



BOGARDUS MOLDS... *I still have questions unanswered.*

Ralph Finch looks back on target balls (with a few hits and a few misses)

I suppose that almost any glass company could have made them. Any glass company could order a common, plain, three-piece mold for a 2-7/8ths inches diameter ball; apparently, many did.

But since glass target balls were ordered by the barrel—often 300-plus in a barrel—and made to be destroyed, most ball makers remain anonymous. Why go to the expense of making elaborate molds? (Note that a few did; the super-rare ball embossed with a finely detailed pigeon is a prime example.) But there are exceptions; a few balls gave some information, but not the maker.

Ira Paine was a major sharpshooter and had (literally) a ton of glass balls made; all embossed with his name but not a maker's name. The glass company occasionally took care of that in advertising but not on the ball itself. Paine noted that his orbs are "the only substitute ever invented for a living bird".

An advertisement from New York City's *Bohemian Glass Works* touted that it was "having made a specialty of the manufacture of glass balls" noted that 103,250 Bogardus balls had been shipped "in one week in April 1879." But Bogardus balls were also made in England and Germany; are these separate from the 103,250? The Bohemian firm also boasted that 80,000 of its balls had just been shipped to London—again, part of the 103,250? Also, over the pond, British gunmaker W&C Scott and Son ordered 10,000 balls...yet no balls are embossed "Bohemian."

Some balls tell you everything—except the maker, such as the "Great Western Johnston" ball [A]. It is embossed "From J. H. Johnston Great Western Gun Works 169 Smithfield Street Pittsburgh, Pa." Embossed on the back, in six lines, is: "Rifles Shotguns Revolvers Ammunitions Fishing Tackle Choke Boring Repairing* & c. Write For A Price List." Variations of this ball have been sold. A deep-purple example was first sold in the Kerr auction for \$19,040 (in 2007). The ball is also found in regular amber, deep root beer, and a great yellow amber. Wouldn't it be nice to have a run of these on your shelf?

A one-known-only aquamarine "Louisville Ball" is embossed "Manufactured by Kentucky Glassworks Company Joseph Griffith & Sons Sole Agents Also Dealers in Guns Pistols & Fishing Tackle Louisville Kentucky." [B] Other U.S.-named glassworks?

"Agnew & Brown / Corner of 27th & Smallman Sts. Pittsburgh Pa." (One example, called "The Pigeon Ball," finally sold for \$29,120.) [C] "E.E. Sage & Co. / Glass Manufacturers / Chicago Illinois / Patented August 21st / 1877." [D]

FYI: Why do people collect? One friend started with target balls when he found a Sage and noted that the date was his birthdate. (The month, not the year.)

The amber "C. Newman" ball is assumed to have been made by the San Francisco & Pacific Glass Works since Carlton Newman January – February 2024

was the firm's proprietor. [E]

Also, there are Great Britain balls embossed "N. B. Glass Works Perth," [F] "W. W. Greeners St Marys Works Birmm." [G] "Stacey & Co.," [H] and "Robinson, Birmm." [I] A Dutch ball is marked "Boers & Cp. Delft Flesschenfabrick." [J] In Germany, "Bogardus Glass Balls Stolberger Glashutten." [K] FYI: Birmm is the abbreviation for Birmingham, then the gun-making capital of England. (The above ball list is almost complete, but...I don't want readers to fall asleep.)

Also, there is other minutia I could bring up. I'm a serious—but former target ball collector, and even I'm a bit tired by this, so... Let's take a shot at the Bogardus ball. Here, we will take aim at what is perhaps the most well-known ball: "The Bogardus." In fact, in England, the Brits will often refer to any glass target ball as a "Bogardus ball." And 99.9 percent of the balls are embossed "Bogardus' Glass Ball Pat'd April 10 1877." [L] (Variations will be noted below.)

Since there were a (literally) ton of Bogardus balls, there had to be MANY molds. Yet, I've never heard of one turning up. (Were they melted down in the metal drives of the Great War {1914-18} since the ball-shooting era was pretty much long gone by then?) Now, here's the point of this: Once, during the period that I dedicated way too much time researching target balls, my listing of variations of the embossings uncovered:

The three-part Bogardus balls had mold lines that separated words at different points; some balls showed different uses of the apostrophe and different ways to abbreviate the word "April." I think I counted 45 different molds, and don't you dare call for a recount of the @\$%& things. (Plus, there were Bogardus balls embossed with large letters: A, B, C and D.)

And to add to that number, a score of Bogardus balls (bad pun intended) were made in England as I assume it was cheaper to send a mold over to England than send many thousands of balls. OR, the molds were also made in England. (We attribute to England the balls that, in one of the diamonds of the pattern, a very small number or letter is found.)

Also, Bogardus balls made in Germany (again, an assumption) add to the total mold number.

And regarding target ball molds in general? What about ball molds from Australia, Canada, France, Norway, and Sweden? With its almost worldwide use, I have never heard of anyone having a Bogardus ball mold or even seen one!

My head is spinning like a poorly launched target ball. Talking about molds...Could anyone update an article on molds for flasks, etc.? Any comments? Or complaints? Or a target ball mold? Write ralphfinch@gmail.com

