

# **Moxie Nerve Food – Bottles and History**

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We were led to the study of Moxie soda bottles by the intriguing BGCo initials on the base of a Moxie bottle with a crown finish. Typically, the BGCo logo was used by the Belleville Glass Co. (1882-1886), far too early for a bottle with a crown closure. Very early in our research, we came to the conclusion that Moxie, like the Curtice Brothers with their catsup bottles, had required their glass suppliers to emboss their initials on Moxie bottles. Further evidence supports this and has led to the present study of Moxie history and a chronology of Moxie bottles.

## **History**

### **Early Legend of Moxie, Lowell, Massachusetts**

Several secondary sources (e.g., Donovan 2014:46; Wikipedia 2022) claimed that Moxie may have been invented as a patent medicine by Dr. Augustin Thompson ca. 1876, but Thompson's son, Frank, at that time the president of the Moxie Nerve Food Co., stated in a long interview in the *Pittsburgh Press* on August 11, 1907, that the firm was 22 years old, "for Moxie was first made in 1885." The junior Thompson noted that his father, a Civil War veteran, had a friend named Mocksey whom had given his father his secret ingredient. Already, Thompson had been working on his idea for "a beverage that should be neither a medicine nor a mere soda fountain drink, but something between the two." The younger Thompson claimed that he drove the initial wagon to deliver Moxie in March of 1885, selling 10,000 cases the first year. Despite the evidence, Moxie ads claimed 1884 as the founding year.

However, Augustin Thompson, himself, told a slightly different story in the earliest newspaper piece we could find. Under the heading "A Big Fortune for Someone If True," Thompson explained his discovery in the *Portland Daily Press* for July 22, 1885, claiming that "Lieut. Moxie was a dear old friend" whom had died recently. However, the year before, "while hunting in South America, he found the people using what they called the Food Plant." Of course, Thompson claimed that his miraculous drink would cure almost everything and offered it for sale in Lowell, Massachusetts, for "35 cents a quart bottle of \$3.50 per dozen . . . . Try it at

soda fountains.” Later, Thompson claimed the Moxie found the turnip-shaped root in the Straits of Magellan. He called his concoction Moxie Nerve Food. The early article gave no name for the company, only Dr. A. Thompson.

Dr. Augustin Thompson had served as the captain of Company G, 28th Maine Infantry during the Civil War in 1862. After the war, he attended the Homoeopathic Medical Hospital of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia, earning his degree with the graduating class on March 2, 1867 (*Philadelphia Evening Telegraph*). While he was a competent, even popular, doctor, his claims about Moxie Nerve Food were completely unfounded. There was no Lieutenant Moxie (or Mocksy) nor any mysterious turnip-shaped root. His assertions that Moxie would cure a long list of ailments were equally unfounded. For example, the *Western Druggist* noted in its August 16, 1886, issue that “this ‘Moxie,’ despite the wonderful tale of its discovery, although so “wholly unknown to biologists” is we presume to say, a plant otherwise termed *Avena sativa*. The great “Nerve Food” is a decoction of oats made into syrup and flavored with sassafras and wintergreen.”

#### **Moxie Nerve Food Co., Lowell, Massachusetts (1885-1899)**

According to the International Publishing Co. (1887), the Moxie Nerve Food Co. was incorporated in 1885 with a capital of two million dollars and was located at 33 N. State St., Lowell, Massachusetts. Almost certainly using data supplied by Augustin Thompson, the short history claimed that Moxie sold six million bottles in the two years since it began (i.e., 1885) and had subscribed to \$14,000 in advertising during that period. However, the piece also asserted that Moxie cured 200,000 drunks in the city – a totally preposterous claim that undermines the veracity of the “history.” The capital, number of bottles sold, and the “cure” figure may safely be ignored.

However, the *Portland Daily Press* reported on July 17, 1885, that the Moxie Nerve Food Co. of Maine was incorporated with a capital of \$500,000. John L. Hunt was president with George A. Byam as treasurer, and John L. Hunt, Augustin Thompson, George A. Byam, I.G. Hungerford, and Charles Langley as directors.

According to the Matthews Museum of Main Heritage. Thompson sold his first bottle of Moxie Nerve Food – now carbonated – on March 7, 1885 (also see above). Matthews claimed that Moxie “was patented” in July of that year, although the July 11, 1887, lawsuit (Caselaw

2022) made it clear that the firm applied for a trademark for “MOXIE” on July 16, 1885, and had the mark registered on September 8, claiming the logo’s first use on April 1, 1885. Despite the repeated claims on internet sites and the embossing on early bottles, Moxie was never patented.

Even though Moxie opened a factory in Chicago (and possibly one in New York City), the heart of the operation remained at Lowell. At some point, William Taylor became president and retained that position until the reorganization of 1901 (see below). But, disaster struck on September 24, 1899. On the day after, the *Holyoak Daily Transcript* reported that the Moxie plant at Lowell had burned to the ground at a \$40-45,000 loss, mostly of stock and machinery. The flames also destroyed the Standard Bottling Co., located in the basement of the building and owned by William Williams. Williams’ loss was estimated at \$15,000, only \$6,000 of which was insured. In 1893, Moxie had opened a much larger factory at Boston, so the firm never rebuilt the Lowell operation.

