until the summer stop began. Hutchinson, Weil charged, failed to convert the goods into money, and with the approval of several other directors, failed to pay bills and buy supplies, “. . . all with fraudulent intent and purpose to destroy company credit, forcing it into

bankruptcy” (CGL, August 27, 1908).

The directors that Weil named filed a counterclaim against the company seeking to recover \$106,691 they asserted they had previously proffered to keep the concern running. In their suit they named as defendants Aaron M. Weil, Aaron’s brother Herman Weil (associated with Miller Brothers dry goods store), Edward A. Rasch, William Barris, Tessie F. Lowenthal, Louisa M. Britz, Harry Woods, Otto C. Hauserman, and Charles W. Kiltz (CGJ, June 6, 1907).

Reporting on the outcome of the stockholders’ suit, CGL, October 12, 1907, wrote “The proceeding was brief. Federal Court Judge Anderson ruling against the plaintiffs and stating plainly that he did not believe their contention could be proved. He said also that the entire contention amounted to nothing more than a quibble and that a decision for the plaintiffs would profit them nothing in the end” (CGL, October 12, 1907). The plaintiffs withdrew the suit; the disposition of the counterclaim was not reported.

In November 1907, 40 stockholders, supported by the Evansville Business Men’s Association, met to discuss reorganization. They believed the defunct glass works could be reopened. However, only \$10,300 of the \$150,000 to \$200,000 needed to operate the EGC had been raised, not nearly enough to reopen (CGL, November 2, 1907).

Outside capital from Indianapolis investors failed to arrive in time, effectively killing James E. Cuning’s reorganization plan. The court granted receiver Percy C. Hopkins authority to sell the bankrupt company (CGJ, February 20, 1908).

Consequently, the factory buildings, raw materials, machinery and appurtenances, and residual glassware inventory sold for \$127, 575 at public auction on March 10, 1908, far below the appraised value (which ranged from \$200,000 to \$700,00).

Five directors of the EGC, Hutchinson, Reitz, Walker, Zipp, and Zutt, bought the entire plant. The sale amount lacked \$21,425

**Evansville Glass Co. Evansville, Ind.**

Mr. Buyer:  
It is a duty you owe yourself and your trade to secure the very best and most attractive lines on the market.  
The demand for our Fennette line of table glassware proves that it is the one that has caught the public favor. You cannot afford to be without it.

Manufacturers of  
**TABLE GLASSWARE  
STEMWARE  
TUMBLERS  
LAMPS  
NOVELTIES  
PACKERS  
SUPPLIES, ETC.**

We will be pleased to send you illustrations and price lists of any of our lines.

Half Gallon Water Pitcher

Representatives: Western—A. W. Boggs, Southern—K. A. Rock, New York—W. B. Wadlin, 25 W. Broadway

[Fig. 7] Ad for half-gallon water pitcher, with reference to a price list and illustrations (*China, Glass and Lamps*, May 26, 1906).



of paying first mortgage holders; the second mortgage holders and stockholders got nothing (CGJ, March 19, 1908).

One year later, in April 1909, President Weil and stockholders renewed charges against the five directors led by Alexander Hutchinson, charging them with conspiracy to defraud. The suit also charged that when these five men became directors, the EGC was solvent; it had successfully passed through the experimental stage, and could have paid off its debts and been operated in the black.

Further, these five directors out of a total of nine represented a majority, exercised absolute control, and had managed the company in such a way as to destroy EGC's credit, rendering stock worthless, and forcing the factory to be sold as a bankrupt concern.

Weil and stockholders alleged the five directors intended to buy the EGC cheaply, at least \$200,000 under its value, then reorganize it for themselves. The five directors replied they were simply protecting their investments.

The second-time plaintiffs included President Aaron M. Weil (b.1859, d.1929), Jesse C. Weil, Herman Weil, Bettie McBridwell, Henry W. Seim, Annie K. Seim, Charles W. Kiltz, Tessie Lowenthal, Florence F. Goldsmith, Charles H. Bredekamp, all stockholders, and a creditor, the Seabee (Kentucky) Coal and Mining Company. The resolution of the second suit by Weil and others is not known.

What caused the EGC to go belly up in such a short time? Although the following interpretations are purely conjectural, it appears that no single factor, but several in unison, may have toppled this company. Economic factors, such as the slight downturn in 1903-04 and the panic of 1907, merit consideration.

Several other glass companies met their demise about the same time as the EGC. Still, some companies sprang up during this period. Many of them flourished for decades, including the Imperial Glass Company, Bellaire, Ohio, 1901-1985; McKee Glass Company, Jeannette, Pennsylvania, 1903-1951; Fenton Art Glass Company, Williamstown, West Virginia, 1905-present; Indiana Glass, Dunkirk, Indiana, 1904-November 26, 2002; and Federal Glass Company, Columbus, Ohio, (made bottles and jars during the first few years), 1900-1980.

