

# Baltimore Glass Manufacturing Company, 1896-1903

On July 5, 1894, Seraphin Kribs made application for a patent for a press for making screw insulators. (Figure 1.) Seraphin Kribs was a citizen of Germany but he lived in Brooklyn, New York, and worked as a machinist for the Brookfield Glass Company. He developed his idea while working for William Brookfield, who was the subsequent assignee of the patent when it was issued on July 9, 1895.

The period of development which preceded the actual patent application naturally involved other employees of the Brookfield Glass Company. There were corrupt and dishonest forces at work in some of these people, and that is our story. Jacob Pease (plant superintendent), Charles J. Jordan (assistant superintendent), Mr. Flohl (draftsman), and Anthony Kribs, who was Seraphin's brother, are the principals involved. Court records tell us that "when Kribs constructed the first machine that was to become known as the 'Kribs Press', Jordan declared that it would not work and himself admits that he did not appreciate its value at the start." It is also significant that at the insistence of Pease, Jordan decided to claim the invention for his own and got Flohl, a draftsman at the factory, to make drawings for him secretly. Together they connived, finagled, and attempted to be first to the patent office; but this conspiracy was found out, and all connected with it were discharged. Even Anthony Kribs participated in this conspiracy, but due to his brother's influence, he was not fired.

So--there Brookfield was in the summer of 1894 with no superintendent or assistant superintendent and looking for a draftsman. This, to be sure, was a great loss to the Brookfield Glass Company, since during this time their yearly output of insulators numbered in the millions. There were only three glass companies making insulators at this time, and with the new Kribs Press, Brookfield surely intended to establish himself as the leader in the field of electrical insulation. As is noted in court records of the time, "The Kribs press superseded all others, and went at once into general use, both by reason of increased output as well as better work. Insulators made according to previous methods were practically unsaleable, costing too much and not coming up to the mark." Even the Hemingray Glass Company was forced to take a license to use this machine.

Shortly after the fateful day at the Brookfield Glass Company, Charles Jordan made application for a patent, claiming the invention as his own, but dropped it when it was thrown into interference with the

application of Kribs, which was subsequently filed on July 5, 1894, as noted earlier.

Court records go on to tell us that "two years later, Jordan and Pease organized a company to exploit the device" for making screw insulators. In the *Commoner & Glassworker*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, dated February 8, 1896, we find Jacob Pease as vice president and Charles J. Jordan as superintendent of the glass company that made the insulators which are lettered "B.G.M.Co." An excerpt from that issue's article, "Green Glass News From Baltimore", follows:

*At Westport, in the thirteenth district of Baltimore County, just across the Patapsco River, is being built a glass manufacturing plant. The capitalists are from N.Y. and Chicago and after looking Baltimore over, found this location to be the best and most convenient.*

*The factory is being erected near the water edge of the Middle Branch and the tracks of the B & O are being laid into the yard of the works. A double force of labor was put on yesterday, as the company wants to have it finished by summer.*

*This is said to be the only plant in Md. that will manufacture and use a patent on simplex glass, stoppered and metal screw-top bottles and fruit jars. The company will also manufacture flint glass and amber glassware. Electrical supplies, such as battery jars, insulators, etc. will also be made. The name of the company is the BALTIMORE GLASS MANUFACTURING COMPANY. The following are the officers: J.A. Oaks, pres.; Jacob Pease, v.p.; Edward Stabler Jr., treas.; I.I. Van Diehl, sec.; I.B. Whitlick, gen. mgr.; Charles J. Jordan, supt.*

