

Chapter 8
Consolidated Bottlers, Inc./Pepsi-Cola West (1957-ca. 2000)

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History

The Transition from Crystal Beverage Co. to Consolidated Bottlers

After the death of Thomas O’Conor on the bottling line in 1946, R.F. Douglas J.S. Martin, and W.H. Ashley attempted to keep Crystal Beverages in business. The group placed the last ads for the Crystal Beverage Co. (Figure 8-1), noting that it was “under new management” and was “striving to produce the best in Soda Water Products” on October 3 and October 31 (*Alamogordo News* 10/31/1948). Douglas and his associates apparently operated Crystal until some point during 1947 (see Chapter 6 for the history of Crystal Beverages).

Bob Callaway remembered that Pepsi, Coke, and Crystal flavors were all available in Alamogordo at the same time. The last date code on the all-white ACL variation of the Crystal Beverage bottle was “47” (1947), indicating that the bottles were ordered by Douglas after the death of O’Conor. These bottles could not have been filled prior to 1947, but it is unlikely that they were used after that year.

By the end of 1947, however, Douglas had apparently realized that the business needed the distribution of popular national brands to survive. Douglas advertised his “Appreciation at Christmastime” as the distributor for the Royal Crown Bottling Co. in the December 25, 1947, issue of the *Alamogordo News*. Douglas greeted his customers with: “Arrival of the Christmas Season reminds us of our obligations to the fine people of this community. We appreciate the excellent treatment we have received and take this means of sending our Greetings to each of you” (Figure 8-2). It is certainly significant that he made no mention of the Crystal Beverage Co.



Figure 8-1 – Final Crystal Beverage Co. ad (*Alamogordo News* 10/31/1948)

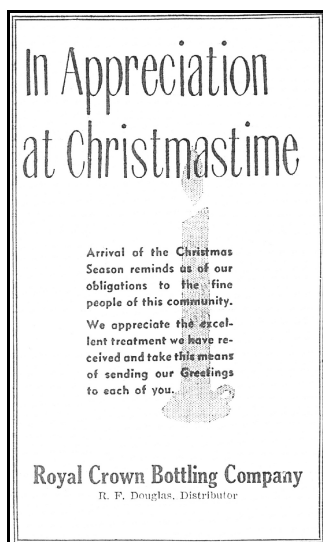


Figure 8-2 – R.F. Douglas Christmas ad for Royal Crown (*Alamogordo News* December 25, 1947)

The following year, the *Alamogordo News* carried an ad for Grapette. The first one (March 18, 1948) proclaimed “IT’S HERE! You can get in now—one of the best soft drinks you ever tasted! You won’t have to learn to like it! You won’t have to be thirsty to enjoy it!” Although the ad failed to identify the local distributor, it was almost certainly Douglas (Figure 8-3).

The large ad only appeared once.

It was followed by small “spot” ads (Figure 8-4) until mid-July, when all soft drink ads – except Coca-Cola – ceased. This was apparently

Douglas’s final attempt at survival in the beverage business. In any event, Douglas faded from the *News*, along with ads for Royal Crown and Grapette.

Consolidated Bottlers, Inc., Roswell

In 1947, Durwood O. Jones moved from Clovis, New Mexico, to Roswell and founded Seven-Up Bottlers, Inc., Jones as president, Mark E Pickel as vice president, and Mrs. Louise Jones as secretary and treasurer. In late 1954 or early 1955, the firm added Pepsi-Cola and reorganized as Consolidated Bottlers, Inc. Jones remained president of the new corporation, with Paul M. Jones as vice president, and Mrs. Louise Jones as secretary and treasurer. At the same time, he formed Consolidated, Inc., as a distribution company for his beverages as well as an insurance agency. Jones, born on May 9, 1907, had his first job as a janitor at a Clovis school and gradually worked his way to owning the largest Pepsi-Cola franchise in the United States (Jones interview; Roswell City Directories 1949-1955).



