

Chapter 6

Crystal Beverage Co. (1930-1947)

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History

Sometime just prior to March 13, 1930, Thomas J. O’Conor, previously from Oak Creek, Colorado, acquired the Crystal Bottling Co. and renamed it the Crystal Beverage Co. He had been attracted to the area by the climate and available business opportunities. O’Conor “with his characteristic energy . . . completely revolutionized the whole plant. Everything has been overhauled, more equipment purchased, new apparatus installed and various changes made along the line of efficiency and cleanliness” (*Alamogordo Advertiser* March 13, 1930). The *Advertiser* described the workings of the plant in a very complex sentence:

Pure food syrups, prepared in glass-lined mixing tanks (which avoids the possibility of fruit acids coming in contact with metal) with every drop of water used thoroughly filtered, with a bottling apparatus in which the human hand never touches the neck of a bottle from the time it is sterilized until the cap is put on, assures a pure, clean product. Every vessel used is thoroughly disinfected and the best Island cane sugar is used in the making of syrups (*Alamogordo Advertiser* March 13, 1930).

O’Conor insisted on using only cane sugar as he claimed beet sugar was inferior. He further promised that he used “only pure materials,” and his products were “clean, pure, wholesome and just as represented.” O’Conor had been in the bottling business prior to his arrival in Alamogordo and still owned a plant at his former home town. He invited local citizens to visit the Alamogordo plant and “have a cold drink.” As of March, he expected to move to a new location “if the business goes well here” (*Alamogordo Advertiser* March 13, 1930).

The business, indeed, went well. On August 18, 1930, O’Conor purchased Lot 18, Block 1 from Eliza Oliver and thirteen relatives, “sole heirs of G.B. Oliver, deceased,” for \$800.00. Like the earlier deeds to the Hotel Weigele and other properties, the title to Crystal contained a liquor clause whereby the owner promised that intoxicating beverages would not be sold on the

premises (somewhat unnecessary by that time – the US had been under Prohibition for a decade). The plant, located at 913 Pennsylvania Ave. (Figure 6-1), was almost directly across the street from the old Alamogordo Bottling Works (the location O’Conor had just move from). The firm remained at the new location until its liquidation in 1947 (NMSBD 1929, 1931; Otero County Deed Records, b. 95, p. 351-354; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1942).

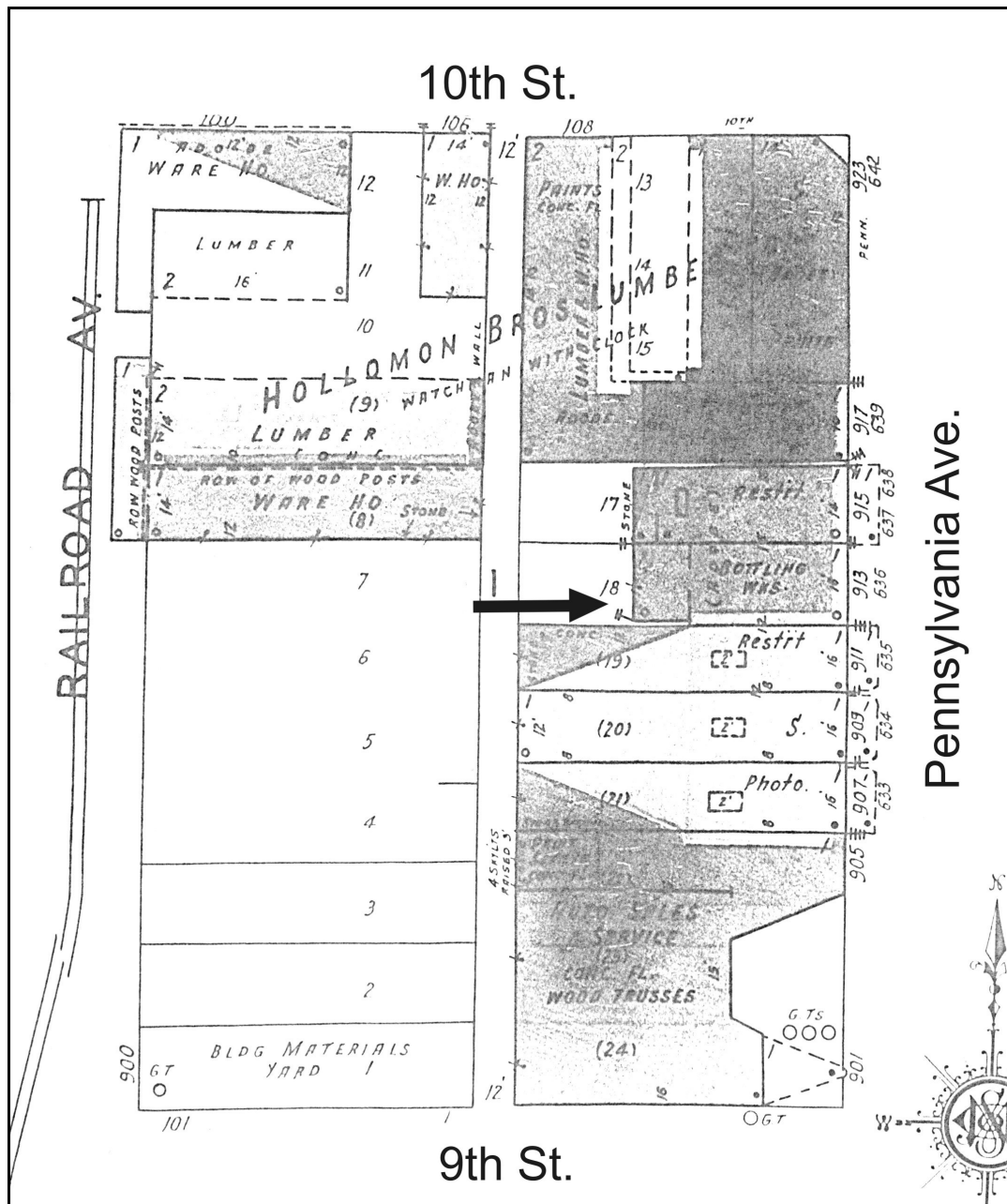


Figure 6-1 – Location of the Crystal Beverage Co. (Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1942)

In April of 1930, O'Connor touted Crystal as "Producers of the Finest in Bottled Soda Waters [...] We Feature Cascade Ginger Ale - Nothing Better" (*Alamogordo Advertiser* April 3, 1930). A bit later in the year, the company suggested, "When It's Hot[...] Drink our bottled Carbonated Beverages[...] Pure and Wholesome [-] Every bottle sterilized[...] Why not Order a case from your grocer or direct from Crystal Beverage Co." (*Alamogordo News* June 19, 1930 – Figure 6-2). O'Connor advertised the company in the Alamogordo city directory as:

OUR PRIDE[,] THE FINEST IN BOTTLED BEVERAGES[,] EVERY BOTTLE STERILIZED Keep a case of your favorite beverage handy for company and for that dry throat of yours (ACD ca. 1930 Figure 6-3).



Figure 6-3 – Crystal Beverage ad (Alamogordo City Directory, ca. 1930)

Stone's Straw Sippers, Coca-Cola in Bottles, Pabst Blue Ribbon Beverages" (*Alamogordo News* April 2, 1931-June 4, 1931 – Figure 6-4). O'Connor was obviously aware that in a town the size of Alamogordo (3,096 in 1930) selling soft drinks alone would not generate sufficient income to allow the company to remain in business. Note that the word "beer" was not used in the 1931 ad. Prohibition still reigned throughout the United States at that time, so the products vended by Crystal could only have been cereal beverages or near-beers that were bottled by the surviving breweries in an attempt to remain solvent.