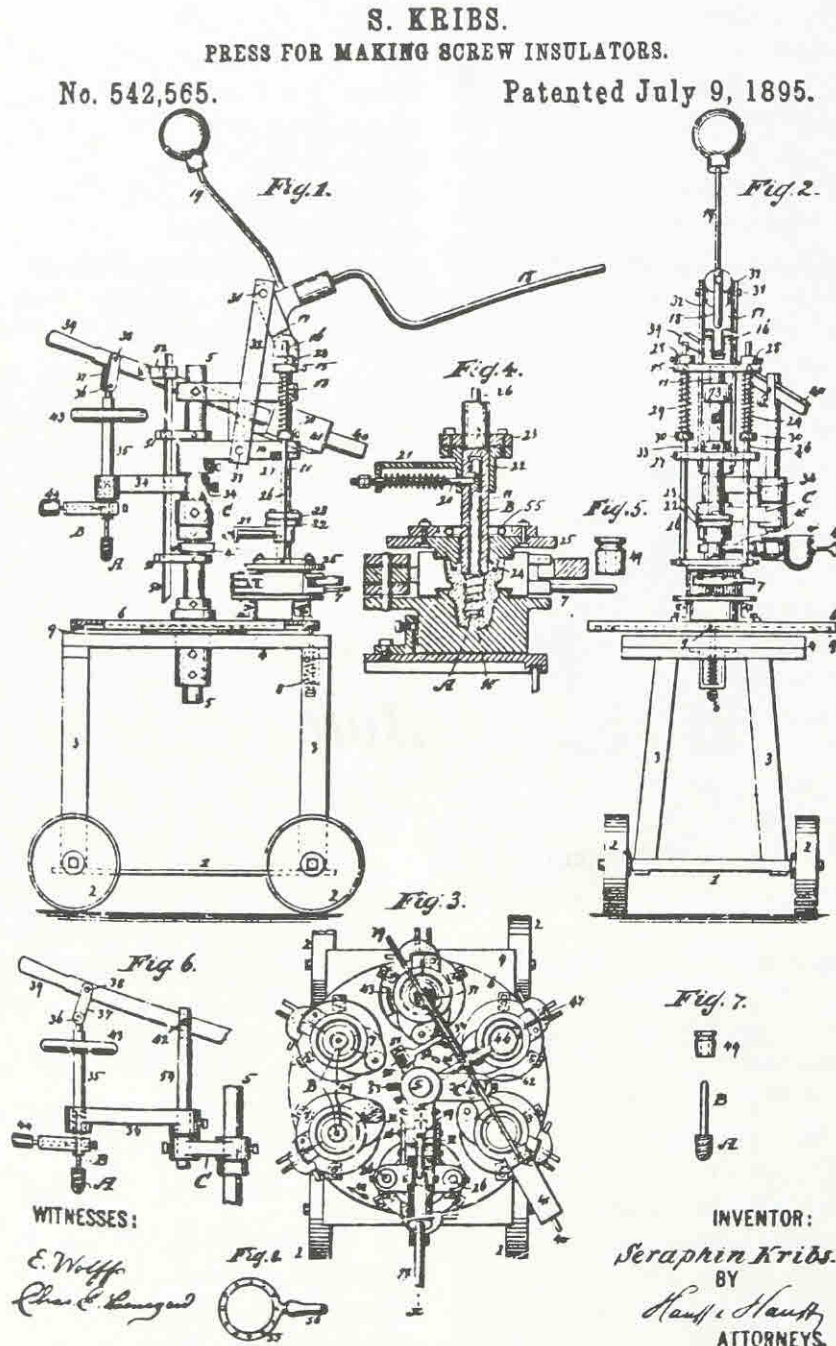
*About 200 men will be employed and the gangs will work both day and night.*

We must wonder just exactly how they went about making insulators on a machine that was in reality patented by S. Kribs and owned by William Brookfield. Obviously they did, because to be in any way competitive with respect to quantity and quality they would have had to use this patent process. [Litigation attempts were] made to prove Jordan the original and sole inventor of the Kribs Press, but this was postponed and tied up for years, with the courts eventually ruling in favor of Kribs.

One would suppose that B.G.M.Co. was able to foresee the outcome of this court test and stopped insulator-manufacturing operations to minimize any damages and

legal expenses they might be ordered to pay if Brookfield were to bring patent infringement proceedings against them. In any case, Brookfield came into ownership of the molds from this ill-fated operation as is evidenced by Brookfield insulators with the B.G.M.Co. ghosting. B.G.M. Co. embossings have been located on CD's 102, 133, 134, 145, 162 and 164. They are made of a purple glass

with a fewer number having been manufactured in a near clear color and a shade of light lemon. B.G.M. Co. ghostings have been found on aqua Brookfield units in CD's 102, 145 and 162. It is not known how long the Baltimore Glass Manufacturing Company was in business. It is believed they last made insulators in 1903.



(Figure 1.) The July 9, 1895 patent granted Seraphin Kribs for a press for making screw-type insulators.

The research and authorship of this chapter belongs to J. Dennis Donovan of Muncie, Indiana. Dennis, a former employee of Hemingray's Muncie, Indiana, plant and researcher, has unlocked much of the history associated with Hemingray as well as other Indiana and historically significant insulator manufacturers.