**Western Moxie Nerve Food Co., Chicago (1886-1888)**

**Chicago Moxie Nerve Food Co., Chicago (1889-1894)**

Around 1886, the firm opened the Western Moxie Nerve Food Co. at 33 N. State St., Chicago. Although we have discovered little about the plant, it used its own bottles, one bearing the term “western” but both identifying Chicago as the place of origin. Between late 1888 and early 1889, the plant moved to 195 Kinzie St., now called the Chicago Moxie Nerve Food Co., although that operation, too, closed after just a few years at 1894.

Even though the firm attempted a resurrection in 1897, there is no evidence that the new place ever opened. The timing is interesting and could reflect three different but possibly related phenomena. First, although Moxie originally appeared to spread in popularity across the country, by the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was receding back to New England, and the failure of the Chicago branch may have been a harbinger of that withdrawal. Second, unlike most popular US bottled, non-alcoholic beverages, Moxie initially bottled all of its own products. The Giants that followed a decade later (like Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola) created syrups and spread their products through the use of franchised bottlers. Although the historic trail is thin, Moxie appears to have begun its push into the franchise method about the middle of the 1890s, and they may have caused the closing of the Chicago plant. Finally, Moxie had just opened its new, larger plant at Boston in 1893, possibly making the Chicago operation superfluous.

**Moxie Nerve Food Co., Boston, Massachusetts (1893-1953)**

The first listing for Moxie’s Boston plant was in the 1893 directory at 68 Beverly St. Rising five stories above the street, the factory was completed in late 1892 or early 1893 (Figure 1). While this was a centralized location, a downside was the loading of the wagons directly on the street in front of the plant. Eventually, this created traffic problems.



Figure 1 – 68 Beverly St. plant (eBay)

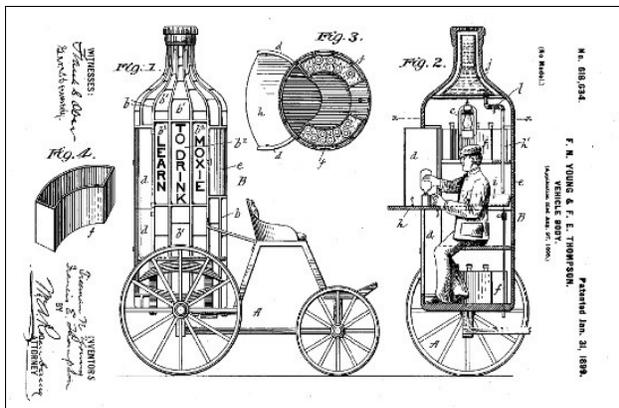


Figure 2 – Young & Thompson 1899 patent

In 1898, two of the Moxie pioneers had a unique brainstorm for selling the drink. Freeman N. Young (one of the original members of the board) and Francis E. Thompson (one of Augustin’s sons) designed a horse-drawn wagon with a tall store room instead of bed that was built to look like a giant Moxie bottle. A salesman would drive the wagon to a town. Unhitch the horse and

disappear into the “bottle” – where he would open a window and pass out free samples of Moxie.

Young & Thompson applied for a patent for a “Vehicle Body” on August 27, 1898, and received Patent No. 618,634 on January 31, 1899 (Figure 2). Because the design was top-heavy and awkward, with little room inside for supplies, these probably saw very limited use – but it was certainly a cute idea. These wagons were depicted on Moxie letterheads at least as late as 1903 (Figure 3).



Figure 3 – 1903 Moxie letterhead (eBay)

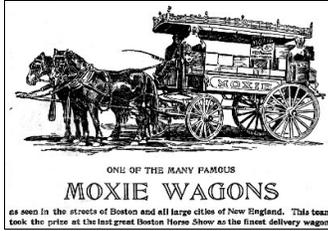


Figure 4 – Moxie Wagon (*Boston Post* 8/16/1896)

The more typical – and practical – Moxie delivery wagon was more like the one depicted in the *Boston Post* on August 16, 1896 (Figures 4 & see Figure 1). Drawn by a one



Figure 5 – Moxie Wagon (eBay)

or two horses, with cases stacked four or five high over a covered area, these wagons had large cutout signs in the shapes of Moxie bottles at all four corners. For heavier deliveries, draft horses pulled larger wagons identified only by the Moxie name on the sides (Figure 5).

About five months after Young and Thompson received their patent for the bottle-shaped wagon, they conspired again with another idea – this time for a beverage cooler. On June 28, 1899, the pair applied for a patent for a “Refrigerator” – receiving Design Patent No. 31,417 on August 15 of the same year. On the same date, they applied for a regular (letters) patent for the same design, this time called an “Advertising Refrigerator” – but they did not receive Patent No. 641,917 until January 23 of the following year (Figure 6). These were actually manufactured, but



Figure 7 – Moxie Refrigerator (eBay)

we have not discovered how long they were used (Figure 7).

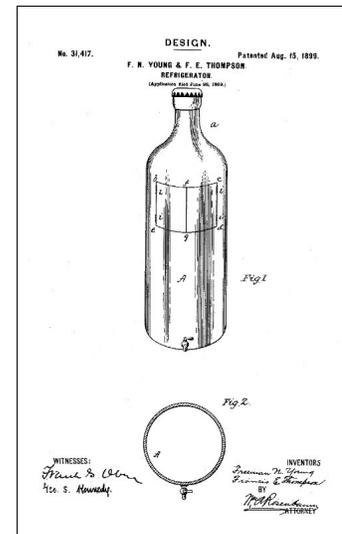


Figure 6 – Young & Thompson 1899 patent

On June 6, 1900, the *Boston Globe* reported on the Moxie factory at 69-71 Haverhill St., calling it a “new plant” comprised of “two more five-story buildings which are adjacent to the Beverly property. The new plants are connected by many bridges, and these make the two virtually one big plant” (Figures 8 & 9 and see Figure 5) The reporter added that the operation was:

so equipped that a very large quantity of Moxie may be shipped in a short time. The bottling room is one of the largest in New England, and is thoroughly equipped with the very latest devices for bottling, labeling, and stoppering of the goods by machinery.