Figure 6-2 – Crystal Beverage ad (*Alamogordo News* 6/19/1930)

O'Connor also advertised in the *Alamogordo News*, suggesting that the public "Try This New Drink - Hop Ale (same price as our soda water)[...] Graham Paper Line - Paper bags, wrapping paper, twine, etc. Ice Cream Cones,

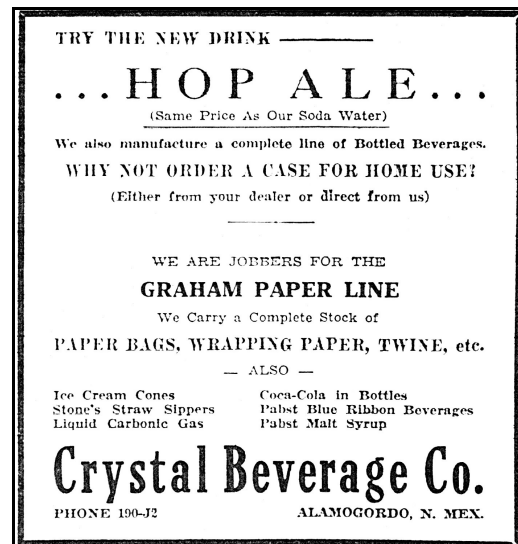


Figure 6-4 – Hop Ale ad (*Alamogordo News* April 2, 1931)

The Coca-Cola franchise, originally obtained by “Lefty” Karosen for the Alamogordo Bottling Works had been discontinued by A.B. Rose, so the 1930 Crystal advertisement was a surprise. However, the popular brand did not appear in any subsequent Crystal ads. Instead, O’Conor tried out one of the competing Cola brands. In 1931, he ran a sales campaign from May to August. He offered “A New Soft Drink . . . “Hi-Peak Cola”. . . A seven ounce bottle of “Hi-Peak Cola” sells for only 5 c and besides every bottle cap counts toward winning valuable premiums” (*Alamogordo Advertiser* May 28, 1931 – Figure 6-5).



Figure 6-5 – Hi-Peak Cola ad (*Alamogordo Advertiser* May 28, 1931)



Figure 6-6 – Hi-Peak “Premium” ad (*Ironwood Daily Globe* July 8, 1931)

an ad from Ironwood, Michigan, explained how the contest worked (Figure 6-6). Each bottle cap had a single letter concealed beneath the cork liner. Each letter was one of the letters that spelled out “Hi-Peak Cola.” When a drinker accumulated sufficient caps to spell out the drink’s name, he or she could return the caps to the dealer and “he will obtain a premium for you” (*Ironwood Daily Globe* July 8, 1931). Hi-Peak ads, however, were never repeated at Alamogordo.

The later part of 1931 was the only period where Crystal advertised Coca-Cola. The drink returned to obscurity in Alamogordo until the late 1930s, when it was trucked in from El Paso. I have been unable to discover why the drink was discontinued by Rose or why it briefly resurfaced in 1931. This brief re-emergence may have been determined to be in violation of the franchise agreement – although, I have not discovered owned the franchise for Otero County in the late 1920s and 1930s. See Chapter 7 for more discussion about Coca-Cola at Alamogordo.

In 1932, O’Conor asked, “Why Pay Fancy Prices When You Can Have a Case of 24 7-oz. Bottles of Cascade Pale Dry or Golden Ginger Ale [?]” The price was only “90 c Per Case Net” (*Alamogordo Advertiser* August 25, 1932). After that, advertising was quiet until 1935 when the

company introduced “BRANDIMIST[,] A real soda water toddy[,] Richer and a Bit Stronger . . . All Dealers.” As an afterthought, O’Conor added “Patronize Home Industry” (*Alamogordo Advertiser* April 18, 1935). By 1939, the new drink on sale was “Sparkling Bromo-Kola[,] 12 oz. Bottle 5c[,] It’s Delicious” (*Alamogordo Advertiser* November 23, 1939).

Born on November 3, 1872, in Albion, Illinois, O’Conor was 57 years old when he moved to Alamogordo and bought the Crystal Beverage Co. He lived on the northwest corner of Virginia Ave. and Ninth St. (occupied by the parking lot of Alamo Savings in 2001 – Bank 34 in 2011). O’Conor was a tall man, about six feet in height, of medium build, with grey hair and glasses. Although he sported neither beard nor mustache, he always wore the same hat (Callaway Interview; *Alamogordo News* June 20, 1946).

O’Conor was “pretty gruff with the kids” but seemed to get along well with adults. He was always seen wearing faded bib overalls, and his constant companion was Old Toe (or just, Toe), a large mongrel dog of German Shepherd ancestry whose normal post was in the passenger seat of O’Conor’s pickup. When Toe died, he was buried in the back yard with a granite tombstone that said “Old Toe” (Personal communication, Mona K. Carrico, December 23, 2000).

Little information has survived about the actual workings of the plant. O’Conor’s machinery was automated, at least to a degree that included conveyor belts, and he had many stacks of empty cases cluttering up the front area of the bottling plant. This suggests that he bought his bottles in large lots, probably infrequently. O’Conor hired schoolboys like Robert Billups to wash bottles on his semi-automatic bottle washing machine for ten cents a day. Refrigerated soda machines were as yet unheard of in Alamogordo, so merchants cooled sodas in tubs full of ice. O’Conor delivered his products to stores and private homes in the back of his pickup truck (Callaway interview).

Fairly early in the 20th century, merchants had begun advertising specials and sales prior to Christmas. It was not until the very early 1940s, however, that local businesses started publishing Christmas greetings in the newspapers. Unlike typical ads, these rarely touted specific products, more often just wishing the townspeople a Merry Christmas. O’Conor joined the trend in 1941, with a simple Christmas wish, but he added a slightly larger greeting – with a Santa Claus – in 1942 (*Alamogordo News* December 25, 1941; December 24, 1942 – Figure 6-7).

O'Connor owned Crystal until his death on June 18, 1946, at the age of 73. On the day he died, O'Connor, who had suffered with heart trouble for many years, "was seized with an attack earlier in the day at his plant, but was determined to carry on with his work." At five o'clock in the evening, he suffered another attack and died before a doctor could be summoned. His son, Orval O'Connor, a World War I disabled veteran, died just two days later in a Veterans Administration hospital in Waco, Texas (*Alamogordo News* June 20, 1946).

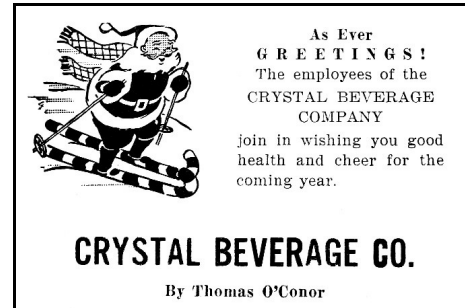


Figure 6-7 – Crystal Beverage Christmas ad (*Alamogordo News* December 24, 1942)

Orval's body was shipped to Alamogordo for a double funeral with his father, although the burial was delayed so that O'Connor's daughter, Grace Marie (Mrs. L.B. Stonebrook), could return from Hankow, China, where she and her husband were doing missionary work. Oddly, Grace O'Connor and Grace Stonebrook purchased a burial plot from the Town of Alamogordo Cemetery Board for \$50.00 on March 5, 1947, almost a year after O'Connor's death – although that plot may have been for Grace. Thomas, Orval, and Grace O'Connor currently lie side by side in Monte Vista Cemetery, Alamogordo (Burial Records, Hamilton-O'Dell Funeral Home, Alamogordo; *Alamogordo News* June 20, 1946, June 27, 1946).

