

Bottles on the Border:

The History and Bottles of the Soft Drink Industry

in El Paso, Texas, 1881-2000

38 BUYERS' GUIDE

Dr. Pepper
GOOD FOR LIFE!

Drink a Bite
10 - 2 - 4 O'Clock



Empire Products Corporation
MANUFACTURERS AND JOBBERS
*Beverages, Candies, Crushed Fruits and Syrups, Cider and Extracts
Soda Fountain, Bottlers' and Confectioners' Supplies and
Machinery—Soda Fountains and Fixtures*
OLD MONK PUNCH
Mills and Florence Sts. Phones Main 1533 and 1534

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Chapter 5c

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The Later Empire Companies, Part I

Empire Products Corporation (ca. 1925-1956)

History

The 1922-1925 period of the Empire-Link Industries is steeped in mystery. It is clearly a time of reorganization of the Empire management and production. Aside from the listings in the city directories, I have yet to find a single tangible reference to Empire-Link. I have also not found references to the Empire Bottling Works name after 1922, but the company did not label its products Empire-Link.

A 1922 bottle first used the term “Empire Beverages,” although the name had been used in an ad as early as 1915. The last-known Empire Bottling Works bottle is dated 23 (1923). The firm was obviously still called the Empire Bottling Works at that time, and the bottles were used until they wore out. When transitions were abrupt, such as the merger of Houck & Dieter and Purity Bottling & Manufacturing Co. to form Empire, the old bottles were discarded and have become ubiquitous in collections. This did not happen with Empire Bottling Works containers. Although not in the scarce or rare categories like many of the earlier bottles used by the firm, even most the later containers are uncommon.

Unfortunately, this means that the transition from Empire Bottling Works to Empire Products Corp. is less clear than I would like, although it is certain that the corporation restructured in late 1924 or early 1925, losing Link and Dorsey and renaming itself Empire Industries, then Empire Products Corp. by 1926. Link, obviously undaunted by the loss of his position at Empire, became the president of Mosson & Co., wholesale fruit dealers in 1925. By the following year, he had formed Link & Co. and remained self-employed in the fruit and produce business for the rest of his life (EPCD1924-1930).

By 1930, Gardner had displaced Heineman as president, with his wife, Nellie S. Gardner, as secretary. This probably represents the moment when the Gardners obtained the majority of the corporate stock. Heineman, now vice president for the corporation, remained in Los Angeles. About that time, the corporation added the distribution of Dr. Pepper to its list of activities (EPCD 1930-1938).

In 1928, the bottling plant had a capacity of 2,000 cases (48,000 bottles) of soda per day. The washing and filling processes were conducted entirely by machine with three separate inspections by employees during the operation. The somewhat complex process required the use of only four people, three of them for the inspections. An entire floor of the building was used for soda fountain supplies and as a jobbing business for nationally advertised products such as ginger ale, cereal beverages, drink juices, and powdered milk. The floor also contained a section for confectioners' equipment, and the plant maintained its own fully-equipped laboratory. Another floor of the building was devoted to the manufacturing of candy. It employed 25-30 people and had a capacity to produce 1,000,000 pounds of candy annually. Specialties included high quality chocolates, gum drops, and cactus candy (EPH 2/11/1928 1:1).

Empire remained relatively prosperous during the early years of the Great Depression. In 1931 the company kept seven employees busy operating the bottling plant during the peak period (June-August) and only decreased to five workers in the colder, winter months. This production crew, along with the office staff, kept eight two-ton capacity trucks busy delivering Empire products. Employees normally worked a nine-hour day, six days a week to fill the need for Empire's large variety of products. Sales in 1931 included 34,391 cases of six-and-one-half-ounce bottles, 24,310 cases of eight- and ten-ounce bottles, and 1,795 cases of twelve-ounce bottles for a total annual sales output of 60,496 cases. The average wholesale price was 80¢ per case (US Census of Manufactures, 1931).