In 1901, the Moxie Nerve Food Co. reorganized. On February 5, the *Holyoak Daily Transcript* presented the new officers. The most notable upset was the election of Frank E. Thompson (son of founder Augustin Thompson), who replaced a “Mr. Taylor” (i.e., William Taylor) as president. Although the paper gave no date, Taylor had been president “since its organization.”<sup>1</sup> Harry A. Thompson (brother of Frank) was treasurer, with Freeman N. Young as vice president. Founder Augustin Thompson relinquished his position as general manager to pursue his growing medical practice but remained as a member of the board of directors. The group abolished the general manager position and added those duties to the tasks of the president. The Bank Service Co. (1905) placed the capital at \$500,000.



Figure 8 – New Boston plant (1903 Letterhead)

Born on November 25, 1835, at Union, Maine, Augustin Thompson died from complications after an operation on June 8, 1903, at the age of 68. Moxie dropped “Nerve Food” in 1906, almost certainly as a result of the 1906 Pure Food & Drug Act. For the first time, on March 15, 1921, the *Boston Post* used the term “Moxieland” as the name big downtown Moxie operation.

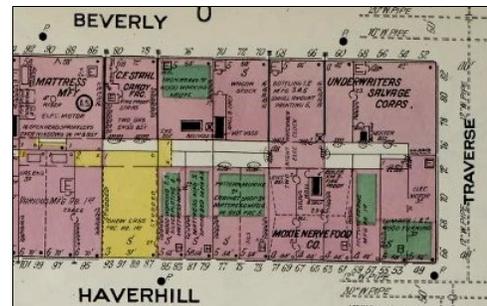


Figure 9 – Moxie Factory (Sanborn map, 1909)

On September 2, 1926, Moxie bragged in the *Boston Globe* about the firm’s accomplishments that year. The main report crowed that Moxieland had moved to Heath, Parker, and Bickford Streets (74 Heath St.), Boston, in the Jamaica Plain section, freeing the downtown area, Moxie’s former location from “about fifty thousand trucks, which is about the number yearly going to and from, parking, loading, at the old Moxieland located on Haverhill

<sup>1</sup> This was incorrect. Taylor was not the first president, although he had apparently held the position for some time.

and Beverly streets.” (Figure 10). During the same year, Moxie introduced “the 7-oz. single drink, which flew into popularity at a single flight and was at once crowned with the title ‘Kid Moxie’” as well as “a complete and practical container for six Kid Moxies.” According to Matthews (2022), the plant remained open until at least 1953.

*Meridian Daily Journal* announced on August 20, 1928, that a new corporation, the Moxie Co. of America, a Delaware corporation, had been formed with Frank M. Archer, Sr., as president and Frank M. Archer, Jr., as treasurer. The company was unrelated to the Moxie Co. of Massachusetts, still with Francis E. Thompson as president with his brother, Harry A. Thompson, treasurer. The original Moxie had granted the new corporation the rights to the drink outside of New England – although the original firm continued to supply New England (also see *Boston Globe* 8/29/1928). Almost immediately, the Archers began assigning franchises. Although Moxie continues to be sold in New England in 2022, the later history of the firm are beyond the scope of this study.

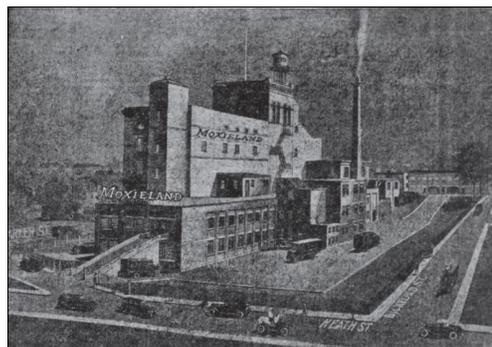


Figure 10 – Moxieland (*Boston Globe* 9/2/1926)

## Containers and Marks

According to a July 11, 1887, law suit (Caselaw 2022), the initial bottles used for Moxie were paper wrapped champagne bottles, and excellent choice for that time period.<sup>2</sup> Champagne bottles were readily available, both new and used, and they were made of heavy glass – strong to withstand the high carbonation. At some point between the first bottling of Moxie on March 7, 1885, and the lawsuit, Thompson had used “a different kind of bottle, with the words ‘Moxie Nerve Food’ blown therein” as well as “beer bottles, and perhaps some other bottles other than champagne bottles.” However, he returned to champagne bottles as his primary containers.

The *Baltimore Sun* confirmed on July 19, 1886, that “until September 1, necessity compels us to use champagne bottles a part of the time, because the eight factories supplying us

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<sup>2</sup> Although the court case and some newspaper reports used terms like “wrapped in paper,” this probably just indicated a paper label affixed to the bottle and/or foil wrapped around the neck and finish.

have so many orders on hand they cannot supply our rapid growth.” Assuming that all went as planned, this almost certainly sets a date for Moxie’s first embossed bottle – although Thompson went back to champagne bottles following the initial order.