After her husband's demise, Grace sold the bottling company property (along with another lot) to Helen Shields for "One Dollar and Other Considerations . . . (total less than \$100)" on July 23, 1946. The two Graces sold another piece of property at 1425 Florida Ave. to Douglas and his wife, Addie, on April 21 1948. Douglas settled the mortgage less than a year later on January 13, 1949. Grace E. O'Connor (born 1871) continued to live in Alamogordo until her death on October 18, 1958 (Otero County Deed Records, b. 135, p. 363; b. 141, p. 266).

The New Mexico State Business Directory for 1946 listed R.F. Douglas, J.S. Martin, and W.H. Ashley as the principals for the Crystal Beverage Co., and two ads in during October of that year noted that Crystal was "under new management" (*Alamogordo News* 10/3/1946, 10/31/1946). Douglas was an insurance agent and may have held a policy for the O'Connor family. His last ad appeared in the *News* on August 22, 1946, so he may have left the insurance business to concentrate on soda bottling. A 1947 date code on the bases of several Crystal bottles is clear evidence that the plant continued bottling at least into that year.

Douglas placed an ad in the 1947 Christmas edition of the *Alamogordo News* that is almost certainly the missing link from my 2001 study. “Greeting card” Christmas ads were common by that time, and this ad was placed by the “ROYAL CROWN BOTTLING COMPANY / R.F. Douglas, Distributor.” The lack of any reference to the Crystal Beverage Co. almost certainly indicates that it was no longer a legal entity. Douglas was now distributing national brands, and that was almost certainly a segue into the arrival of Consolidated Bottlers, Inc. of Roswell, and the rest of that story is told in Chapter 8.

Location

Soon after O’Conor became the owner of the Crystal Bottling Co. (located in a rented building) in 1930, he bought Lot 18, Block 1 – the property across the street from the older bottling plant – from the heirs of G.B. Oliver, changed the name to Crystal Beverage Co., brought in new equipment, and moved the operation. Crystal’s new address was 913 Pennsylvania Ave. (now White Sands Blvd.). The structure was the fourth business south of the corner of Tenth St. and Pennsylvania Ave. Holloman Lumber Co. occupied the corner itself, followed by another firm (illegible name on the 1942 Sanborn map), a restaurant, then the Crystal Beverage Co. – marked as “BOTTLING / WKS” on the map (Figures 6-8 & 6-9).



Figure 6-8 – A = former Alamogordo Bottling Works location; B = former location of the Crystal Beverage Co. (undated photo – probably early 1950s)

The bottling plant covered the entire lot from sidewalk to alley, a long narrow structure, measuring 25 x 120 feet.¹ The building was constructed of wood and faced with two large display windows on either side of the door, a situation that allowed passersby (especially curious children) to watch the bottling operation. The most notable features visible from the windows were large stacks of empty bottles (Callaway interview; Sanford Maps, 1942). The building had a high ceiling with the front door offset from the sidewalk. The alcove created by the offset door contained a window on either side (Sheffield interview). The plant's original location is covered by the parking lot of Walgreen's Drug Store in 2011.

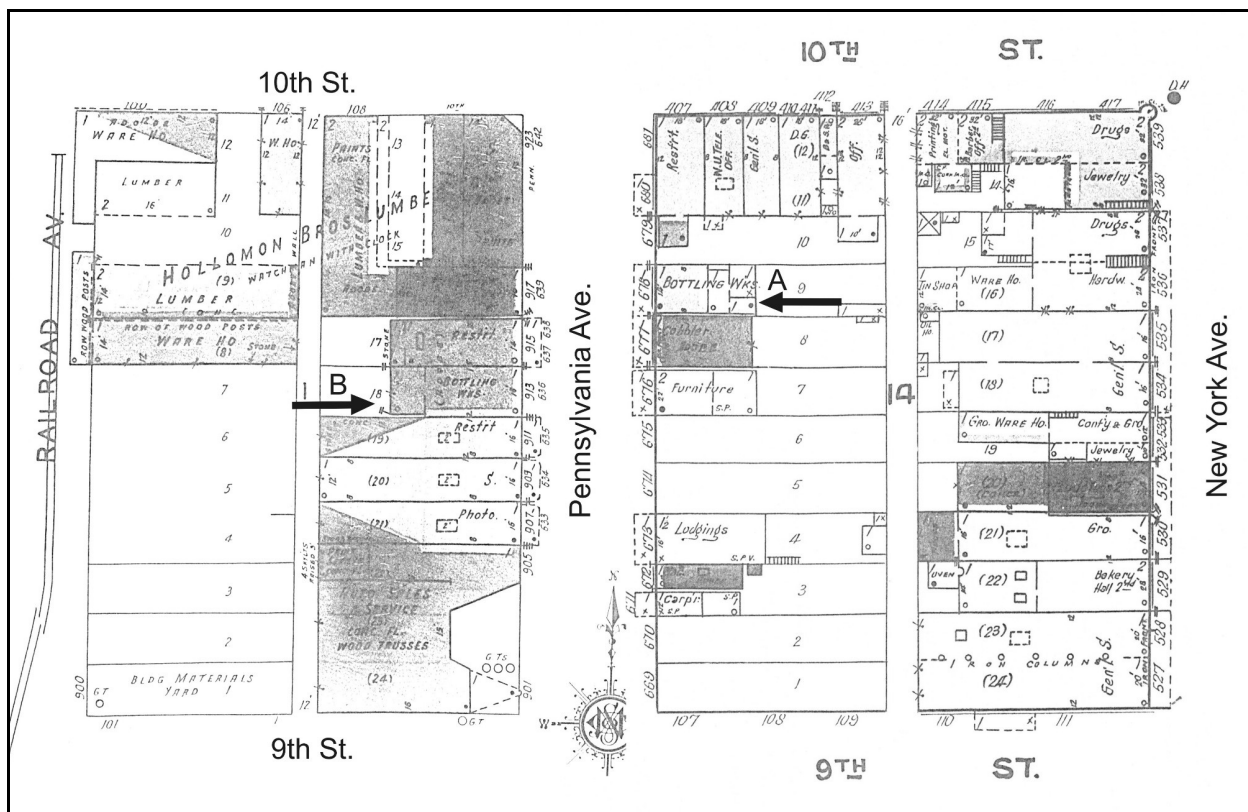


Figure 6-9 – A = the location of the older Alamogordo Bottling Works and the Crystal Bottling Co.; B = the Crystal Beverage Co. location (composite of 1921 and 1942 Sanborn maps)

¹ The 1942 Sanford Map does not show the building as extending to the alley, but Callaway stated that the structure actually did fill the lot.

Bottles

O’Conor’s timing in opening the Crystal Beverage Co. placed him in an unusual historical moment. The U.S. was just entering the Great Depression. While the Depression sounded the death knell for many small businesses – including a significant number of soda bottlers – across the country, O’Conor survived well into the recovery period.