Figure 8-3 – Ad for Grapette (*Alamogordo News* March 18, 1948)



Figure 8-4 – Spot ad for Grapette (*Alamogordo News* July 1, 1948)

The Roswell Seven-Up bottling plant was located at 117 E 3rd – but the operation moved to 1106 S. Main with the reorganization to Consolidated. The Roswell plant served Alamogordo, Carlsbad, and Hobbs, although the firm established warehouses in each community soon after the reorganization. Despite heavy sales pressure from Coca-Cola distributors, Jones gradually expanded the firm's business area until it covered most of Southern New Mexico and a large portion of western Texas. Jones sold the franchise and everything but the Roswell buildings to PepsiCo in 1988 for \$9,360,000, almost all of which went to paying off debts accumulated in building the vast territory (Haines interview; Jones interview; Roswell City Directories 1949-1955).

Consolidated Bottlers at Alamogordo

As noted above, information about the transition from Crystal Beverages to Consolidated Bottlers is missing or unclear, but Consolidated almost certainly began deliveries to Alamogordo shortly after its inception in 1954 or 1955. In the early days, a route salesman left Roswell with a loaded truck early in the morning and drove to Alamogordo. Once in town, he serviced all his stops and then was faced with the long drive back. One driver confided that he was so tired on the return trip that he frequently had to stop and take a nap along the side of the road (Haines interview).

By 1958, Consolidated had hired a salesman who took care of local business from 809 Fourth St. in Tularosa.¹ Advertisements in the telephone directory described Consolidated as “Bottlers of Pepsi Cola, Mission Beverages, Seven Up, Nu-Grape Soda.” Consolidated also advertised locally on billboards that were set up in Alamogordo by the parent company in Roswell (Alamogordo Telephone Directories 1958-1963; Haines interview).



Figure 8-5 – Vermont Ave. Consolidated warehouse (Courtesy of Mike Haines)

¹ Tularosa, a small village thirteen miles north of Alamogordo, was permanently settled about 1862. Although the settlement survived the rigors of Apache raids and water scarcity, its development never matched its southern neighbor, Alamogordo (Lovell 1963:12-13; Sonnichsen 1960:1-15; Townsend 1984:22-27).

Consolidated converted a former Forest Service building at 1101 Vermont Ave. in Alamogordo into a warehouse in 1962 (Figure 8-5). By 1964, it was managed by B.E. Dooley. The 2,000 Square foot warehouse was too small to accommodate the flow of “product” through it, but it was successfully used by a variety of managers including Paul McGregor, James F. Fairfield, Esquiel De La Rosa, and Michael May between 1967 and 1975. Ken Josselyn, who had previously worked for Coca-Cola, became manager for a short period before going into bread delivery. He later returned to Coca-Cola and became manager of the Alamogordo Coke plant in 1978 (ACD 1964 - 1973; Haines interview).



Figure 8-6 – Ann Carleson (Plant Secretary) and Mike Haines in front of Consolidated Plant (Courtesy of Mike Haines)



Figure 8-7 – Mike Haines and others at the Alamogordo Space Hall of Fame for the presentation of a Pepsi-Cola can for use in space (Courtesy of Mike Haines)

Mike Haines began working for Consolidated in 1974 and became manager the following year (Figure 8-6). At some point during that period, NASA chose Pepsi-Cola for use in outer space. Because of the limitations imposed by the lack of gravity, Pepsi had to invent a special can, and Haines was present when a Pepsi representative presented one of those cans to what was then called the Space Hall of Fame at Alamogordo (ACD 1974-1975; Haines interview – Figure 8-7).

Under Haines, Consolidated carried 40-50 different items during the Vermont Ave. period, and, despite the limited space at the Vermont Ave. warehouse, vended over 100,000 cases of product during some years. Space was not the only problem on Vermont Avenue. Consolidated was located at the edge of the 10th Street business district and nestled close to the surrounding residences. Although Haines maintained good relations with his neighbors, there were still occasional complaints about the noise generated by loading and unloading operations, and deliveries could not be scheduled at night (Haines interview).

To resolve the problems of noise and space, Consolidated bought land and constructed a new, larger warehouse at 2315 N. Eddy Dr. in 1985 (Figure 8-8). Pepsi Cola West, a subsidiary of PepsiCo, bought the local operation in 1989 and retained Haines as manager and salesman for the area. The plant was administered



Figure 8-8 – Pepsi-Cola West location at Eddy Dr., 1998

from Phoenix, Arizona. In 1993 the company name became Pepsi-Cola Co., the district headquarters changed to Albuquerque, and Haines became the District Manager, a position he retained in 1998. Interestingly, both Pepsi-Cola and Alamogordo celebrated their one hundredth anniversary in 1998 (ACD 1977-1994, Haines interview).