## Embossed Bottle Chronology

**1.** Applied tapered collar “blob” top: “MOXIE NERVE (slight arch) / FOOD / CO (both horizontal) / LOWELL MASS (inverted arch)””; aqua (ca. 1886) (Figure 11)



Figure 11 – Moxie 1 (eBay)

Since this was the only bottle with the “CO” designation, it was probably the first one, ordered between 1885 and 1887. According to the lawsuit (see above), this was only ordered once and was used for a short time – probably ca. 1886. After that, Thompson returned to the use of champagne bottles.

**1a.** Applied tapered collar “blob” top: “MOXIE (slight arch) / NERVE FOOD / LOWELL / MASS (all horizontal) / {horizontal groove}””; (ca. 1888-ca. 1890) aqua (Figure 12)

Although the wording was slightly different, and the bottle had an odd horizontal groove below the word “MASS,” these bottles had the same tapered collar finish applied to the top. We have not discovered any historical documentation about when Moxie phased out the champagne bottles and re-instituted embossed containers, so we must make our best estimate for this one – ca. 1888-ca. 1890.



Figure 12 – Moxie 1a (eBay)

**2.** Applied rounded blob top (donut): “MOXIE (slight arch) / NERVE / FOOD / LOWELL / MASS / PATENTED (all horizontal)””; bases: “6””; three dots in a row; “S””; or “N.B.B.G.Co.” heelmark; aqua (ca. 1890-ca. 1896) (Figure 13)

This bottle added the word “PATENTED” (a reference to the trade mark – registered with the U.S. Patent Office), and the bases had a variety of marks, none diagnostic. A distinct difference from the previous variation was the use of rounded finish, often called a donut by collectors. The reason for the shift was the discovery that the “corners” of the collars created a perfect “platform” for creating a break at that point – similar to the ways that flint knappers used the same type of “platform” for making stone tools. The rounding of the finish removed that “platform.”



Figure 13 – Moxie 2 (eBay)

One front heelmark, however, was from the North Baltimore Bottle Glass Co., open from 1888 to 1896, apparently using the front heelmark during that entire span. However, none of this provides a serious clue as to when this variation was adopted, so our best estimate is ca. 1890. While we have reason to believe that the next style began in 1893, the plethora of basemarks suggests that this variation lasted more than three years, so have recommended ca. 1896 as the probable end date (Figure 14).

The letter “S” probably was an early glass house logo (see Figure 14). The size of the letter and the placement are much more similar to the “C,” “W,” and “B” logos discussed below than to the “A,” “T,” and “L” initials (also discussed



Figure 14 – Basemarks Moxie 2 (eBay)

below). As noted in the next example, the second set of initials strongly suggested the initials of the early principals of the organization, while the other four almost certainly represented glass houses. Because of its proximity to Massachusetts, the Salem Glass Works at Salem, New Jersey (1862-1934) is probably the best candidate. Like Binghamton, the plant rarely marked its bottles but likely did so with the Moxie bottles at the request of Thompson.

**2a.** Tooled Baltimore Loop Seal: “MOXIE (slight arch) / NERVE / FOOD / LOWELL / MASS / PATENTED (all horizontal)”; heel: “MOXIE”; bases: a five-pointed star (some with the letter “A”); aqua (ca. 1892-ca. 1894) (see Figure 13)

This style was the segue between style No. 2 and style No. 3. The bottle redundantly added “MOXIE” at the front heel and adopted the Baltimore Loop Seal finish used in the three No. 3 variations. Of great interest was the star and the “A” embossed on the base (Figure 15). As noted above, the letter was unlikely a manufacturer’s mark – unlike the “S,” “C,” “W,” and “B” that represented glass houses. These glass house logos were all embossed in the centers of the bases, and each was larger than these other initials.



Figure 15 – Moxie 2a base & finish (eBay)

In all likelihood, the “A” represented Augustin Thompson, the founder of the operation. Although a certain vanity is probable in the use of the initial, it is likely one of the firm’s first attempts at quality control. Moxie appears to have been the earliest soda bottler to require some form of identifying mark or logo on the bases of its bottles. This letter and the other initials discussed below were all placed off center, were each smaller than the glass house marks, and were embossed in additions to other words, numbers, symbols, and/or letters. Each of the two groups of initials clearly served a different purpose.

**3. Tooled Baltimore Loop Seal: “MOXIE (slight arch) / NERVE (horizontal) / FOOD (slight inverted arch)” ; base: “T / PAT 85 / 1” ; aqua (1893-ca. 1900) (Figure 16)**

The dropping of the Lowell, Mass designation almost certainly occurred after Moxie opened the Boston plant in 1893, although the Lowell plant would have continued to use the older bottles until the supply was



Figure 17 – T-base & finish (eBay)

exhausted. Likely, the Boston plant adopted the first new bottles when it opened. This variation continued in use until at least 1898, still showing up in ads until at least 1902, although the last year of the ads may reflect an ad placed for a year in

1901 (Figure 17). In all probability, the transition from Baltimore loop seals to crowns lasted from 1898 to 1901, although some old bottles may have been refilled for another few years. See next entry for more on crown caps.