He was also part of a dying breed – a bottler of a local house brand. House brands were fruit flavors made and bottled by local soda bottlers, and O’Conor bottled his house brand throughout the entire 16 years he was in business. Although some bottlers had adopted franchised sodas (like Coca-Cola) many years earlier, the trend toward national brands had increased, until they clearly dominated the market by the early 1930s. O’Conor rode the fence, retaining his house brand and offering a large – and changing – variety of national beverages. Upon O’Conor’s death, R.F. Douglas made a brief attempt to keep the Crystal house brand alive – then joined the trend toward the national brands.

Crystal House Brand

Initially, O’Conor carried “twelve different flavors of bottled goods” that offered “the public a big variety to choose from.” The *Alamogordo Advertiser* predicted that Cascade Ginger Ale would be a popular drink in Alamogordo “in a distinctive bottle” with an “artistic label, selling at a price much lower than the widely advertised brands” (*Alamogordo Advertiser* March 13, 1930). These flavors were “house brand” of the Crystal Beverage Co., prepared and bottled entirely by O’Conor.

The *Advertiser* further noted that “a carload of distinctive bottles (fluted sides) and new made-to-order cases to hold them was received a short time ago, and a good size stock of bottled goods is now ready for delivery (*Alamogordo Advertiser* March 13, 1930). These bottles with “fluted sides” were part of yet another trend in the bottling industry. As noted in Chapter 5, bottles from the Alamogordo Bottling Works originally had the name and location of the bottler embossed in an oval plate on the front – in keeping with the trend at that time. By the time D.H. Pharr acquired the firm in 1922, most bottlers were using generic bottles with paper labels, and that trend continued until the late 1920s.

Specialty Bottles

When O’Conor purchased the Crystal Bottling Co. (formerly the Alamogordo Bottling Works), he picked up on a new trend – a bottle style described by the industry as “specialty” bottles, more commonly known as “proprietary” bottles to archaeologists and as “deco” bottles to collectors. Early examples appeared in El Paso about the turn of the century and were used by Houck & Dieter, the largest bottler in the city at that time. The most famous example is the hobble-skirt Coca-Cola bottle. Specialty bottles had complex embossed designs and, often, unusual shapes. O’Conor’s initial bottle with “fluted sides” is an example of the specialty bottles.

Although Crystal advertised several national brands – and may have carried some I have not discovered – I have been unable to find any of the bottles locally. Of course, none of the brands were advertised for long, and there may simply be no surviving examples – or just none that I have found. It is probable that many of the franchised brands were either bottled in regular Crystal Beverage Co. containers or in generic bottles with paper labels.

By the 1940s, O’Conor sold Strawberry, Orange, Grape, and Cream Soda and occasionally bottled a Lemon-Lime drink (Callaway interview). All or most of those flavors were likely part of his original house brand inventory. The company’s initial embossed, specialty bottle is almost certainly the one with “fluted sides” that O’Conor ordered in 1930 (Figure 6-10), although a generic, paper label container may have been used for some drinks. I have yet to discover a bottle with a 1930 date code, but examples of the earliest style are very rare.

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Colorless

Size (in cm.): 23.3 (h); 5.6 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: Embossed

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 8 oz.



Figure 6-10 –
Embossed specialty
bottle for Crystal’s
house brand

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical with embossed rings around the neck/shoulder joint and just above the heel. Embossed vertical ribs extended from ring to ring with a 2 cm. labeling area left flat around the upper section of the body.

Front Description

Body: Embossed - CRYSTAL / BEVERAGE CO. [Note the unusual embossing of “CRYSTAL” in Figure 6-10)

Heel: Embossed - 8 FL. OZ.

Back Description

Body: Bare

Heel: 3 RIVERS {star} (Figure 6-11)

Base: Embossed - ALAMOGORDO / 3 R {star} 6 (Figure 6-12)

Manufacturer: Three Rivers Glass Co. (1925-1937)

Dating: [1930-ca. 1937] O’Conor may have used this bottle style until Three Rivers went out of business in 1937. The earliest date on an ACL bottle (see below) was 1938. Smith (1989:51) illustrated an example in his book on the Three Rivers Glass Co.

O’Conor probably only ordered this bottle twice. Even



Figure 6-13 – Vent marks on embossed specialty bottle

though I have never seen an example, the bottle with “fluted sides” noted in the *Alamogordo Advertiser* in 1930 was almost certainly the first order of this style. The only examples I have seen had the “6” date code on the bases. Since this period is concurrent with the worst part of the Great Depresssion, it is likely that O’Conor used the bottles until they actually broke – regardless of how badly worn they became. This was typical of bottlers during the early 1930s.

Collection(s): Bill Ward; Lynn Loomis; author’s collection.

The Three Rivers bottles have a series of three air vent marks (tiny round dots, similar to embossed periods) on each mold half in the upper section of ribs (erroneously called “flutes” by the newspaper) and six on each mold half of the lower rib area (Figure 6-13). Glass manufacturers began using vent holes in the molds by the early to mid-1880s, and



Figure 6-11 – 3 RIVERS {star} manufacturer’s mark on heel



Figure 6-12 – Base of embossed specialty bottle

that had become the industry standard by ca. 1890 (Lindsey 2011). This venting continued into the machine era, although by the 1930s, many manufacturers had begun concealing the vent marks in the designs and embossed lettering. On these bottles, however, the vent marks are clearly visible at the highest points of the ribs.

The “White Sands” Bottle

In 1934, Applied Color Lettering (ACL) became available from the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. This process used glass enamel applied to the bottle through a silk screen. Others glass houses used different names for the procedure. The Liberty Glass Co., for example, called the process Lustro-Color. By the late 1930-early 1940 period, ACL was the industry standard for soda bottles, although some hold-outs – like Coca-Cola and Dr Pepper – continued to use embossed bottles into the 1950s and later.

O’Conor’s first ACL bottle used red and white enamel to advertise his beverages as “THE FINEST MADE” and publicized White Sands National Monument on the back (Figure 6-14). Because White Sands National Monument was proclaimed on January 29, 1933 (a year prior to the perfection of the ACL technique), the bottle cannot have been manufactured to commemorate the opening of White Sands. However, it may have honored a boundary change made on August 29, 1938, or O’Conor may have just like White Sands. The bottle may have only seen use in 1938; the back design had changed a year later. Of course, O’Conor certainly used the bottles until the supply was exhausted.

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Colorless [Note: the White Sands version is made from a paler colorless glass² than any of the later versions]



Figure 6-14 – Crystal ACL bottle with White Sands back label

² There are numerous tones, shades, and hues to colorless glass, including faint amethyst, green, aqua, blue, orange, and yellow tints.

Size (in cm.): 23.2 (h); 5.5 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: White and Red ACL

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 8 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical with embossed horizontal rings at the shoulder/neck joint and just above the heel (as in the specialty bottle described above) and vertical ribs at heel and neck/shoulder area

Front Description

Body: A white ACL rectangle was bordered by a red line. Within the rectangle appeared the words DRINK / CRYSTAL / BEVERAGES (red) with an inset rectangle of floating white bubbles between CRYSTAL and BEVERAGES. Letters in the word CRYSTAL were outlined in red with a filling of tiny red dot stippling. White enameled lettering below the rectangle proclaimed THE FINEST MADE / ALAMOGORDO, N.M.

Heel: Embossed - G 5632

Back Description

Body: White ACL horizontal rectangle depicting sand dunes above White Sands (upwardly slanted script) / NATIONAL / MONUMENT / NEW/MEXICO.