Trade papers described rapid expansion at the EGC, not only building enlargement, but machinery upgrades as well, both of which commanded large outlays of capital. The varied lines made by this company called for a storehouse full of molds that required constant emending as lines were

expanded, representing a major investment.

The human element, as well as monetary issues, may have figured into the fateful equation. The obvious friction between Weil and Hutchinson may have arisen initially from competition in the insurance business. These two men may have nurtured different visions for the company; management styles also may have been dissimilar.

Weil, as president and originator of the company, may have felt a loyalty and responsibility that other officers did not experience.

Lastly, did the trade papers of the time paint too rosy a picture of conditions, when in reality the company was less healthy than portrayed?

### **New Tenants Fill Old EGC Buildings**

Despite legal action pending against them, the purchasers (five former directors) received a charter to reopen the EGC plant as the Citizens Glass Company (CGC).

*Pottery and Glass*, September 1908 (Vol. 1, No 3) announced that the CGC would begin operating in September, employing 200 workers, with Fred W. Reitz, president, Frank Zipp, vice-president, and John C. Zutt, secretary-treasurer. The CGC probably made little, if any, glassware.

By 1910-11, the CGC (John Zutt, secretary-treasurer), had disappeared from the Glass Factory Directories. One final notation on the moribund CGC factory--"Plant idle" (Roller, 1994). (In 1924, John Zutt became the manager of the Central Glass Company, Evansville, a mirror and glass works.)

The old EGC buildings did not remain idle for long. In 1913, they were taken over by the Graham Glass Company headed by three Graham brothers -- Joseph B., Robert C., and Ray A.-- who since 1906 had been involved with a Loogootee, Indiana, plant making blown bottles.

Joseph Graham successfully eliminated the weak point between the shoulder and neck of mechanically blown bottles by blowing them upside down, causing glass to flow toward the weak point. Appropriately the company logo on 1914 letterhead shows an upside down bottle superimposed over a capital "G."

In Evansville, Graham Glass under Joseph's presidency, made beverage bottles including Coca-Cola's "Gibson Girl" (Hobbleskirt) bottle.

In 1927, under president J. M. Lents, a new steel and concrete factory was erected to replace the old wood frame bottle factory.

By 1929, this factory had been taken over by the Owens-Illinois Glass Company, named Factory No. 11, last appearing in

the 1939 Glass Factory Directory. The Triple A Catsup Company was among several companies that later occupied the buildings.

The Graham brothers founded the Graham Brothers Truck Company in 1919, and built a plant in Evansville to make a complete line of trucks, school buses, and the Graham-Paige automobile.

### **The EGC's Wares Await Attribution**

Until a copy of the 1905-06 EGC catalog, or additional print collateral is found, the patterns named in trade journals--the grape line, Puritan line, and the Evansville line can't be identified.

Made in 1904, these lines preceded the Fernette line. Were they made in colors? Was the company's definition of a novelty a unique piece added to an already existing line, or was it considered a separate form such as a vase or salt?

The Fernette line made in 1905 in clear only includes a covered butter, covered sugar, nine-inch shallow bowl (true open compote), toothpick, and half-gallon water pitcher (jug). Most likely a creamer and spooner completed the table set; water tumblers may have been produced as well.

Bredehoft et al.,(1999) report that the Fernette toothpick was also made by the Canton Glass Company, Marion, Indiana, about 1920, the second Canton Glass Company to operate in Marion. Heacock (1981) shows the Fernette compote as also being made by Canton No. 2 in 1922, but with a square bowl. After the demise of the EGC, and later the CGC, molds were dispersed among other factories.

What wares were produced in Chocolate glass and other opaque colors? According to Jacob Rosenthal, in September 1932 correspondence with Dr. Otis Nesbit, a Chocolate glass collector from Gary, Indiana, "I made it in Evansville in 1904, but it was not a popular color and in commercial demand after 1903. For two and one-half years it sold big" (Measell, 1982).

In the information Susan Rosenthal sent to J. Stanley Brothers, Jr. in 1933, following Jacob's death, she did not remember that he made Chocolate glass in Evansville.

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#### Tableware

- Evansville line
- "grape line"
- Fernette line
- Puritan line

#### Miscellaneous

- berry bowls
- liquors
- bread plates
- medicine bottles
- butter dishes
- milk jars
- cake plates
- molasses cans
- candle sticks
- nappies
- cups
- novelties
- fish jars
- packers goods
- flint beers
- pitchers (jugs)
- fruit jars
- proprietary ware
- goblets
- queen custards
- jelly glasses
- salts
- lamps
- tumblers
- lantern globes
- vases

**About the Author:** Marg Iwen began collecting Early American Pattern Glass (EAPG) after bidding successfully on an unknown glass plate at a country auction in 1969. Today she collects a Mc-Kee tableware pattern, but has bought and sold EAPG, novelties, and historical glass through her home-based Bear Tooth Antiques for the past 14 years. Her research interest is glass factories of the 19th and early 20th centuries. She has written over a dozen articles on various factories and their wares. She lives in Madison, Wisconsin, with her husband, Frank, and Schnauzer, Data Base.

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