Figure 16 – Moxie 3 (eBay)

The basemarks may be interpreted with varying degrees of certainty. “PAT 85” certainly refers to the patent for the Baltimore Loop seal. By 1893, the patent remained in force. The “1” was almost certainly a mold code, likely the number of the mold in the order that they had been made. Other bases in our sample had a “2” on no number. Possibly, this means that only three molds were made for this variations.

The “T” is much less certain, although it could equal Thompson – reflecting either Augustin Thompson or his son, Francis, always known as Frank. At a guess, Frank Thompson may have been the one who suggested the adoption of the Baltimore Loop finish, replacing the earlier cork finishes. Of course, this may just have represented a vanity of the Thompson family.

**3a.** Tooled crown: “MOXIE (slight arch) / NERVE (horizontal) / FOOD (slight inverted arch)” ; base: “Y / PAT 85 / 4.” (1898-1900) (see Figure 16)

This was the earliest crown-finished Moxie bottle we have found (Figure 18), and we have been able to document the transition between the use of the Baltimore Loop finish and the crown finish on Moxie bottles. As noted in the section above, the non-crown finish appeared on drawings in ads until at least July 12, 1898, in the *Meridian Daily Journal* (Figure 19). The first use of the crown cap was illustrated in Patent No. 618,634, issued to Freeman N. Young and Francis H. Thompson on January 31, 1899 (see Figure 6 in the history section). However, the pair applied for the patent on August 27, 1898, setting that year as the earliest evidence for crown use by Moxie. These bottles probably were used between 1898 and 1900.

As above, the basemarks tell an interesting story. As shown by “PAT 85,” this variation was made from the same molds as the bottles with the Baltimore Loop seals. Changing finishes on mouth-blown bottles was merely a matter of using a different tool during the final step of manufacture.



Figure 18 – Y-base & finish (eBay)



Figure 19 – Last non-crown ad (*Meridian Daily Journal* 7/12/1898)

Since the patent year was for the Baltimore Loop seal, there was no other reason for it to appear on a crown-topped bottle.

These bases appear in our sample as either a “Y” alone or “Y / 4” – meaning either that there were five molds made or just two – although a jump from no mold number to a “4” makes no apparent sense (see Figure 18). Like the “T” in the previous example, the “Y” may indicate Freeman N. Young, the primary inventor of the “bottle” wagon discussed in the previous entry. You may recall, that the patent drawing (see above) showed a crown cap atop the bottle on the wagon. It seems logical that Young, one of the original incorporators and a member of the board of directors, was the one who instigated Moxie’s adoption of crowns. Like the previous example, these bottles probably were early attempts at quality control by marking the bases.

**3b. Tooled crown: “MOXIE (slight arch) / NERVE (horizontal) / FOOD (slight inverted arch)”;** base: “C” or “C / 8” (1899-1900) (see Figure 16)



Figure 20 – C-base (ebay)

These bottles were identical to 3a above except for the basemark. In this case, the “C” indicated the manufacturer of the bottle (Figure 20 – glass houses discussed in more detail in No. 5a below). From this point on, the glass house initial, initials, or logo always appeared on Moxie bottle bases – a stronger quality control feature than the initials of individuals. Although probably ordered a year or so after 3a, these were otherwise used concurrently with that variation. The next slight change likely followed in just a year or two.

**4. Tooled crown: “MOXIE (slight arch) / TRADE MARK / NERVE (both horizontal) / FOOD (slight inverted arch) / REGISTERED (horizontal – front heel)”;** base: “C / 4” or “W”; aqua (C) or colorless (W) (1900-ca. 1904) (Figure 21)

Along with 3b, these bottles represented the beginning of the requirement that all Moxie bottle suppliers emboss some form of a manufacturer’s mark on each base. See section 5 below for more on the identification of the glass houses that used the “C” and “W” initials



Figure 21 – Moxie 4 (eBay)

(Figure 22). This requirement likely began soon after the 1899 fire destroyed the Lowell Moxie plant, so these probably came into use in 1900 and remained the choice until ca. 1904. The word “REGISTERED” referred to the same patent office registration of the trademark but was more accurate than the “PATENTED” on the previous variations.



Figure 22 – C & W bases (eBay)

**4a.** Tooled crown: “TRADE MARK (horizontal) / MOXIE (slight arch) / NERVE (horizontal) / FOOD (slight inverted arch) REGISTERED (horizontal – on front heel)”; reverse: “MOXIE” (slight arch); base: “B1” or “B5”; aqua; aqua (ca. 1904-ca. 1910) (Figure 23)

Along with moving “TRADE MARK” above “MOXIE,” these added “MOXIE” on the reverse shoulder. This particular configuration appears to only have been used by this glass house. The other two suppliers used the No. 4 style above, and all changed back to that for

the next alteration. Apparently, the bottles were made only by the glass house identified by the “B” firm and the mold codes 1-5 in our sample (Figure 24 and see next entry for the names of the glass houses). Although it is possible that these were made concurrently with No. 4 (both from 1900-1910), the bottles were likely made afterward from ca. 1904 to ca. 1910.