Heel: Embossed - Bare

Base: Embossed - 1 / CONT. / 8 FL. OZS. / 9 I-in-an-oval-superimposed-on-an-elongated-diamond 8 (Figure 6-15)

Manufacturer: Owens Illinois Glass Company (1929-1954)

Dating: [1938] All examples I have seen of the White Sands bottles were dated 1938 (the “8” to the right of the Owens-Illinois logo on the base). The bottles were almost certainly only ordered a single time. These were the only house brand bottle ordered from the Owens-Illinois Glass Co.

Collection(s): José Hernandez collection; author’s collection.



Figure 6-15 – Base of White Sands bottle

This bottle, too, had visible vent marks. As with the embossed bottle, this one had the vent marks on the highest section of the ribs at both the heel and shoulder. On this bottle, however, the vent marks were spaced one on every other rib.

The Lula Bottles

The final three variations in Crystal's ACL bottles are very finely datable. In 1939, O'Connor changed the back design to a line drawing of the face and shoulder of a woman holding a soft drink bottle. The word, LULA, appeared on the woman's shoulder. Both O'Connor's wife and his daughter were named Grace, leaving us with the question: Who was Lula? In 1941, the size of the front label became slightly smaller than on the 1939 bottles (Figure 6-16). The first two variations retained the red-on-white ACL front labels, but the final label was all white. The all-white bottle was ordered at least three times (and probably only three).

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Colorless

Size (in cm.): 23.2 (h); 5.5 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: White and Red ACL

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 8 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical with embossed vertical ribs at heel and neck/shoulder area [Note that the horizontal neck/shoulder ring was *not* present on any of these later bottles – all of which were made by the Liberty Glass Co. The ring above the heel remained present but was more narrow.]

Front Description

Body: A white ACL rectangle was bordered by a red line. Within the rectangle appeared the words DRINK / CRYSTAL / BEVERAGES (red) with an inserted rectangle of floating white bubbles between CRYSTAL and BEVERAGES. Letters in the word CRYSTAL were outlined in red with a filling of tiny red dot stippling. White enameled lettering below the rectangle proclaimed THE FINEST MADE / ALAMOGORDO, N.M.

Heel: Embossed - L-G 514 1 [final number may be 2 on some bottles] (Figure 6-17)



Figure 6-16 – 1939 ACL bottle with large red-on-white front label and “LULA” on back



Figure 6-17 – L-G logo on heel of 1939 bottle

Back Description

Body: White ACL - a line drawing of a woman (labeled LULA on her shoulder) holding a bottle with a straw protruding from the top. Above and to the right of the drawing, a message claimed The (script) / ADVERTISING / is inside (script) / THE / BOTTLE (Figure 6-18).

Heel: Embossed - 8 FL. OZ.

Base: Embossed - L-G / 39 (Figure 6-19)

Manufacturer: Liberty Glass Co. (1936-1954)



Figure 6-18 – Close-up of LULA



Figure 6-19 – Base of large-label bottle

Dating: [1939] All Crystal bottles with the large red-on-white ACL labels that I have seen were made by the Liberty Glass Co. in 1939. Since the White Sands bottle was manufactured a year earlier, and the small-label bottle followed in 1941, it is highly unlikely that any others were produced. Both the 1939 and 1941 bottles had the L-G logo embossed on both the heel and the base.

Collection(s): Viola Salas Collection; Tularosa Basin Historical Society Museum; Lynn Loomis collection; author's

collection.

Variations:

1. See above – large front label; Lula on back.
2. In 1941, O'Connor re-ordered the same bottle. Apparently, Liberty Glass had to make a new silk screen. The bottle, itself, is identical to the one ordered in 1939, but the front label is notably smaller (Figure 6-20). The back label is the same size as the 1939 bottle (although the straw in the drawing is shorter); only the front label and date code has been changed. The base was embossed "L-G / 41."
3. The final variation eliminated the red ACL. The white background was removed, and the red lines became white. All essentials of the



Figure 6-20 – 1941 small-label bottle

design and lettering, however, were unchanged. The back label is also unchanged, except that Lula's face is slightly fuller, and the straw is longer again (Figure 6-21). The all-white variation eliminated the "L-G" on the base (although it remained on the heels), so that the bases only have date codes of "44," "46," or "47." At least one baseplate was peened to remove the "L-G" logo (Figure 6-22).

The date codes suggest that O'Connor ordered bottles in 1944 and 1946. The final bottles had to have been ordered by Douglas and his colleagues after



Figure 6-22 – Base of all-white label bottle

O'Connor died in 1946. It is significant that the bottles with 1947 date codes are relatively common, while the other date codes are scarce, possibly even rare. As

noted above, O'Connor seems to have used bottles until they completely wore out. Douglas, however, apparently discontinued Crystal flavors in favor of nationally franchised brands toward the end of 1947 – making the final order of bottles obsolete overnight. Many of these, therefore, have survived.

Conclusions – House Brand Bottles

Crystal Beverage bottles fall neatly into a dichotomy: embossed and ACL labels. The earlier bottles may also be classified as specialty (or proprietary or deco), although the ACL bottles are certainly the same type of specialty bottle with ACL labels added. The same bottles fit into a second dichotomy – with bottles made during the Great Depression and post-Depression bottles (Figures 23 & 24 – also see Table 6-1).



Figure 6-21 – Bottle with all-white label



Figure 6-23 – Full line of Crystal Beverage bottles – front view



Figure 6-24 – Full line of Crystal Beverage bottles – back view

The post-Depression bottles may be further cataloged by changes in back label, color, and label size. An archaeologist, finding a fragment of a White Sands back label, for example, can be assured that the bottle was made in 1938. Date codes, of course, tell the rest of the story, providing us a relatively accurate picture of the production history of the bottles.

A note on production, however, is in order. Date codes on bottles with only embossed labels are very accurate and reflect the specific date when the bottles were made. However, date codes on ACL bottles *may* be misleading. Bottles of a certain style *can* be made in quantity, and the ACL labeling may be applied later. There have certainly been cases where this has been reported. However, the sequencing of the Alamogordo bottles makes intuitive sense, so the date codes on them probably reflect not only the manufacturing dates but also the dates that the ACL was applied.

Table 6-1 - Alamogordo Soda Bottlers and Their Bottles

Company	Owner	Date Code or Poss. Range	Bottle Style/Features
Alamogordo Bottling Works	George A. Weigele	1911	Embossed; Plate
Alamogordo Bottling Works	Jerry S. Johnson	1914	Embossed; Plate
Alamogordo Bottling Works	L.H. Karosen	1921	Embossed; Plate
Alamogordo Bottling Works	D.R. Pharr	1922-1923	Paper?*
Alamogordo Bottling Works	A.B. Rose	1923-1928	Paper?*
Crystal Bottling Works	E.L. Craig	1928-1930	Paper?***
Crystal Beverage Co.	Thomas J. O'Connor	1930?	Embossed; Specialty
Crystal Beverage Co.	Thomas J. O'Connor	1936	Embossed; Specialty
Crystal Beverage Co.	Thomas J. O'Connor	1938	ACL (red & white); White Sands on back
Crystal Beverage Co.	Thomas J. O'Connor	1939	ACL (red & white – large label); Lula on back
Crystal Beverage Co.	Thomas J. O'Connor	1941	ACL (red & white – small label); Lula on back
Crystal Beverage Co.	Thomas J. O'Connor	1944, 1946	ACL (white); Lula on back
Crystal Beverage Co.	R.F. Douglas	1947	ACL (white); Lula on back

* No bottles have been found for these owners.

