

# J. William Gayner

## *...and the Gayner Glass Works*

The early 1920's brought a new era of glass insulator production to the East Coast. The most significant factor was the closing of the Brookfield Glass Company. The failure of Brookfield created a vacuum in insulator production in the East which encouraged new competition in the manufacture and sale of insulators. This came at a time of rapid growth in the use of open wire communication lines, especially telephone lines in rural areas of the Midwest and West. This expansion also fostered competition and stimulated improved insulator designs.

Two well-established New Jersey glass companies, Whitall Tatum and Gayner Glass Works, immediately rushed to fill the void left by the closing of Brookfield. Gayner, located at Salem, New Jersey, was the first into actual production of insulators, beginning late in 1920 or early in 1921.

Insulator production at Gayner was supervised by J. William Gayner. It is not known what insulator equipment was used at the Gayner plant in its early production, but it is likely that some equipment, including hand insulator presses, was obtained from Brookfield. Brookfield's automatic presses were not sold until late in 1922 or early 1923, so it is unlikely that these were ever used at Gayner. Gayner eventually built their own fully-automatic insulator machine, presumably based on designs and patents developed by Brookfield. It appears that Gayner either bought Brookfield patents and equipment outright or paid royalties for their use.

The facilities at Gayner were good. Since the company was already producing bottles, fruit jars, and other glassware, skilled labor and production expertise were readily available. The result was the production of consistently high-quality insulators.

Gayner produced insulators until late 1922 or early 1923. At that time J. William Gayner, the driving force behind insulator production at Gayner, joined the Lynchburg Glass Corporation and moved the entire Gayner operation to Lynchburg, Virginia.

Because of the high quality of Gayner production, its insulators are remarkably uniform, good news for the company but not very exciting for collectors. The colors range only from a medium blue aqua to a darker greenish aqua. On all styles, the lettering is "GAYNER" in neat uniform letters on the front and the Gayner style number and very small mold numbers on the back. The style numbering generally follows Hemingray style numbers, although on three types the style number is a combination

of Hemingray and Brookfield numbers (e.g. No. 38-20).

There are ten styles of insulators which bear the Gayner name:

CD 103	No. 6
CD 106	No. 90
CD 121	No. 160
CD 153	No. 48-400
CD 154	No. 44
CD 160	No. 140
CD 162	No. 36-190
CD 164	No. 38-20
CD 205	No. 530
CD 252	No. 620

Most are common styles of the era, although some have unique features.

The CD 103, No. 6, is quite rare. It may have been an experimental design or a special order. It is possibly from a reworked Brookfield mold that Gayner never put into commercial production.

The CD 106, No. 90, has two distinct types. Type I is the earlier design, closely resembling early types of the Hemingray CD 106 No. 9. It has a slightly peaked, rounded dome and thick heavy ridges on both sides of the wire groove. The groove itself is rounded and protrudes slightly from the sides of the insulator. Type II more closely resembles the Whitall Tatum CD 107, No. 9, with a flatter top and a flat squared-off wire groove.

The CD 160, No. 140, has two minor variations in the shape of the dome.

The CD 252, No. 620, is a unique design of cable insulator with a wider base and a shorter, more squatty appearance than other CD 252 cables. The CD 154, No. 44, is also slightly shorter than the Hemingray No. 42 likewise giving it a more squatty appearance when compared to other CD 154's.

All styles except the CD 103 occur with sharp drip points and all but the CD 121, CD 153 and CD 160 also exist with a smooth base.

Gayner prepared molds for a CD 122 but the operation at Gayner was moved to Lynchburg before these could be put into production. Careful examination of Lynchburg CD 122's will reveal the five- or six-circle blotouts covering the original GAYNER embossing.

It is not certain whether the No-Name CD 106, No. 9 and No. 90, the CD 153, No. 48-40, the CD 162, No.



36-19, and the CD 164, No. 38-20, were produced by Gayner, later by Lynchburg, or by some other company using Gayner-manufactured molds. There is some evidence that at least the CD 153 was produced by Lynchburg. The color and numbering of these No-Names suggest at least some connection to either Gayner or Lynchburg. It is possible that other styles without the Gayner name were

also produced at the Gayner plant.

While the Gayner insulators were produced for less than three years, the fact that so many are available, and that they can be found in many areas of the country still in service along railroad rights-of-way, attests to some measure of success of Gayner insulator production.