Two years later, the depression had caught up with El Paso. Although twelve-ounce case sales rose to 3,381, total case sales fell to 35,195 – a drop of 41.8% in two years! The average price per case rose to 91¢ although this probably reflected the increased sales of twelve-ounce packages and reduced sale of smaller sizes. Despite the plummeting of sales, Gardner retained the same number of workers in the plant, maintaining seven plant workers and a total of twenty-two employees, counting drivers and staff. Beverage sales failed to show the complete picture, however. Gardner noted, "We also manufacture flavoring extracts which are not shown in this report" (US Census of Manufactures, 1933).

By this time, Empire's better-known drinks like Bronco, a fruit cordial, and Old Monk, a grape beverage, extended from East to West Coasts (including Puerto Rico) and as far south as Mexico City. For national sales, Empire shipped flavor syrup in condensed, one-pint containers to be mixed and bottled at its destination. Each pint made six pints of beverage when added to carbonated water. Within the smaller "trade territory," which included New Mexico and Arizona, Empire products were shipped in already bottled form. The company used the most

modern, up to date bottling and washing equipment available and employed forty people (EPH 2/11/1928 1:1).

Occasionally, National sales produced interesting situations. Bronco, for example, was advertised as having a “kick.” Gardener described an incident:

The kick is non-alcoholic, but there was a time after Prohibition went into effect and before we had solved the problem of preventing fermentation when it used to have a real kick. Sometimes we would hear from customers afar off, saying our “Bronco” had fermented and exploded. One wrote in to say it had blown the plate glass window out of his store. . . .It doesn’t kick quite so hard now (EPH 2/11/1928 1:1).

Gardner was proud that “in El Paso [Old Monk] outsells any national product in a 5¢ bottle with the exception of Coca-Cola” (EPH 2/11/1928 1:1).

When beer became legal again in El Paso, on September 15, 1933, Empire added Budweiser, from Anheuser-Busch, to its list of products, bringing back memories of the days a decade earlier, when Empire carried the near-beer with the Budweiser name. Empire began selling the brew beginning at 12:01 AM. Sales were so brisk that Gardner had ordered two more railroad carloads to arrive by September 17 (EPT 9/15/1933, 9/16/1933). Empire distributed Budweiser beer in bottles and draft until 1956 (see ads in the *El Paso Times* 9/15/1933, 5/4/1935, and 6/11/1936).

In 1938, Gardner’s daughter, Isabella C. Zimmerman, became a vice-president of the corporation and was followed by her husband, William W. Zimmerman, who was elected as a vice-president and sales manager two years later. Empire celebrated its thirty-third anniversary in 1939 by placing its twelve-ounce bottle of Pale Dry Ginger Ale on sale for five cents. The popular drink had been priced at fifteen cents per bottle for several years. By 1940, the company was branching out with a plant in Las Cruces, managed by C.W. Thompson and a representative, John Gomez, at 210 South Bullard in Silver City, New Mexico¹ (EPCD 1931-1940; NMSBD 1940, 1942; EPHP 9/2/1939 8:6)

When Lawrence retired from Empire in 1944, Nell Gardner assumed the presidency, with

¹ Neither New Mexico location was still listed in the 1942-43 directory.

the Zimmermans as vice-president and secretary/treasurer. Lawrence was listed as living at their home on 935 Rim Road, but the directory gave no job title. By 1947, he was no longer listed in the directory, and he had probably gone to the “home” (what would now be called a nursing home). He was living at 113 Edison, the Pilot Home, in 1949. Gardiner died in 1950 (EPCD 1944-1950).

