

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 As is noted in court records of the time, "The Kribs press superseded all others, and went at once into general use, both by reason of increased output as well as better work.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.

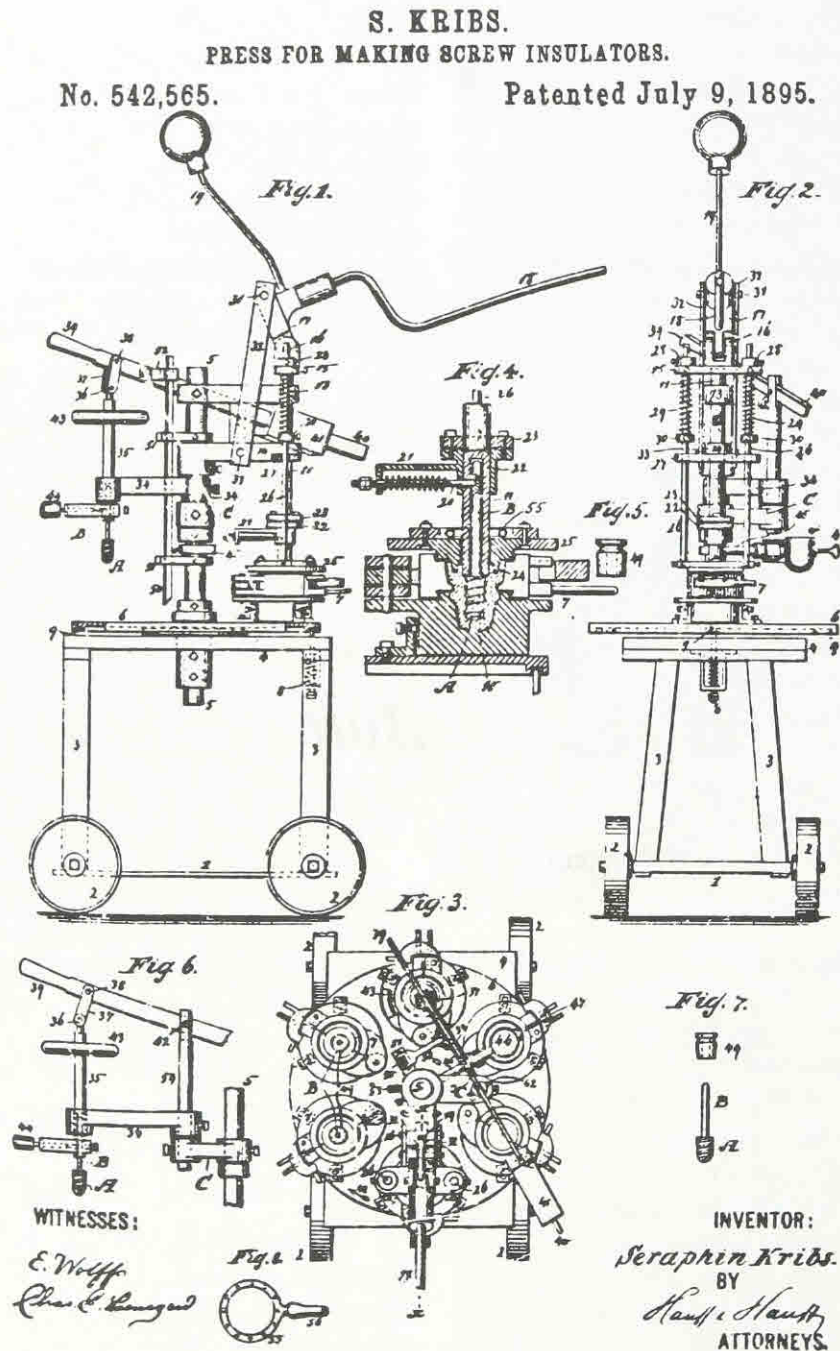
About 200 men will be employed and the gangs will work both day and night.

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.

NEW ENGLAND MANUFACTURERS

Introduction

Glass insulators manufactured or used in the Boston area are known in more embossings and manufacturers' names than those native to any other region in the United States. Some have unique designs; a few have special types of pinhole threading; and still others are found in very attractive colors, making many of these specimens particularly desirable collectors' items.

The most prominent individual in the history of Boston area glass insulator production is Samuel Oakman. Mr. Oakman invented several insulator designs which were very different from others used in their day. Without his patents, the progress of insulator design into the 20th

century might have taken a very different path. Each of his insulator patents represents a small but important historical glimpse of Mr. Oakman's ingenuity.

Boston glassmakers were very active during the 1870-1900 period. Complete records of these early events have been difficult to obtain. A number of questions remain about these manufacturers and the insulators they made.

Hopefully, the information provided will enable future researchers to assemble a complete chronological history about glass insulator production in the Boston area during the early days of the telephone and electric light.

The Influence of Samuel Oakman at Boston Bottle Works

No other glassworks ever produced more unusual styles of insulators than those made by the Boston Bottle Works. These interestingly-designed insulators were produced in the early days of the threaded pinhole glass insulator.

Most Boston Bottle Works insulator designs are unique. Although the majority of Boston Bottle Works insulators are of aqua glass, some have been located in beautiful shades of amber and green. In addition, many have three or four segmented pinhole threading and are usually embossed around the base of the pinhole or on the rim of the inner skirt.

In studying and researching the Boston Bottle Works and early Boston area glass insulator production, no other name is encountered so frequently and prominently as that of Samuel Oakman.

Samuel Oakman was born in February 1822, to Mr. & Mrs. Samuel Oakman of Charlestown, Massachusetts. By the late 1840's he had gone into business with Benjamin Eldridge, establishing a dealership in coal, wood, and kerosene. Their office, as well as a bonded warehouse, was located at 99 State Street, Boston. Mr. Eldridge passed away in 1865 but the Oakman & Eldridge

business remained in operation until the late 1870's.

During the years when Samuel Oakman was active in Boston area glass factories, the principal items he produced were bottles, demijohns, and insulators.

Between 1868 and 1904, Mr. Oakman was granted 22 patents. Many of them dealt with bottle-making and related equipment, while several involved insulator designs. Some of these designs are still utilized today in the manufacture of porcelain insulators, notably his June 17, 1890 saddle groove and November 13, 1883 inner skirt patents. (Figure 1.)

The Boston Bottle Works story begins with the Massachusetts Glass Company. It was listed in the *Boston City Directory* from 1869 to 1871. The company was formed during May 1867, with Samuel Oakman as its president. Mr. Oakman was listed as "agent" in the 1868 *Boston City Directory* and as "treasurer for glass company" during 1869 and 1870. On March 23, 1869, he was granted his first patent for a glassmaking furnace, nearly two years after the Massachusetts Glass Company's organization.

During 1869 the Massachusetts Glass Company's office was at 99 State Street, the same location as the