## *...and the Lynchburg Glass Corporation*

Lynchburg Glass Corporation of Lynchburg, Virginia, was another of those companies which attempted to capitalize on the vacuum left when Brookfield ceased production in 1922. Because of various problems with Gayner Glass Works' insulator production, J. William Gayner, who had supervised insulator production at Gayner, joined the newly reorganized Lynchburg Glass Corporation in 1923 as vice president in charge of production. He brought with him his expertise in insulator production and his "contacts" in the glass industry, along with the equipment and insulator molds which had been used at Gayner.

The Lynchburg plant was a state-of-the-art facility when it was constructed in 1918. It occupied a little over five acres at the corner of Ann and Hudson Streets in Lynchburg. The main furnace building was about 200' by 100' and contained two gas-fired tank furnaces with a daily capacity of about 40 tons each. It also housed five 7' by 65' oil-fired annealing lehrs.

The mixing shed or batch house contained three large bins of soda ash, lime and sand, as well as equipment for weighing and mixing the glass formula. The bins were filled directly by railroad cars from an overhead trestle. An electric-powered mixing machine mixed the glass formula and fed it to the furnaces.

A 64' by 37' production building provided ample space to sort, grade, and pack the insulators. There was also a large warehouse for storage. The plant had its own powerhouse with two 66" diameter 18' boilers for steam driven machinery and an electric generator for powering lights. There was also a complete box shop with electric saws for constructing wooden shipping crates and barrels, as well as an amply-equipped machine shop for equipment repair and the tooling of molds.

Most of Lynchburg's actual insulator equipment came from the Gayner plant, including the Gayner-built fully-automatic insulator machine, all the Gayner molds, and four hand-operated insulator presses. Lynchburg also obtained Brookfield's two automatic insulator presses. These were most likely the Brookfield-Kribs presses built under Brookfield's 1900 patent. These presses were specifically mentioned in the liquidation sale of Brookfield

equipment in late 1922. Evidence indicates that Lynchburg paid royalties for the use of this equipment.

In addition, Lynchburg had six bottle-blowing machines, one automatic and five semi-automatic, with a variety of bottle molds. It also had one fruit jar machine with pint, quart and half-gallon molds. While most of Lynchburg Glass Corporation's production consisted of insulators, they did produce a small number of fruit jars. There are reports that some soda bottles were also produced at the Lynchburg plant, but these were likely produced by Lynchburg Glass Works prior to 1923 before the company was reorganized as Lynchburg Glass Corporation.

Insulator production began at Lynchburg in November of 1923. Their slogan was "Supreme Where Quality Counts." This reflected the concern with high quality which had marked insulator production at Gayner under J. William Gayner.

Lynchburg's insulators were aggressively marketed. By early 1924 they were shipping insulators to exporters in Seattle, Los Angeles, and New York; to customers in Newfoundland, South America, the Caribbean, Mexico, and as far away as the Philippines and Australia; to wholesalers throughout the East and South; and small orders to businesses, cities, and utility and telephone companies from Arizona to Nebraska. Since Lynchburg was located near several major railroads, low transportation costs allowed it to compete with the larger companies. Demand increased steadily and during the first twelve weeks of operation, Lynchburg produced an average of 150,000 insulators per week.

However, things did not go well for the company. Despite the modern equipment, superb management and good sales, the company struggled to show a profit. The quality of glass produced was not good and production costs were excessive. By the middle of March 1924, the company was in trouble. Production was halted the first week of April after only sixteen weeks of operation. After some reorganization, the plant resumed operation in early November of 1924. However, there were still problems with glass quality resulting in a large number of rejects which pushed production costs higher. Unable to show a



profit, the company finally closed at the end of May 1925 after only 44 weeks of operation.

Efforts to raise capital to reopen the plant failed and the entire facility was eventually demolished. Only then during the demolition was it discovered that a valve in a gas line feeding the main furnaces had been improperly installed in an inaccessible place and was partially closed. This had caused low gas pressure resulting in improper heating of the glass in the furnaces. The Lynchburg plant had been doomed to failure the day it was built!

The majority of Lynchburg insulators are a characteristic bright blue aqua, although they occur in hues ranging from a sparkling ice blue to a deep greenish aqua. Many shades of green are also found, including olive, lime, sage, apple, and emerald green. Characteristic of later production (early 1925) are various shades of clear, including ginger ale, pink, green, and amber tints as well as sparkling crystal clear. Rare colors known to exist include bright blue (no aqua), translucent (jade) aqua, aqua-swirled with green, aqua-swirled with milk white, and amber-tinted clear. Due to production schedules, particular styles only occur in certain colors.