Lawrence Gardner had been known as a “nice guy”; he used to teach the old ladies on Kern Place to make wine. Gardner would take grapes and equipment from Empire into their homes and cheerfully instruct them in the winemakers’ art. His wife, Nell, was known as a “sweet” lady to some (Price interview) but was described by others as a “formidable woman, tall, erect, bordering on being heavy-set. . . . She always wore a hat, more often a rather broad-brimmed hat” (EPHP 11/10/1976 8:3). Nell shared a bit of her personal philosophy on her 85th birthday:

Forget yourself and think of others. Develop a sense of humor, especially regarding your own personal peculiarities. Have a tough hide and be too big to indulge (*sic*) in littleness. Be curious. Be venturesome. Think of the other fellow, if you want to be remembered (EPT 7/9/1978 D1:1).

Nell was known for being conscientious and taking her duties seriously. Once, when she was due to speak at a ladies club, she fell and broke her wrist. Undaunted, she immediately went to the doctor’s office and had the wrist bound with a bandage. Although the doctor implored her to remain and allow him to properly set and treat the injury, she declined and continued on to her appointment. At the conclusion of her talk, she returned for proper treatment. Her daughter, Isabella, on the other hand, had a different reputation. She was once described as “the meanest woman on the face of the Earth” (Price interview), a person who hated everyone. Although her detractors disliked her, she was Nell’s only child, and her mother mourned her untimely death in 1958 (EPHP 11/10/1976 8:3).

Despite the loss of Lawrence Gardner and the restrictions imposed by rationing during World War II, the company was again ready for expansion in 1945, leaving the old location at Mills and Florence (Figure 5-82) for a new \$250,000 plant filling “Sixteen lots, just off Wyoming Street, with a frontage on Cotton Avenue and ample railroad trackage . . . [the land was] purchased for approximately \$13,000” (EPT 7/26/1945 1:1). The new, two-story building had a full basement, allowing ample room for the manufacturing of soda water and candy as well as the distribution of Nesbitt’s fountain supplies and fixtures, liquors and wines, and Anheuser-

Mrs. Nell S. Gardner sold the controlling interest in Empire Products Corporation to Richard C. Price of Grapette Bottling Co. in 1956. She became the primary stockholder and president of Empire Moving and Storage Co. shortly thereafter, retaining her son-in-law, William Zimmerman as her vice president once again. She retired in 1962, making way for the new president, Jack Connor, and devoted her remaining life to civic organizations. Born in 1879, Nell Gardner died on June 23, 1970, at the age of 91 (Social Security Death Index; EPCD 1962-1963; EPHP 4/28/1956 F12:1; 9/22/1964 B1:2; EPT 6/24/1970 B1:2).

Bottles and Artifacts

Of the various corporations that used the Empire name, the Empire Products Corporation lasted longest, from ca. 1925 to 1956, and it produced the greatest variety of containers. Lime Rickey is featured in an *El Paso Times* ad (5/4/1935) in a paper label configuration and is mentioned in the September 2, 1939, article on El Paso bottlers in the *Herald Post* – but it is discussed as if it were a time-honored product. Old Monk Punch (a grape drink) first appears in



a city directory advertisement in 1926 and received comments in newspaper articles in 1928 and 1939. After Empire closed, Duffy's Draft Beverages began selling Old Monk in flavor syrup form for use in soda fountains.

The 1928 El Paso Herald article on Empire Products Corporation indicates that Bronco, a fruit cordial, was first manufactured about the beginning of Prohibition (1919). It remained on the market until at least 1928. Dr. Pepper became part of the Empire line about 1930 or 1931 and remained until at least 1949. After that, Dr. Pepper was not offered in El Paso until 1952. Sometime, probably after 1935, Empire introduced the only chocolate soft drink I have found in El Paso, Chocolate Soldier (except the very recent addition of Yoo Hoo Chocolate in the late 1980s); it is unknown how long the drink was bottled. The product most recently distributed by Empire was Squirt, first mentioned in the *Times* and an El Paso telephone directory advertisement in 1953. Squirt was still advertised by Empire in the February 1964 telephone directory and was still distributed by Empire until the company's demise in 1969. It was again advertised by the Dr. Pepper Bottling Company in 1970.