** The only photo I have found of these bottles shows no label whatsoever.

Delaware Punch

Although the drink had not been advertised since A.B. Rose introduced it in 1923, Delaware Punch had either continued in production through the changeover to Crystal Beverage Co. or had been re-introduced by O'Connor. The drink may have only been sold for a short time, or O'Connor may have only ordered bottles containing the alamogordo designation once. In any event, I have only seen one example of a Delaware Punch bottle from the Crystal Beverage Co. (Figure 6-25).

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Colorless

Size (in cm.): 22.0 (h); 5.5 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: White and Red ACL

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 7.5 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical with inset labeling area around the central and upper body with an embossed ring near the shoulder. The shoulder, itself, contained three evenly spaced, vertical ribs tapering slightly at the lower ends.

Front Description

Neck/Shoulder: Bare

Body: Red & White ACL - a red rectangle enclosed a red oval around the words, Delicious / DELAWARE (underlined) / PUNCH, all superimposed on a white background

Heel: Bare

Back Description

Neck/Shoulder: Bare

Body: White ACL - {drawing of a full punch bowl with three cups} / TRADE MARK REGISTERED / MIN. CONTS. 7½ FL. OZS. / PATENT APPLIED FOR / CONTAINS ARTIFICIAL COLOR AND FLAVORS / CITRIC AND TARTARIC ACID: BENZOATE / OF SODA, TRACE: SUGAR AND WATER / BOTTLED BY CRYSTAL BEVERAGE CO. / ALAMOGORDO, N. MEX.

Heel: Bare

Base: Embossed - 43 / N-in-a-square 2

Manufacturer: Obear Nestor (1915-present)

Dating: (1943) Crystal probably bottled Delaware Punch from the mid-1940s until the termination of the company in 1947. The beverage was no stranger to Alamogordo. A.B. Rose, then proprietor of Alamogordo Bottling Works, advertised in 1923, “We are also introducing ‘Delaware Punch,’ which pronounced to be one of the finest and most refreshing drinks known”



Figure 6-25 – Delaware Punch Bottle (Courtesy of José Hernandez)

(*Alamogordo News* May 17, 1923). It is unknown at this time whether Rose continued to bottle Delaware Punch until he sold the company to E.L. Craig or whether Craig maintained the product as part of his line.

Collection(s): José Hernandez

Nesbitt's Orange

Although I have never found an ad for Nesbitt's Orange in Alamogordo newspapers, a bottle in the Lynn Loomis collection is labeled with the Alamogordo name (Figure 26). The bottle only says "NESBITT LICENSEE" – but the plant was almost certainly Crystal Beverages.

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Colorless

Size (in cm.): 23.5 (h); 6.1 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: Black ACL

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 10 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical with two embossed rings around the neck (with tiny embossed rings in between them) above a neck label area. The shoulder consisted of four embossed rings with a series of tiny rings in between, extending into the upper body. A large body label area was blank, with a series of tiny rings below it.

Front Description

Neck: Embossed - Nesbitt's (script)

Body: Black ACL shield with stenciled Nesbitt's (script) / CALIFORNIA / ORANGE / DRINK / 19 © 38; below the shield was CONTAINS CARBONATED WATER / SUGAR, ORANGE JUICE, FRUIT / ACID (CITRIC), ORANGE OIL / FLAVOR, U.S. CERTIFIED COLOR / LESS THAN 1/20TH. OF 1% / BENZOATE OF SODA



Figure 6-26 – Nesbitt's orange bottle (Lynn Loomis collection)

Heel: Embossed - NET CONTENTS 10 FL. OZ.

Back Description

Neck: Embossed - same as front

Body: Black ACL - Nesbitt's (script) name on Orange drinks / is like / STERLING stamped on silver. / BOTTLED UNDER LICENSE OF / NESBITT FRUIT PRODUCTS, INC. / LOS ANGELES, CALIF. / by / NESBITT LICENSEE / ALAMOGORDO, N. MEX.

Heel: Embossed - L-G 2

Base: Embossed - 42

Manufacturer: Liberty Glass Co.

Dating: (1942) The only Nesbitt's bottle I have seen with the Alamogordo name was made in 1942 and was probably used roughly concurrently with the Delaware Punch bottles discussed above. Very shortly after this date, Nesbitt stopped listing the names of local bottlers on the bottle, choosing instead to have city/state designations on bottle caps. It is thus likely that O'Connor continued to bottle Nesbitt's Orange until his death, although it is probable that no other bottles will be found with the Alamogordo name.

William J. Latchford, Jr., applied for the patent for what would become the Nesbitt's bottle on December 28, 1938. He received Design Patent No. 114,026 on March 28, 1939, and assigned it to Nesbitt's Fruit Products, Inc. (Figure 6-27) Nesbitt's received a copyright for the label, itself, in 1938, so some of the bottles may have been made prior to the receipt of the patent. Most Nesbitt's bottles were embossed "DES. PAT. 114026" on the base, but I did not record that embossing for this bottle.

Collection(s): Lynn Loomis

National Brands

The Crystal Beverage Co. originally carried Coca-Cola as well as bottling its own Crystal flavors, although it is likely that Cokes (and possibly some other flavors) were shipped in by rail from El Paso. I will discuss the entire spectrum of Alamogordo Coke bottles in Chapter 7. Other brands, however, probably had distinctive labeling.

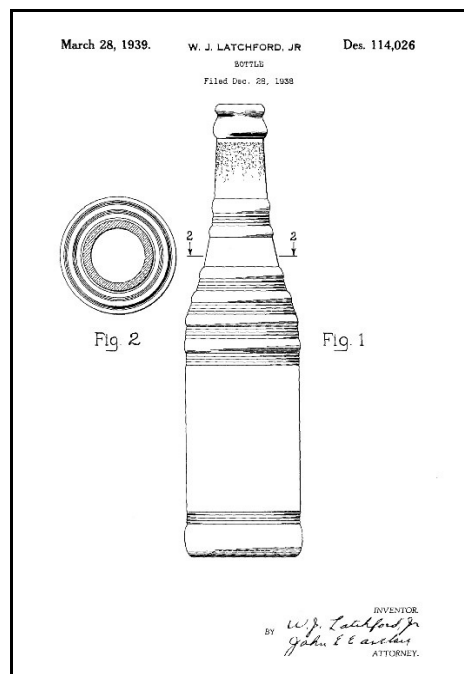


Figure 6-27 – Nesbitt's bottle patent – Latchford 1939

In 1931, Crystal sold Hop Ale and Pabst Blue Ribbon beverages (*Alamogordo News* April 2, 1931), along with Hi-Peak Cola (*Alamogordo Advertiser* May 28, 1931). The next year, O'Connor offered Cascade Pale Dry or Golden Ginger Ale (*Alamogordo Advertiser* August 25, 1932) and advertised Brandimist, "A real soda water toddy[,] Richer and a Bit Stronger in 1935 (*Alamogordo Advertiser* April 18, 1935). His last advertised attempt at a new product was Sparkling Bromo-Kola in 1939 (*Alamogordo Advertiser* November 23, 1939).

Hop Ale

O'Connor advertised Hop Ale during his early years in business, very close to the end of Prohibition, although, of course, *he* did not know that the end was in sight (see Figure 6-4). Hop Ale was probably first offered around turn of the century, and the drink likely lost popularity and was removed from the market shortly after the repeal of Prohibition.