Figure 24 – B base (eBay)



Figure 23 – Moxie 4a (eBay)

**5.** Tooled crown: “MOXIE (arch) / TRADE MARK REG. U.S. PAT. OFFICE / MOXIE (both horizontal)” – on one shoulder; base: “BGCo (slight arch) / 6” or “WTCO (slight arch) / 1”; aqua (ca. 1910-ca. 1913) (Figure 25)

With this style, the configuration devolved back to No. 4 (unlike 4a) with “REG. U.S. PAT. OFFICE” added. These bottles followed the ones with the single-letter glass house identifications, switching instead to real manufacturer’s marks. Although not in alphabetical order, the “WTCO” logo is the easiest to deal with. The mark was used by the Whitall Tatum

Co. from 1901 to 1924 (Figure 26). Although not its typical mark, the lone “W” was also used by Whittall Tatum. The other two sets of initials are a bit more complex to date.

Typically, the Belleville Glass Co. used the “B.G.CO.” logo on beer and soda bottles from 1882 to 1886, but these Moxie bottles were produced far too late to have been made by that firm. The actual manufacturer of the Moxie containers was the Binghamton Glass Co.,



Figure 26 – BGCO & WTCO bases (eBay)

a company that only used a logo when it was required to by a customer. In response to the request by Moxie for a mark, it used the now-defunct former “B.G.CO.” logo. from ca. 1910-ca. 1913. See the section on Binghamton Glass for more information on the glass house.



Figure 25 – Moxie 5 (eBay)

**5a.** Tooled crown: “MOXIE / TRADE MARK REG. U.S. PAT. OFFICE (both horizontal)” on front shoulder (elaborate “X” in “MOXIE”); “MOXIE” on reverse shoulder; base: “C.G.CO. / 3 (or 14)” (ca. 1913) (Figure 27)

Moxie probably adopted this sub-variation toward the end of the time period for No. 5 (ca. 1913) as it appears to be between 5 and 5a in design and embossing. One characteristic, however, is unique – the elaborate “X” in MOXIE. But, identifying the user of the “C.G.CO.” logo is less certain



Figure 27 – Moxie 5a (eBay)

(Figure 28). Although many glass houses had the correct initials, only three fit the pattern of the right time period, were located in a reasonable area, and made the right products.



Figure 28 – CGCO base (eBay)

The Coshocton Glass Co., Coshocton, Ohio, was in business from 1902 to 1921. The plant was an important producer of beer and soda bottles during its two-decade span of existence. Our study

of Coshocton and the Cohansey Glass Co. – both users of the “C.G.CO.” logo – showed that bottles “with CGCO heelmarks and no numbers; heelmarks and base codes; or basemarks of all kinds (with or without numbers) – were made by the Coshocton Glass Co.” This would seem to place Coshocton as the mark’s user, but, if our dating is correct, the use of the “C” mark was slightly too early for the glass house.

In business from 1870 to 1909, the Cohansey Glass Co. also made beer and soda bottles and it, too, used a “CGCo” logo. As noted above, however, Cohansey likely did not apply basemarks to its bottles, and the firm closed too early to have made a bottle in 1913. This either questions Cohansey as the maker of the Moxie bottles or questions our dating scheme. See the section on Cohansey for more information about the glass house.

A final contender was the Cumberland Glass Mfg. Co., Bridgeton, New Jersey (1885-1885-1920). The glass house location was much closer to the Moxie plants than one of the other two (see below), and it was open both early and late enough to fit both the “C” and “CGCO” dating criteria we have set. In addition, Cumberland was our first choice for the user of a “C” mark on straight-sided Coca-Cola bottles during the ca. 1900-1910 period. A letter from the Coca-Cola main office showed that Cumberland, indeed, produced Coca-Cola Bottles by at least 1910. Even though the term Mfg. suggests that a logo for the firm should be “CGMCo,” Cumberland was one of the two final contenders for the use of the “CGCo” logo on Curtice Brothers catsup bottles during the 1901-1914 period. Like Moxie, Curtice Brothers required its bottle producers during that time to emboss their initials on the bases of its catsup containers. For more information see the sections on the Cumberland Glass Mfg. Co. and the Curtice Brothers.

So, the first question to ask is about the validity of our dating. On the early dates, the patent application for 1898 sets the date for crown finishes *at least* that early, maybe a year or two prior to that. Although the “Y” bottles (No. 3a) were used immediately prior to the “C” containers (No. 3b), it is highly likely that the first bottles with a “C” basemark were made during the 1899-1902 period. On the late end, No. 5b (CCGCO) almost certainly was made no earlier than late 1913 (see below) and probably not until the following year. The almost identical No. 5a with the “C” basemark was almost certainly only made a year or two prior to that one – not before 1912. Therefore, the early date is a bit prior to the opening of Coshocton, and the late date is beyond the closing of Cohansey.

However, the dates fall easily within the range of the Cumberland Glass Mfg. Co. – despite the fact that the initials do not quite match. In addition, Cumberland was the most likely user of the “C” basemark on Coca-Cola bottles in the teens and likely used “C.G.CO.” basemarks on catsup bottles for the Curtice Brothers. Proximity favors both Cohansey and Cumberland but makes Coshocton an unlikely choice. Prior to adopting machine-made bottles about 1914, Moxie selected reasonably local glass houses – Binghamton Glass Co., Binghamton, New York (306 miles from Boston) and Whitall Tatum Co., Millville, New Jersey (341 miles). Cohansey began at Bridgeton, New Jersey (338 miles) but moved to E. Downington, Pennsylvania (336 miles), while Cumberland remained at Bridgeton during its entire tenure. At Coshocton, Ohio, the Coshocton Glass Co. was 719 miles away from Moxie’s Boston plant.