Changes in container styles were affected by several factors. Of course, national trends had notable effects. The trend toward paper labels on generic bottles made Empire containers (like those of many other bottlers at the time) archaeologically invisible from ca. 1924 to 1929. The next bottles used by the company again followed the national trend toward, this time toward specialty or proprietary bottles with fancy embossed decorations. Finally, Empire joined the national trend in the adoption of bottles with baked enameled labels in 1939.

Empire's choices were affected in at least three other ways. The firm grew out of its earlier incarnation ca. 1924 – in the midst of Prohibition. The lack of alcohol to drink (at least on the US side of the Rio Grande) made it a great time for soft drink sales. El Paso was also remote enough that it did not feel the major sting of the Great Depression until 1932 or 1933 – but then it created reduced sales, a return to paper labels, and less bottle orders. Finally, when Lawrence Gardner retired, Nell began making changes. She soon removed the sale of alcohol-related products, changed the styles of the Empire bottles, and slimmed down the product line until there was little left but soft drinks. Then, she sold the business.

Bottles used by the corporation may be divided into five categories:

1. House brand fruit flavors. These began with generic bottles using paper labels, returned to the six-panel style used by the preceding company, evolved into specialty or proprietary embossed

bottles, briefly returned to paper labels, and, finally, turned into a series of bottles with Applied Color Lettering (ACL) labels.

2. Ginger Ales. These mostly paralleled the fruit flavor bottles albeit with less variation. At some point during the 1940s, ginger ales lost their individual characteristics and may have been dropped from the product line.

3. Mixers. I know less about the sequence for these bottles. They were mostly generic with paper labels, although, like the ginger ales (but sooner), they lost their individual standing. These may not have been carried prior to the lifting of Prohibition in 1934.

4. Siphon bottles. These were probably used from the reorganization ca. 1924 or 1925 until about the time of Lawrence Gardner's death – when Nell Gardner began simplifying the firm. It is possible, however, that they, like the mixers, were not sold until the end of Prohibition.

5. Franchise brands. Despite the popularity of the Empire house brands, the corporation began early as a franchise for national brands. Most of the early brands identified Empire as the bottler, initially with "EMPIRE" embossed on bottle bases, later with the full name in ACL on the reverse of the bottles. Eventually, more and more brands stopped local identification and only noted the home location on bottles.

Empire House Brand Fruit Flavors

Like most soda bottlers during the 1920s and 1930s, Empire offered its own "house brand" of fruit flavors. Along with more exotic names like Old Monk (grape) and Bronco (fruit punch), Empire also carried such flavors as strawberry, lime, cola, and many of the other typical taste treats. As discussed above, the house brand bottles went through many variations. See Table 5-5 (at the end of the house brand section) for a chronology of the bottles.

Paper Labels in the 1920s

Although some soda bottlers had used paper labels to identify their products during the late 1800s, many, if not most, used embossed bottles by the turn of the century. Just prior to the onset of Prohibition, however, the use of paper labels on generic bottles became a national trend. Beginning as early as 1918, paper-labeled bottles began to dominate advertising in El Paso newspapers. As discussed in Chapter 5b, the Empire Bottling Works began pasting paper labels

on the embossed, six-panel bottles in 1920.

About 1924 or 1925, concurrent with the transition to the Empire Products Corp., the firm began using generic bottles with paper labels of their own. Although diamond-shaped labels, similar to those advertised on bottles in the very early 1920s, may have continued, I have been unable to find any evidence. It is likely that the first paper labels used by the Empire Products Corp. were rectangular in shape and were similar to the Applied Color Labels that followed (Figure 5-83).