An Apollinaris-style mineral water bottle illustrated on Flickr had a paper label. The label was round and called Hop Ale a "Carbonated Compound." The label included "Guarantee No. 828. Food & Drug Act, June 30, 1906." The American Beverage Co. was listed on the label as "Sole Owners" with the location in Atlanta, Georgia. A later label (not on a bottle) was rectangular, although otherwise similar, but this one placed the American Beverage Co. at both Atlanta and Memphis, Tennessee (Figure 6-28). The latter label noted that Hop Ale "possesses the taste and tonic effect of beer *without its intoxicating effects* (their emphasis)."

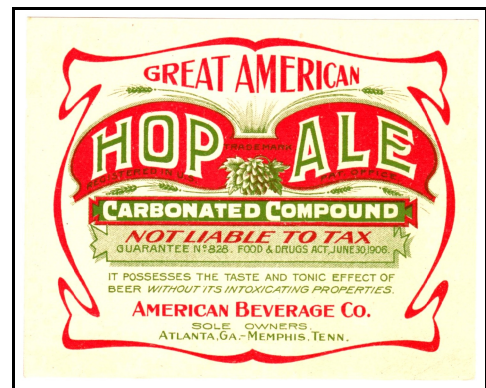


Figure 6-28 – Hop Ale label

Ads during the teens indicated that the firm was located in St. Louis, although this probably indicated the main sales office rather than a production center. The Kansas Board of Health tested Hop Ale in 1910 and noted the same wording on the latter label that was discussed above. The tests showed that the drink was "colored with tobacco," although there was "no evidence of tobacco extract." Alcohol content was "four tenths of 1 percent" or 0.4% (State of Kansas 1911:54).

Pabst

In an attempt to survive Prohibition, most breweries produced just about anything they could sell, including malt tonics, soft drinks (especially ginger ale), other beverages, non-beverage products, and near-beer. Near-beers (or cereal beverages) were actually the regular products from the breweries with the alcohol drastically reduced. Anheuser-Busch began the trend with Bevo, and most of the other breweries followed suit, naming their near-beers something slightly different from their regular beer. Pabst produced a cereal beverage called Pablo (Figure 6-29).

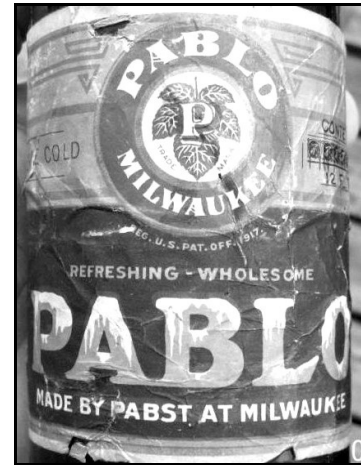


Figure 6-29 – Pablo label (eBay)

The bottom fell out of near-beer sales in 1924, although many breweries continued to brew at least some of the drinks. Most breweries returned to their original beer names for the near-beers about 1924. Although I have not found anything conclusive, Pabst probably joined that trend, too, and ceased using the term “Pablo” in favor of just “Pabst.” Thus, O’Conor’s 1931 ad was almost certainly for Pabst near-beer (see Figure 6-4). As far as I have been able to determine, *all* near-beers were bottled in export beer bottles or malt tonic style bottles (squat with swelled necks) using paper labels.

Hi-Peak Cola

Hi-Peak Cola was another drink offered by O’Conor during 1929 (see Figure 6-5). The product was produced by the Hi-Peak Corp., described as “chili manufacturers” when it opened in 1928. Marcus S. Woods, the power behind the corporation, advertised Hi-Peak Cola for the next few years. Located at 1212-14 Fort St. in Chattanooga, Tennessee, the plant manufactured the syrup and other necessary extras connected with the product. Apparently, the firm became a victim of the Great Depression, although it may just have been swamped by the popularity of Coca-Cola. In any event, the plant was no longer listed in 1933 or in succeeding years. Marcus Woods began manufacturing brooms at the Fort St. plant before moving on to other enterprises (Harmon 2009).

Both a cap and a rubber stamped image show a young woman standing on a mountain peak with outstretched arms (Figure 6-30). Superimposed over the image is “Hi-Peak / tops them all / TRADE MARK / COLA” (Harmon 2009). At least two specialty bottles were made for the drink. An aqua bottle offered on eBay had a constricted waist with “Hi-Peak / COLA” embossed on the shoulder (Figure 6-31). The specialty bottle may not have included the local designations. Since O’Conor only carried the drink for a short time, we may not have found one of the few bottles that were used at Alamogordo. It is also possible that O’Conor bottled Hi-Peak in generic bottles with paper labels that resembled the caps.



Figure 6-30 – Hi-Peak Cola cap (Worthpoint)



Figure 6-31 – Hi-Peak Cola bottle (eBay)

Wade (2003:43) listed and illustrated a very different specialty bottle. His was colorless with a “slightly contoured mid-section.” “Hi-Peak / PAT APPLD FOR” was embossed on a slight slant at the shoulder. The body section was separated from the shoulder by a distinct line and was decorated with an embossed drawing of a mountain peak (Figure 6-32). Both front and rear had the same embossing. Wade’s example had no location, and he listed the bottles as “very scarce.”

Cascade Ginger Ale

In 1930, O’Conor advertised “Cascade Ginger Ale” and increased to “Cascade Pale Dry or Golden Ginger Ale” in 1932 (Figure 6-33). Even though a Google search resulted in ten pages of hits, I have been unable to find a history of the

firm that produced the drink. Cascade was apparently quite popular and was advertised by at least the late teens. Since ACL bottles appeared in the search, the brand continued until at least the mid-1930s, probably later.



Figure 6-32 – Hi-Peak Cola bottle (Wade 2003:43)

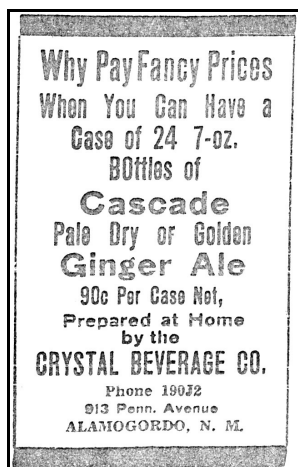


Figure 6-33 – Cascade Ginger Ale ad
(*Alamogordo Advertiser*
August 25, 1932)

Although I found no photos of acceptable quality, there were at least three different embossed bottles made for Cascade Ginger Ale. Two of these had embossing at the shoulder and heel, with a bare section in the main part of the body for paper labels. The third style was a specialty bottle. It is probable that O’Conor used either embossed or generic bottles with paper labels (Figure 6-34).



Figure 6-34 – Cascade Ginger Ale label

Brandimist

In 1935, O’Conor advertised Brandimist, “A real soda water toddy” (Figure 6-35). The Brandimist trademark was registered on October 29, 1912, and the firm claimed that its first use was during that same year. With a headquarters at Decatur, Georgia, the drink was franchised by Brandimist, Inc., and bottled in 47 cities. The firm remained in business until 1949 (Personal communication, Chris Weide, 6/6/2011).



Figure 6-35 – Brandimist ad (*Alamogordo Advertiser* April 18, 1935)

Wade (2003:22-23) listed and illustrated a specialty bottle for the brand. The bottle had a fluted, upwardly tapered lower section that culminated in a glass ball with three horizontal rings at its bottom and top, tapering up from the shoulder to a crown finish. The word “Brandimist” was embossed at a diagonal across the rounded, upper-central area. Wade noted that “PAT’D MAY, 1926” was embossed at the heel.