In conclusion, the dates for the bottles are more important than the identification of the manufacturer. While no absolute designation is possible, the evidence points more strongly to the Cumberland Glass Mfg. Co. – despite the inclusion of “Mfg.” – than either of the other two.

**5b.** Tooled crown: “MOXIE / TRADE MARK REGISTERED (both horizontal)” of front shoulder; “CONTENTS 7 FL. OZ.” on front heel. “MOXIE” on reverse shoulder; “REGISTERED / D.O.C. 72521” on reverse heel (1914) (Figure 29)

Dominic O. Cunningham decorated his bottles with the “D.O.C.” logo from 1880 to 1958, so his time in business was too long to be helpful – and most of his marks appeared on bottle heels (Figure 30). However, the combination of the tooled crown finish and the embossed contents information on the bottle almost certainly points to the specific year of manufacture.

To begin, the invention of the first practical, fully automatic machine to make small-mouth bottles in 1903 led others to work feverishly to develop competing mechanics. During the period between 1910 and 1915, virtually the entire industry shifted to the machine manufacture of soda and beer bottles, so this bottle could not have been made any later than 1914-1915. But, the 1913 Gould Amendment to the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906 required



Figure 30 – D.O.C. heel (eBay)



Figure 29 – Moxie 5b (eBay)

that the weight, measure, or count of the contents of each package be clearly marked on the outside of the container. Bottlers and others were given until September of 1914 to comply with the act, but most delayed as long as possible to use up the remaining old bottles. Thus, 1914 is almost certainly the year of manufacture for this bottle.

6. Machine crown: “MOXIE / TRADE MARK REG. U.S. PAT. OFFICE (both horizontal)” – on front shoulder; “MOXIE” on reverse shoulder; base: “ABCo” (some “ABCo” with “25N”-“30N” date/plant codes); aqua (ca. 1914-1930) (see Figure 27)

Although a few of these were mouth blown, the vast majority were machine made, all with the same shoulder marks, although some had “REGISTERED” on the front heel. This was Moxie’s first dive into machine-made bottles, and the firm never looked back. When the Owens Bottle Machine Co. began selling machines, it created intentional monopolies, selling exclusive licenses for the use of its machines on certain products. The Ohio Bottle Co. formed in 1904 to take advantage of the beer and soda bottle licence, reorganizing as the American Bottle Co. the following year. In 1916, the Owens firm gained control of American Bottle, although Owens continued to operate under the American Bottle Co. name until its own reorganization as the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. in 1929. At that point, the American Bottle plants became Owens-Illinois factories.



Figure 31 – Typical 1925-1930 basemark (eBay)



Figure 32 – Mouth-blown finish (eBay)

From 1906 until 1916, the American Bottle Co. used an “A.B.Co.” basemark (occasionally heelcode) on its bottles. When the Owens firm gained control, the mark changed to two-digit dated codes, followed by single-letter plant codes (e.g., “16N” for the Newark, Ohio, plant in 1916) – without the “A.B.Co.” logos. In 1925, the marks migrated to the bottle bases for some kinds of soda bottles, often with the plant code before the date code (e.g., “N 25”), sometimes with underlines – although the codes were *never* consistent, *and* almost all of them lacked the “ABCo” logo (Figure 31).

Moxie bottle bases followed several patterns. Our only mouth-blown example had a poor strike of “ABCo / 10” with no Owens scar and no parting line right below the finish (Figure 32). Many examples had only “ABCo” logos (plus the Owens scar) but no date/plant code (Figure

33). Also common was the “ABCo” logo above the “N” plant code for Newark, Ohio, and date codes that ranged from “25” (1925) to “30” (1930) (Figure 34). As discussed below, the final date code was a year after American Bottle ceased operations, continued by Owens-Illinois to complete existing contracts. Finally, some bottle bases only showed the plant/date codes – no logo (see Figure 31).



Figure 33 – ABCo & machine finish (eBay)

However, due to Moxie requirements, American Bottle continued to use “A.B.Co.” as a basemark on Moxie bottles. Moxie apparently adopted the “A.B.Co.” bottles ca. 1914, although American Bottle did not use date codes on the Moxie bottles until 1925, following the same plan as their coded bottles beginning in 1925. So, Moxie bottles with the “A.B.Co.” logos and no date codes can be dated between 1914 and 1925, while coded bottles bear dates from “25” to “30” – the final date code being applied to American Bottle molds by Owens-Illinois to fulfill the final contracts before the paperwork shifted to Owens-Illinois (see below for more on the Owens-Illinois marks).



Figure 34 – ABCo & codes (eBay)

But, the “A.B.Co.” story is far from over. Like all bottlers, Moxie continued to circulate returnable bottles until they wore out. The only study we know on returnable bottle reuse showed that soda bottles typically lasted about five years, although finding a single bottle still in use 20+ years later is not unusual. Owens-Illinois even created a longer lasting opportunity, now called repurposing. The glass house would take back older bottles – that Owens-Illinois had produced – clean it up and add the ACL process.

ACL is the acronym for Applied Color Label, often called “painted label” by collectors. In this process, enamel is silk screened onto each bottle forming an almost permanent label in great detail and in as many colors as the bottler can afford – although rarely more than two. First used on prescription bottles in 1933, Owens-Illinois transferred the idea to soda and milk bottles in 1934. By the early 1940s, the practice was wide spread.