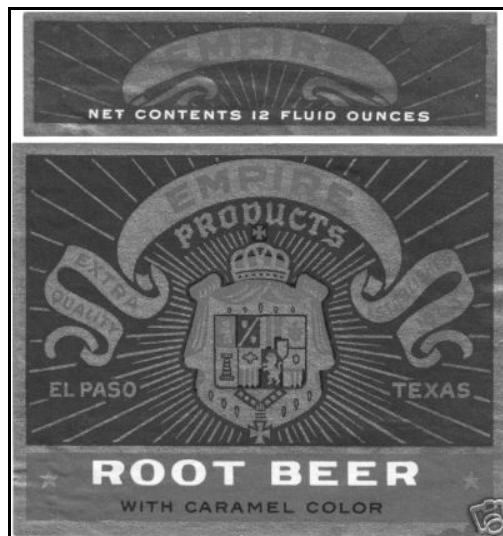


Figure 5-83 – Empire Root Beer label (eBay)

Note: The dating of these paper labels is quite tenuous. At this point, I have not seen any of the ones illustrated in advertisements or on datable bottles.

Six-Panel Bottles

The national trend had again shifted by the late 1920s. Following the lead set by Coca-Cola in the teens, a style of bottles called “specialty” by the industry (more commonly known as “proprietary” to archaeologists and “deco” to collectors) began appearing during the mid-1920s and became popular in the latter years of the decade.² These had unusual shapes and/or fancy embossed designs. The ancestral six-panel bottle, used by both Houck & Dieter and the Empire Bottling Works fit right in (Figure 5-84).

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Colorless

Size (in cm.): 19.0 (h); 6.0 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: Embossed

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 6½ oz.

² Typically, researchers point to the hobble-skirt Coca-Cola bottle (patented in 1915) as the earliest example of these specialty bottles. I maintain that the Houck & Dieter six-panel bottle anticipated the trend by 20 years!

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical with six vertical panels created by embossed lines forming arches at the upper extremities

Front Description

Body: Embossed in six vertical panels (lettering read with bottle on its side from crown to heel), EMPIRE / BEVERAGES / EL PASO / TEXAS / CONTENTS 6½ FL.OZ. / TELEPHONE No. 3165

Heel: Embossed: S-in-a-star / 1 / 29 (under BEVERAGES panel)

Back Description

Body: See front description

Heel: Bare

Base: Embossed - EMPIRE

Manufacturer: Southern Glass Co. (1917-1931)

Dating: [1929] Empire ordered at least three of these bottles in 1929, and the firm may have ordered more in 1930 (although I have not seen a 1930 date code). They were certainly replaced by larger specialty bottles in 1931.

Collection(s): Author's collection.



Figure 5-84 – 6-panel Empire Beverages bottle

Variations:

The only variations I have found were in manufacturer's markings and a change in one panel. The "TELEPHONE" panel became "REGISTERED" on both variations. In one variation, the heelmark changed to "3301 29" (under the "TEXAS" panel) with only "EMPIRE" on the base. On the other, the heelmark was "3303 29" with "1 / EMPIRE/ {I-in-an-elongated-diamond}" embossed on the base. The Diamond-I logo was used by the Illinois Glass Co. from ca. 1915 until the merger that created the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. in 1929 (Lockhart et al. 2004b:25-26). The bottle with the "3301 29" heelmark was almost certainly also made by Illinois Glass. These were probably some of the last bottles made by Illinois Glass.

Specialty Bottles

Still following the national trend, Empire finally abandoned the older, six-panel bottle and switched to a larger specialty (proprietary) bottle design that failed to identify the local bottler or city of origin. However, examples of this design are common in El Paso dumps used during the 1920s-1930s period. These bottles were used until the change to ACL labeling during the mid-1930s.

Empire advertised these bottles as both “Giant Beverages” and “McGinty Beverages” during April 1931. The firm offered each in 9-ounce sizes for “5c” (Figure 5-85). One ad described the drink as “SKY HIGH In Quality SO BIG In Quantity. . . . Also at Your Dealer Our Other Matchless Specialties in Regular Bottles” (EPH 4/3/1931 16:1). The regular size bottle was seven-ounces. Note that the “other matchless specialties in regular bottles” probably indicates that generic, paper-labeled bottles were still being used (see next section).