Bates and his family (1992:2) listed the same type of bottle in both colorless (8-oz., the bottle listed by Wade) and aqua (6-oz.) hues and noted that the 8-oz. bottle was dated 1926 – almost certainly referring to the patent date. Several bottles listed on the internet were embossed

“BRANDIMIST CO.” at the heel. One bottle, offered at a Worthpoint auction, was embossed “ATLANTA (arch) / 3 RIVERS {star} / 27 1 (both horizontal) / GA. (inverted arch) on the base (Figure 6-36)” Most were noted as being made by the Three Rivers Glass Co., Three Rivers, Texas, and that glass house may have held the exclusive contract for the bottles.



Figure 6-36 – Brandimist bottle base (Worthpoint)

In his history of the Three Rivers Glass Co., Smith (1989:1, 26, 51) noted that the firm was open from 1922 to 1937. In his container section, he included a photograph of a Brandimist bottle.

According to Roller (1997), however, Three Rivers had gone into receivership by November 1936, and the Ball Brothers purchased the plant on December 3 of that year. Ball operated the

factory throughout 1937 and 1938. Brantley (1975:95)

noted that the Ball Brothers closed the plant in 1939.

Although not relevant to this discussion, Roller (1997) further produced evidence that the Balls retained ownership of the Three Rivers factory until 1954.

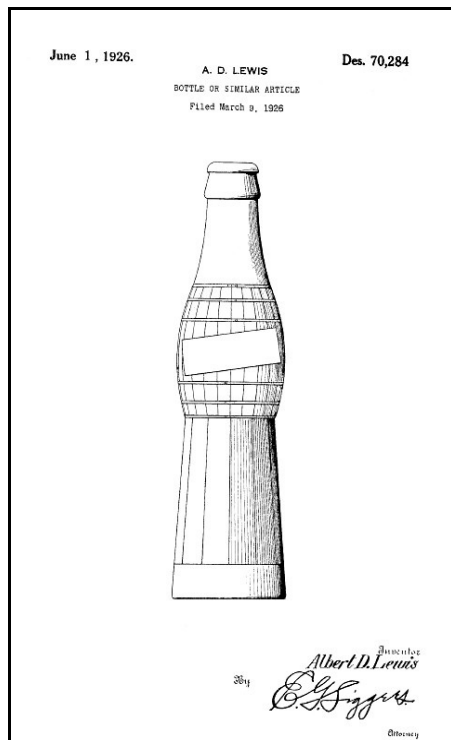


Figure 6-37 – Lewis patent for the Brandimist bottle, 1926

Three Rivers used a variety of manufacturers marks, often embossing two different styles of logos on the same bottle. See the section on the embossed, specialty, house brand bottle above for an example. Some bottles were also embossed with *both* a Three Rivers logo (usually on the heel) and a Ball (script) mark (usually on the base). See Lockhart (2010), Chapter 9a for an example. The Bottle Research Group has only discovered date codes on bottles made in 1936 (a “6” code) and 1937 (a “37” code). The “27” on the Worthpoint example, however, *may* be a very early date code.

On March 9, 1926, Albert D. Lewis, of Atlanta, Georgia, applied for a patent for a “Design for a Bottle or Similar Article.” Lewis received Design Patent No. 70,284 on June 1, 1926 (Figure 6-37). The *Gastonia Daily Gazette* (9/24/1926) illustrated the bottles and noted that the drink was manufactured by the Brandimist Co., Atlanta,

Georgia (Figure 6-38). It is likely that Lewis, the bottle designer (also from Atlanta), was in some way connected with the firm. It is probable that bottles used before 1926 were generic with paper labels.

Sparkling Bromo-Kola



Figure 6-39 – Alamogordo ad for Broma-Kola [note misspelling] (*Alamogordo Advertiser* November 23, 1929)

put in the drink which is proving very popular here” (Figures 6-40 & 6-41).

An apparently unrelated Bromo-Kola was sold by druggists in 1896 and 1897. The *American Druggist* (1897:127) noted that “Bromo-Kola is a specialty already becoming well and favorably known. It is an effervescent preparation recommended as a cure for headache and a nerve bracer. Retail druggists report a ready sale for Bromo[-]Kola where introduced. The preparation was made and distributed by the Kola Medicine Co., Detroit, Michigan.

O’Conor’s final ad (at least that I have been able to find) for a national brand was for Sparkling Broma-Kola (note misspelling) in 1939 (Figure 6-39), but I have been able to find very little about the brand. On May 14, 1934, the *Ruston Daily Leader* (Ruston, Louisiana) announced that “Bromo-Kola is [the] New Drink Bottled Here.”

The beverage was made by the Dielh Beverage Co., Memphis, Tennessee. The *Leader* explained that “Bromo-Kola contains a small amount of Bromo Seltzer which will clear up the head and sooth the nerves. This drink is put up in large bottles about twice the size of the ordinary cold drink but sell [*sic*] at the same price. A very distinct flavor is



Figure 6-38 – Brandimist bottle (*Gastonia Daily Gazette* September 24, 1926)



Figure 6-40 – Ad for Bromo-Kola (*Ruston Daily Leader* June 4, 1934)

Coca-Cola

From April to June 1931, O'Connor advertised "Coca-Cola in Bottles" in the *Alamogordo News*. The timing is strange. It is virtually certain that A.B. Rose sold the franchise for Coca-Cola in Otero and Lincoln Counties to Hope Smith of the Magnolia Coca-Cola Bottling Co. of El Paso in late 1927. Hauling firms began trucking the drink to Alamogordo by at least September of that year, and Smith's name was on the ads by 1929. Although this is pure speculation, O'Connor may have cut a deal with Smith to sell Cokes at Alamogordo (see Chapter 7 for a consolidation of Coca-Cola distribution in Alamogordo). Apparently, the arrangement did not work well for one or both parties. O'Connor began carrying other cola (or Kola) types – apparently with little success – as noted above.

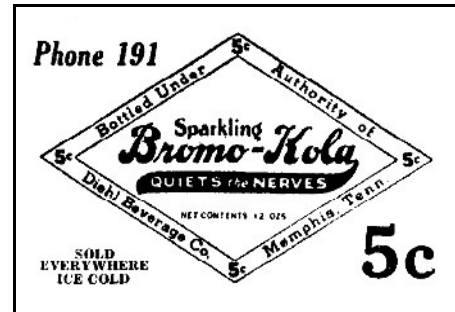


Figure 6-41 – Label from a Bromo-Kola bottle (*Ruston Daily Leader* June 11, 1934)

Summary of the Crystal Years

When Ezra Craig renamed the Alamogordo Bottling Works as the Crystal Bottling Co., he ushered in the era of profound change. Thomas O'Connor only changed the name slightly – to the Crystal Beverage Co. – but he relocated the plant and bought the property. O'Connor had obviously come to Alamogordo to stay.

O'Connor was an innovator. Not only did he try different products, he initially bottled Crystal flavors in one of the new, specialty bottles, very different from the styles used by any of his predecessors. When ACL was introduced, O'Connor was again an early adopter, using a red-on-white ACL bottle in 1938 – just four years after the first one of that style was offered. He downgraded to a white ACL bottle in 1944 and retained that until his death.

Who knows how many other changes might have taken place, if O'Connor had not had his heart attack on the bottling line in 1946. Although R.F. Douglas and his associates attempted to continue in the same manner as O'Connor, times had changed. Douglas soon ceased bottling local flavors and adopted only nationally franchised brands – leading to the Consolidated Bottlers. See Chapter 8 for that story.