

## **The Saratoga Glass Works at Mt. Pleasant Saratoga County, N.Y.**

by Howard Dean

In the 1866 Atlas of Saratoga County Sylvester wrote the following: "About the year 1850 a glass factory was started on the mountains in the northwest part of the town (Greenfield) a little village of about one hundred inhabitants sprung up around it. It was named Mount Pleasant. Some years ago the factory was removed to Saratoga Springs, and the village followed it to its new location." Not a very fitting obituary for so important a place, especially to bottle collectors with a yen for a bit of history connected with an old hand made bottle!

First of all lets straighten out the various names that have been associated with this glass house. Most glass works are easily identified with a single name, not so Mt. Pleasant. Bernie Puckhaber, in his extensive research on Saratoga County mineral waters, has listed the following names that have been associated with the facility: (1) Saratoga Glass Works (2) Saratoga Mountain Glass Works (3) Mt. Pleasant Glass Works (4) Granger Glass Works and/or (5) Mountain Glass Works. The owner called this plant the Saratoga Glass Works so I suppose we should finally settle on this as the official name.

Along about 1810 a petition was approved by the New York State Legislature and the Mt. Vernon Glass Co. came into being. They made a large number of beautiful flasks. By about 1823, John Clarke and Tom Lynch were beginning to look for a source of bottles for their mineral water. At this time a Charles Granger was the superintendent of the Mt. Vernon Glass Works, a few miles west of Utica, N.Y. He was given the contract to produce the "Lynch and Clarke" bottles in spite of the long distance between Mt. Vernon and the mineral springs around Saratoga. Gradually the Granger family became the dominate forces in the Mt. Vernon works and an Oscar Granger became plant superintendent. By 1843, the Saratoga mineral water business was in full swing and the demand for these bottles was taking the capacity of the Mt. Vernon plant. In addition to this, the supply of wood needed to keep the furnaces going was beginning to fail. It was about this time that the Grangers decided that in order to remain in business they should build a modern glass factory, near to the source of their main outlet and having an "endless" wood supply and a supply of pure sand. Oscar Granger was given the responsibility of finding a suitable location. It seems fitting to state that the Mt. Vernon Glass works continued to produce glass until about 1850.

Oscar was drawn quite naturally to the Mt. Pleasant area of the Kayaderosseras Mountains in Saratoga County because his mother's early home was in nearby Greenfield, his father, Nathan had lived near Saratoga before moving to Vernon. Also there was a good wood supply and nearby sand. Oscar met a local banker and businessman named John James. James sold him 1400 acres of land in the Greenfield Township and also agreed to finance the new undertaking. It cost money to build a new factory, establish a new community of homes, school, church, stores, hotel and to move from Vernon to Mt. Pleasant. It was not done overnight, but rather took a couple of years. It was in 1844 that Oscar and John met and agreed to be business partners. A carpenter named Todd was hired and the glass factory was begun. Two years later it went into full operation and was named "Saratoga Glass Works of James, Granger and Todd." Todd left in 1848 to become postmaster and operator of the general store at Mt. Pleasant. James was a partner until 1850. Before 1850 Oscar Granger's nephew Henry arrived from Mt. Vernon to help with the business. The other Grangers, Charles and Gideon remained behind to phase out the old Mt. Vernon operation.

The establishment of this new factory involved three undertakings: (1) establishing the new village, (2) improvement of roads and transportation and (3) planning and construction of the glass factory itself. The map of Mt. Pleasant shows the layout of the village; the other maps show the location of the works in relation to the surrounding country. Transportation and accessibility was a real problem. In those days

going up the mountain was generally through Greenfield Center to Porter Corners and then west to Mt. Pleasant. Most of this was a toll road so a fee was charged for each passage. Much of the time in the winter one would be snowed in the mountains - it was a hard life!

To expedite the movement of wagon loads of bottles down the mountain a dug way was devised by Mr. Granger. Horses or oxen brought the wagons to a launching platform at the top of a long right angled cut in the side of the mountain. Here the teams would be unhitched and the loaded wagons would be let down with the aid of a series of ropes and a windless into Middle Grove (then called Jamesville). From here the teams were again used to convey the bottles to their destination. Some parts of this old dugway can still be seen. Some do not believe that such a dugway ever existed for this purpose.

Would they risk losing a load of bottles to save a mile or so of travel? On the other hand Mr. Lowe, a relative of the Grangers, states that such a dugway did exist and was shown on a county map. In 1948 Mr. Lowe wrote, "it is considerably grown up now, but I have been over it in a wagon about fifty-five years ago." We will probably never know for sure whether Oscar Granger used it or not. After having delivered the load of bottles in Saratoga Springs, the teamsters would pick up a load of lime at a quarry in Rowlands Hollow or a load of sand at Chatfield Corners on their return trip.

The factory itself was a large round building, perhaps fifty to seventy five feet in diameter. It had a large high smoke stack in the center which picked up the smoke from the large conical furnace. Around this furnace were six fireholes from which the glass blowers could gather the glass or "metal" to blow the bottles.