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Colorless

Size (in cm.): 23.3 (h); 5.6 (d) at checkering; 5.9 (d) at vertical ribs

Primary Labeling Style: Embossed

Finish: Crown, embossed “31” on the reinforcing ring

Capacity: 9 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical with two horizontal embossed rings, one encircling the upper body at the shoulder junction, the other just above the heel. Six rounded, vertical ribs connect the rings and form six panels. Each panel is filled with embossed checkering. The seven-ounce bottle has a much steeper shoulder than the nine-ounce version.

Front Description

Shoulder: Embossed: CONTENTS 9 FLU. OZ.

Body: See Overall Bottle Design

Heel: Embossed: FRUIT ACID ARTIFICIAL COLOR ADDED (embossed all around heel)]

Back Description

Shoulder: See front description

Body: Same as front

Heel: Embossed: See front – plus IPC-in-a-triangle 1

Base: Embossed - EMPIRE

Manufacturer: Illinois Pacific Coast Corp. (1925-1930)

Dating: [1931-ca. 1932] This “Fruit Acid” variation is very likely the one advertised as the Empire Original McGinty Beverages in the *El Paso Times* on April 4, 1931. On August 19, 1930, the Illinois-Pacific Glass Corp. merged with the Pacific Coast Glass Co. to form the Illinois-Pacific Coast Co. Just over two years later, on May 31, 1932, the firm was reorganized

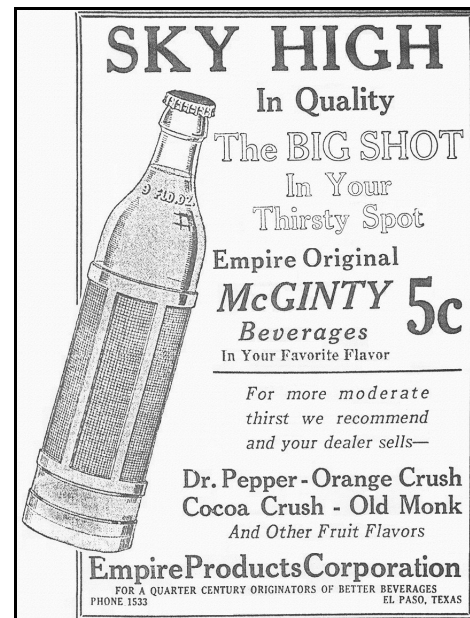


Figure 5-85 – Ad for Empire McGinty Beverages (*El Paso Times* 4/4/1931)

as the Owens-Illinois Pacific Coast Co. Owens-Illinois used a date code technique that was almost unique (a very similar system was used by the Southern Glass Co.). Beginning in 1926, the firm used dates for both the month and the year (instead of year only, the industry standard). The firm also began embossing date codes on the reinforcing ring (lower ring) of the crown finish in 1929 and went to two-digit date codes in 1930 – unfortunately also eliminating the month codes (Lockhart et al. 2005:77-78). Thus, the “31” on the reinforcing ring of this bottle indicates a manufacture in 1931. The bottle style may have changed slightly to the next variation when Owens-Illinois began on the West Coast.

Collection(s): Author’s collection.

Variations:

1. Nine-ounce, Fruit Acid (description above – Figure 8-86)

2. Seven-ounce, Empire Giant

By at least 1935, Empire sold a seven-ounce version of the Empire Giant brand. Although I have never seen a complete bottle, I found fragments in a dump at Oro Grande, New Mexico. Aside from the size, the only major difference was the embossing above the heel – “EMPIRE GIANT BEVERAGES.” The base was embossed “9 I-in-an-oval-superimposed-on-a-diamond 5. / EMPIPE / 1” (Note misspelling of “EMPIRE” on 7 oz. version).