When I returned to the building in 2011, the building had become an annex of the Otero County Sheriff's Dept. All traces of the Pepsi-Cola equipment had vanished. From 2000 on, the Alamogordo city directories only listed Coca-Cola as a beverage distributor. At this point, I have been unable to discover when Pepsi closed the warehouse.

Location

The first listed local address of Consolidated Bottlers was 809 Fourth St. in Tularosa, the private residence of the area salesman. Fourth St. is now St. Francis Dr. where Highway 54/70 extends through town. In 2001, an abandoned gas station gathered dust and decrepitude at 801 Fourth St. next to a vacant lot where the salesman lived. The first home of Consolidated Bottlers is no more.

When Consolidated established its Alamogordo warehouse at 1101 Vermont Ave. in 1962, the location bordered a residential district. The building had been a grocery store in the 1940s, later a Forest Service building. Consolidated constructed an addition to increase the limited space. When the company built its new warehouse on Eddy Dr. in 1985, Rocky Mountain Supply Co. moved into the Vermont location. Just a few years later, however, Smith's Food and Drug Center bought the property and demolished the old warehouse. The food store had become Lowe's by 2011. Consolidated's plant was located approximately where the Lowe's north loading dock now stands (Haines interview).

Bottles

Along with the local Crystal flavors, Alamogordo residents were able to enjoy Coca-Cola, Royal Crown, and Grapette in the late 1940s. However, that soon changed. Crystal flavors were likely discontinued before the end of 1947. R.F. Douglas advertised Royal Crown and Grapette in 1947 and 1948, but I have not found either type of bottle with an Alamogordo label. Douglas likely had them shipped from Las Cruces or El Paso.

By about 1955 or 1956, Consolidated Bottlers trucked in Pepsi-Cola, Seven Up, Mission Beverages, and Nu Grape from Roswell. All products delivered by Consolidated also lacked any local labels and probably had the Roswell designations. By the early 1960s, local identifications on soft drink bottles had mostly ceased.

Shells

Like all other soda bottlers, Consolidated used wooden shells (cases), bound together with wire straps. The Consolidated shell is a typical one with internal wooden dividers, creating spaces for 24 bottles. Unlike most shells, the one I have was made with slight, concave grooves to fit the exact bottle size (Figure 8-9). If there was ever any manufacturer's information on the base or inside of the shell, it has long worn off.

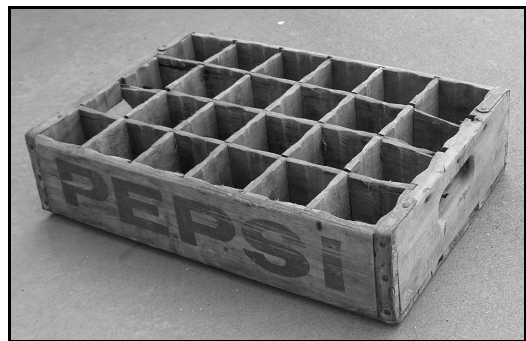


Figure 8-9 – Overview of Consolidated shell – note grooves to fit bottles

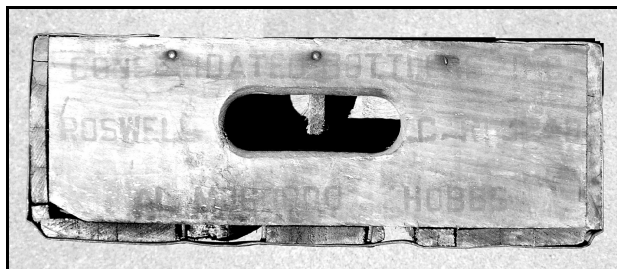


Figure 8-10 – End panel of Consolidated shell

One long side of the shell is painted in red letters “Fresh Up (*italics*) WITH 7-Up.” The other side, simply says “PEPSI” – also in red. Each end panel has the typical oval hand-hole cut into the center with “CONOLIDATED BOTTLERS, INC. / ROSWELL {hand hole} CARLSBAD / ALAMOGORDO HOBBS” again in red

(Figure 8-10).