At first, we were surprised to discover ACL bottles embossed “A.B.Co.” on their bases (Figure 35). Then, we realized that Moxie had taken advantage of the Owens-Illinois offer and had returned thousands, maybe even millions of bottles in to have the ACL applied. Even though the logos were long discontinued, the bottles still had been produced by an Owens-Illinois subsidiary and remained in good shape. As a result, we are seeing ACL bottles with the “A.B.Co.” logo even though the American Bottle Co. had been disbanded long before the ACL bottles came into being.

7. Machine crown: “MOXIE / TRADE MARK REG’D U.S. PAT. OFFICE (all horizontal)” – on both front shoulder; only “MOXIE” on reverse shoulder; base: {9 OI symbol}x – x=date codes of at least 5 (1935) through 3. (1943); colorless (1929-1943) (see Figure 27)

Once the American Bottle Co. ceased production, all its business landed with the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. Formed in 1929 by a merger of the Owens Bottle Co. and the Illinois Glass Co., the firm became a true giant in the glass industry, producing every kind of container. Typically, the Owens-Illinois base contained quite a bit of information. The normal marking included the elongated diamond (former symbol of the Illinois Glass Co.) with an “O” superimposed atop it and an “I” in the center. Generally, the mark had a single-digit number to the left, indicating the plant manufacturing the article; a one- or two-digit date code to the right; and a mold code below it.

Even though Owens-Illinois continued to use old ABCo molds into 1930, the firm may have also implemented some molds with its own logo during the first two years – or not. Certainly, we could expect date codes from 1931, although the early codes may be difficult to interpret. Owens-Illinois used single-digit date codes on soda bottles until as late as 1946, although it also began two-digit date codes as early as 1943, sometimes adding the second code as an afterthought. An even stranger date code consisted of adding a dot or period after the single-digit code beginning in 1941 (1.), continuing on some bottles until 1946 (6.)



Figure 35 – ACL ABCo (eBay)

The latest date we have seen on paper-labeled quart Moxie bottles was “5.” (1943), although some of those could have had added ACL (see above). Our earliest evidence for an ACL Moxie bottle was 1942, so the paper-labeled bottles probably began phasing out that year. The codes from the 1930s were placed at the top of the base, but they migrated to the center by the 1940s (Figure 36).



Figure 36 – Owens-Illinois (eBay)

8. Machine crown: “MOXIE” on each shoulder; base: Box-G; colorless (1940s?) (see Figure 27)

We have only seen a lone example of this type of bottle, and it could just represent a single order during a busy period. The opposite shoulder probably had the same “REG. U.S. PAT. OFFICE” as the other machine-made bottles, although it did not show in the photo. The base was embossed with the Box-G logo of the Gayner Glass Co. and a “66” code beside it (Figure 37). Unfortunately, the eBay seller did not photograph the finish, so we could check the date code there. The base number *could* be a date code for 1966, although that would be awfully late for a paper-labeled bottle, so it was more likely a mold code. The bottle probably was used during the 1940s.



Figure 37 – Box-G (eBay)

## 9. Applied Color Labels

As noted above, Moxie began the use of ACL bottles ca. 1942 and had many of their old, paper-label bottles sent back to Owens-Illinois to have ACL applied to them. But the study of the later Moxie bottles is beyond the scope of this work.

## Chicago Bottles

As noted in the history section, Moxie instigated a Western Moxie Nerve Food Co. at Chicago, Illinois (1886-1888), followed by the Chicago Moxie Nerve Food Co. (1889-1895). Each firm offered its own bottles.

**C1.** Applied rounded collar (donut); WESTERN (slight arch) / MOXIE / NERVE FOOD CO. / CHICAGO (all horizontal); base unknown; aqua (Figure 38). The “Western” plant was open from 1888-1889. Only one example we have found had the straight collar, Baltimore Loop finish favored by the second firm.



Figure 38 – Chicago bottles (eBay)

**C2.** Applied straight collar Baltimore Loop finish; MOXIE (slight arch) / NERVE FOOD / CHICAGO / ILL. (all horizontal); base unknown; aqua (see Figure 38). This style was used between 1889 and 1895. The Chicago factory disappeared from the record the following year. Although a start up was again attempted in 1897, it apparently went nowhere.

## Other Bottles

Although other bottles are beyond the scope of this study, we have included a photo of the Moxie Catarrh bottle, used during the 1890s (Figure 39).

## Discussion and Conclusions

Although the Moxie history certainly stretched beyond our final date of 1956 (the brand remains in existence in 2022), the scope of this study only extends to end of paper-labeled bottles, probably around 1945. Moxie had a rich material history, beginning with unmarked champagne bottles in 1885 and at least one embossed bottle the next year. By 1887 or 1888, Augustin Thompson returned to embossed bottles and continued to use those throughout his life. His two sons, clearly the backbones of the operation, continued to use embossed bottles until the switch to Applied Color Labels about 1942.



Figure 39 – Catarrh bottle (eBay)

We have documented a total of 15 variations, grouped into eight categories (plus a ninth group for ACL bottles), although there may be more minor variations sitting in various

collections. No study ever discovers every bottle. Sooner or later, some collector or archaeologist uncovers one that was formerly unknown. However, this study includes the major ones, and we have made every attempt to find measures to accurately date the variations. Failing that, we have made the best estimates for each date range. We hope that future researchers will discover methods to accurately date each bottle.

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