The lettering arrangement on Lynchburg insulators varies widely. The most common front embossing is the name "LYNCHBURG" and their logo, an "L" within an oval, either above or below the name. The logo sometimes appears on the top of the dome or is omitted altogether. In a few cases, the logo appears without the name. Since many Gayner molds were reused, often the Gayner-embossed style and mold numbers were retained on the back with "MADE IN U.S.A." added as a distinctly Lynchburg feature.

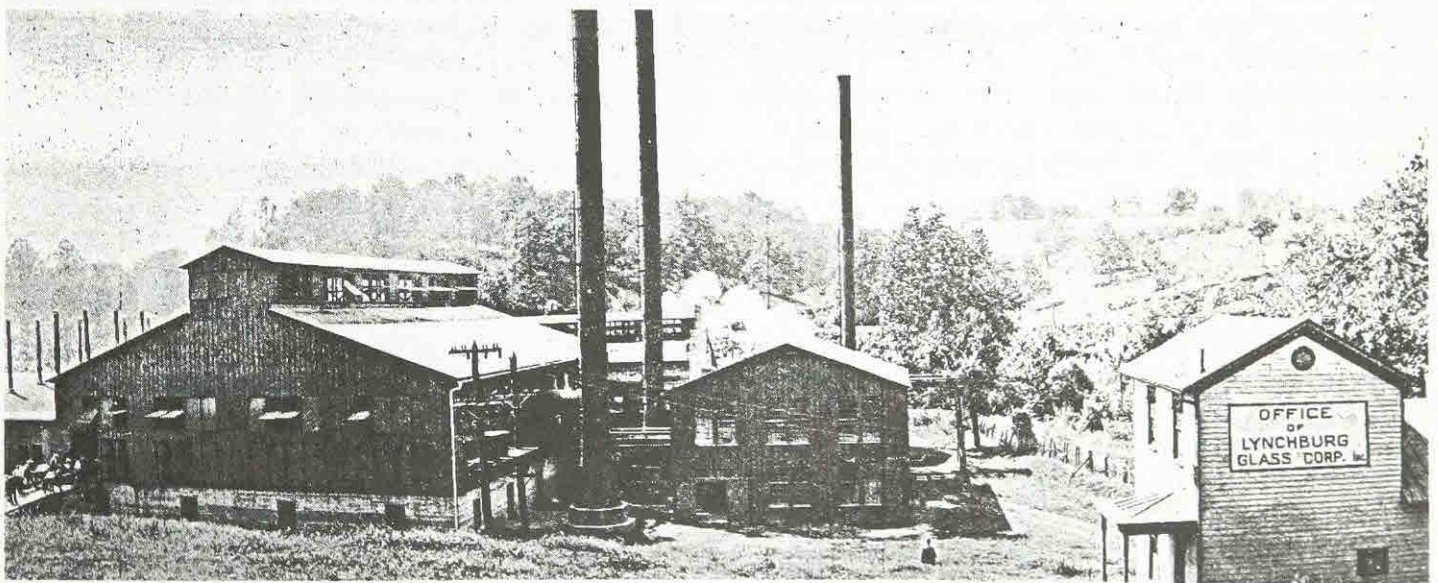
The style numbers generally follow Brookfield's system, so even when the Gayner numbers were retained they were usually partially altered to eliminate the Hemingray numbers favored by Gayner.

Lacking skilled engravers, much of the early Lynchburg lettering was crudely done, often little more than the name scratched into the mold. This resulted in many embossing errors and various sizes of lettering. Most of the crude embossing and errors were corrected in later retooling of the molds, but it makes for some interesting variations for collectors. Since Lynchburg carefully numbered most of their molds, some of the same molds can be traced through as many as three modifications.

There are fourteen styles of insulators that carry the Lynchburg name or logo:

CD 106	No. 10
CD 112	No. 31
CD 121 and CD 122	No. 30
CD 145	No. 43
CD 154	No. 44
CD 160	No. 32
CD 162	No. 36
CD 164	No. 38
CD 205	No. 53 and No. 530
CD 251	No. 1
CD 252	No. 2
CD 281	No. 180
CD 306	No. 181

An interesting feature of Lynchburg insulator



*Pictured is the office of the Lynchburg Glass Corp., Inc. (right foreground) and the plant buildings belonging to the Lynchburg, Virginia, glasshouse. (Lynchburg advertising brochure provided by Neil Eidson)*

