

History of Several Major Producers of Depression Glass - Part One

by Barbara E. Mauzy



Men blowing glass ~ this is how bottles and similar items were created before the use of machines.

By the end of the Great Depression more than half of the American glass factories had closed, but those engaged in the production of this cheaply manufactured dinnerware and accessories were able to survive, and here are some of the most important and successful enterprises.

Federal Glass

Federal Glass Company began manufacturing glassware in Columbus, OH in 1900. The reason the owners of the company selected Columbus was because there were good supplies of the items needed to create glass: sand for glass making and natural gas to run the furnaces. Railroad lines and rivers were nearby, which would make it easy to ship out the completed products.

Before the 1920s much of the glassware was made by hand. Automatic machinery was brought into the factory during the 1920s and new colors were introduced: blue, pink, and amethyst. Federal was one of the largest, most successful producers of tumblers and jugs.

During WWII (1941-1945) Federal Glass Company produced items for use in hospitals and restaurants.

In the 1950s Americans turned away from using glass dinnerware and attempting to say current, the company changed its name to Federal Paper Board Company in 1958.

In the 1960s and 1970s Federal struggled to get Americans to buy their glass dinnerware. They even reproduced some of the once-popular Depression Glass patterns and offered commemorative glassware.

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Due to a lack of sales, Federal closed in 1979. The Indiana Glass Company purchased the newer glass molds which they used in their factory.

“Mayfair” pattern by Federal Glass Company

Hazel-Atlas Glass

In 1885, Charles N. Brady and C.H. Tallman started the Hazel Company in Wellsburg, West Virginia. Initially, they only produced one product: a disk of white glass, called “opal” glass, which was used in the center of canning jar lids.

In 1886, Hazel Company relocated to Washington, Pennsylvania where there was an abundance of the natural resources needed to produce glass. After this move, Hazel Glass began manufacturing opal (white) medicine bottles, and they were the first to do so. Initially these bottles were hand blown, but Charles Brady invested in a company that invented machinery and soon there were machines that were making all kinds of glass containers, and this process was faster and less expensive.



Brady created the Atlas Glass Company in 1896. The focus of this production was fruit jars. Hazel Company continued to manufacture items in opal glass including but not limited to ink bottles, jam jars, Vaseline jars, and shoe polish jars. Atlas Glass Company was the first company to produce mayonnaise jars, baby food jars, and pickle jars.

In 1902 the Hazel Company and the Atlas Glass Company, and two other companies, merged into the Hazel-Atlas Company. The combined resources led to new opportunities for creative development and glass tableware (plates, bowls, etc.) became a huge part of their production line by the 1920s.

By 1930, Hazel-Atlas became one of the largest producers of Depression Glass with fifteen different factories in use.

Hazel-Atlas Glass Company was acquired by Continental Can Company in 1956, and in 1964 ten of the twelve factories that had remained operational were sold to Brockway Glass Company, another Pennsylvania Glass Company. Information pertaining to the remaining two factories is unclear.

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1934 Advertisement for Hazel-Atlas Depression Glass

"Platonite"

FEATURES

- Pure White
- Hard to Break
- Will Not "Craze"
- New Step Design

THE NEW glass table-ware for 1934! Pure white glassware in the modern step design! Features that make it an outstanding line in the popular priced field! Start the New Year with this handsome "Platonite" ware — Offer the complete service white for New and different. Head baked — very durable! Smooth edges — fine finish! Made under an extremely high resistance condition. Best —

... Order The Complete Line

A Salts & Peppers 4 1/2 in. diameter. Also six plates. SOP-1000—4 doz in carton, 14 lbs Doz 40c	B Sherbet Plates 8 in. diameter. Also six plates. SOP-1001—3 doz in carton, 16 lbs Doz 42c	C Salad Plates 8 in. diameter. SOP-1002—3 doz in carton, 33 lbs Doz 80c	D Dinner Plates 10 in. diameter. SOP-1003—2 doz in carton, 30 lbs Doz 95c
E Sherbets 3 1/2 in. x 3 1/2 in. SOP-1006—3 doz in carton, 17 lbs Doz 42c	F Cups & Saucers 4 1/2 in. x 2 1/2 in. x 1 1/2 in. saucer, 14 pcs. SOP-1008—3 doz in carton, 28 lbs Doz 80c	G Sugars 5 1/2 in. x 2 1/2 in. SOP-1002—3 doz in carton, 28 lbs Doz 75c	H Creamers 4 1/2 in. x 3 1/2 in. SOP-1001—3 doz in carton, 24 lbs Doz 75c

Original Ad From a 1934 Butler Brothers Catalog

Hocking Glass Company

Isaac J. Collins, along with several investors, started the Hocking Glass Company in Lancaster, Ohio in 1905. In 1924 the factory was destroyed by a fire, but the owners of the company purchased two other glass companies so production continued.

Hocking Glass Company thrived because of their use of new, "modern" machinery that brought production of glass from one piece per minute to over thirty pieces per minute. Right after the stock market crash in October 1929, Hocking Glass Company created a machine that could make ninety pieces of glass per minute. Because the production costs were really low they could keep the price of their products really low and stay in business during the Depression.

Hocking Glass Company started manufacturing glass containers in 1931 and in 1934 they invented the one-way bottles that we take for granted today.

The Anchor Cap and Closure Corporation merged with Hocking Glass Company in 1937 resulting in factories in several states. The new company, Anchor Hocking Glass Corporation, continued to grow creating a greater variety of glassware. The first glassware they produced under this new name was Royal Ruby (red) beginning in 1939.



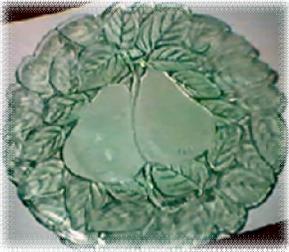
Royal Ruby Dinnerware in the "Charm" Pattern

In the 1950s and 1960s Anchor Hocking Glass Corporation purchased additional glass companies that were scattered across the United States.

In 1969 the company's name was changed to Anchor Hocking Corporation as their products now included plastic containers, stoneware, china dinnerware, and more. They continued purchase additional companies and expand their line of products.

In 1987 The Newell Corporation purchased Anchor Hocking Corporation who closed some factories and upgraded other factories. Anchor Hocking is still in business.

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popular they were made for more than seventy years in more than eighty different colors.

Hens on the Nest

With the start of World War 11 in 1941, glassware for household use was abandoned for glassware for the war effort such as lenses for headlights on trucks and aircraft.

The production of glass tableware resumed in the 1950s but sales slowed down. In 1957, Indiana Glass Company was purchased by the Lancaster Glass Corporation who already owned Colony Glass. The Indiana Glass factory was used to produce pieces that were sold as Colony Glass, and this became a successful endeavor.

In 1962, Lancaster Glass and four other companies merged and became Colony Glass and glassware in the original Indiana factory continued to be made in a variety of colors until it closed in 2002.