The 1850 census reveals that there were five glass blowers living at Mt. Pleasant and a total population of 200 of which 40 worked in the glass factory. It also reported that 7,200,000 bottles were produced annually. This continued for more than twenty years when in 1865 it was sold to the Congress and Empire Glass Works in Congressville, a suburb of Saratoga Springs. Tradition has it that all the houses from Mt. Pleasant were moved to Congressville along with the glass factory equipment.

Between 1845 - 1865 the following mineral water bottles were blown at the Saratoga Glass Works: Clarke and Co., John Clarke, Clarke and White, High Rock, Congress and Empire (C&E), G.W. Weston, D.A. Knowlton, Star Spring and Paradise (Quaker) Spring. Also blown were; pint Success to the Railroad, and half pint Cornucopia flasks. Other bottles blown were: inks, Dr. Townsend Sarsaparilla, E. Roome/Troy/New York, other cylinder bottles without embossing, a limited number of chestnuts and porters, wine bottles, peppersauce, varnish, and B. Fosgate's Anodyne Cordial (in which the N's are backwards). As was usual at all glass works, the blowers would blow "occasional pieces" and the men at Saratoga were no different! It is reported that these usually were rolling pins, pitchers, match holders, lily pad design plates and probably many other items.

It has recently been realized that threadless insulators were also made at this works. Many parts and pieces of which have been dug by the author and others. A recent article in *Antique Bottle and Glass Collector* by Ray Klingensmith tells this story so it will not be repeated here.

An attempt to list all of the colors, tints, shades, hues etc. of old glass bottles would be nearly impossible. "Mountain Glass," as pieces from this works are called, can be described as very dark, nearly black olive green or olive amber. Some chards of glass found there also include blue-green, dark green, dark amber and aqua. The glass is generally dark, bubbly and greasy.

It is recognized that great caution must be used when trying to identify a certain piece of glass with a specific glass house. Recent techniques using mass spectrometer and other analytical methods can be of great assistance to the student of glass. Most of us can only go by known dates when companies were in business, colors most likely used, mold marks and other such unscientific facts.

The known base marks from the Saratoga Glass Works include the numbers 1 through 5 and the letter "B." Bases both with and without pontil scars have been dug there. One has to be very careful in attributing a particular bottle to a certain glass house just because a chard was found there. On a recent dig at the Saratoga site, Bob Joki dug a chard from a Lynch and Clarke bottle. These bottles were blown at Mt. Vernon and the company went out of business around 1833 - the Saratoga Glass Works was built in 1844 so a Lynch & Clarke could not have been blown there. What probably did happen, since both plants were owned by the Grangers, was that some cullet, or broken pieces of glass, were taken from Mt. Vernon to Saratoga for making glass. We know that molds were moved from plant to plant, why not cullet? What a great experience it is to dig on these old sites. I can't wait for spring so I can go back!

Many people have dug the Mountain Glass area and are still at it today. Harry Hall White was one of the first to make a detailed study of this area, from records, personal contacts with descendants of the operators and from excavations on the site; he published his findings in 1927. Fenton Keyes also did extensive excavations on this site in the 1950's. My first experience there was in November of 1982 when the newly formed Saratoga Collectors Society made a trip to see this area. Led by Bernie Puckhaber, we drove up the road past Lake Desolation and up to the top of the mountain, where we pulled over and stopped. The area is completely grown up and there is very little to indicate the great activity which once flourished here. If one searches the woods, the foundations of some of the homes and other buildings can be found. The roads have been changed a bit making it harder to visualize how it used to be. The recent photos will illustrate how it looks now. To the careful observer the bits of glass that are everywhere is a dead giveaway of what went before! Gone is Saratoga Glass Works, but it is far from forgotten by a few diehard bottle and history buffs.

At the opening of the National Bottle Museum in Ballston Spa in June 1984, the Saratoga Bottle Collectors Society sponsored a Saratoga Glass Works exhibit. In addition to bottles and other pieces blown there, pictures of the Grangers, glass making tools, the main item was a large model of the old glass works made by Gerry Strubel. It was recently learned that a grant of \$750 by the Gannett Newspaper was made available to put the model on a mobil basis so that it can be taken to area schools as a teaching aid. We will not let the old Saratoga Glass Works be forgotten!

References:

- (1) *Saratogas*, by Bernhard C. Puckhaber - 1976
- (2) *American Glass* - Volume 1, Blown and Molded. Edited by M.D. Schwarty
- (3) *The Glass Factory*, by John Lowe. From a talk given June 20, 1948
- (4) Sylvester's *History of Saratoga County, N.Y.* - 1866
- (5) *The Springs, Glass Houses and Bottles of Saratoga Springs, N.Y.* by Fenton Keyes. Quarterly Journal of the N.Y. S. Historical Association, April 1959
- (6) *The Spouter* - No. 3 - September 1982, No. 4 - January 1983 and No. 11, January 1985

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**Editor's Note:** This article was written by Howard Dean in 1985 and was published in the May 1985 issue of *The Antique Bottle and Glass Collector*.