The “9” to the left of the logo indicates that the bottle was made at the Streator, Illinois, plant, the logo, of course, indicating the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. The date code, however, is a bit strange. Typically, a dot to the right of a single-digit date code on an Owens-Illinois *soda* bottle³ specifies the early 1940s – so, if this bottle follows the typical code, it was made in 1945. However, there is *no way* this can be correct. As described below, Empire was well beyond embossed bottles by 1945.

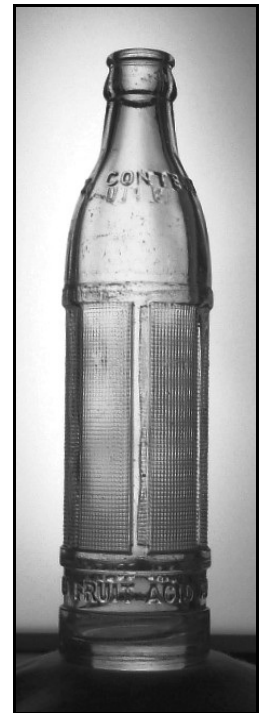


Figure 5-86 –
Empire specialty
bottle – Fruit Acid

In addition, a typical 1945 bottle would have had “Duraglas” in script also embossed on the base. Although a few bottles were made without the procedure, most Owens-Illinois soda

³ I emphasize the word “soda” because the dot system was not used by Owens-Illinois on other bottle types.

bottles after 1940 used the Duraglas process. This was either a mis-recording on my part or an engraver's error at Streator. Engraver's errors were common at Owens-Illinois in the 1930s and 1940s, and this bottle already *had* another error – the misspelling of “EMPIRE” as “EMPIPE.” Thus, the date of manufacture was certainly 1935.

3. Nine-ounce, Empire Giant

The nine-ounce bottle was similar to the seven-ounce one, including “EMPIRE GIANT BEVERAGES” above the heel. In addition, these had the model number “5303” embossed at the heel and “9 I-in-an-oval-superimposed-on-a-diamond 8 / EMPIRE / 2” embossed on the base (Figure 5-87). These are certainly the second specialty (proprietary) bottle used by Empire, probably between 1935 and 1938. Because this was all happening during the Great Depression – with sales almost certainly plummeting each year – Empire may not have ordered bottles between 1931 and 1935. It is also entirely possible that more date codes for these bottle types will emerge.

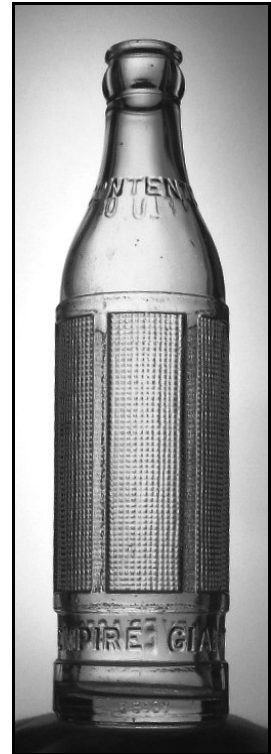


Figure 5-87 – Empire specialty bottle – Empire Giant



Figure 5-88 – Empire paper label on vinegar-type bottle (Jim Cullen collection)

Paper Labels in the 1930s

Paper labels apparently continued in use on at least mixers and ginger ale bottles. A new type of paper label may have also been used as an emergency style during the Great Depression, when Empire's sales plummeted. The “emergency” labels were small and round. The only photo I have seen (from the Jim Cullen collection) is of a large (possibly quart-sized) vinegar-style bottle that was packed in a case labeled “ORANGE SODA” (Figure 5-88).

The round label showed a white-outlined blue background with “EMPIRE (red) / a glowing white crown / PRODUCTS / EL PASO, TEXAS (upward arch).” The cardboard cartons that carried these bottles were imprinted with the red, white, and blue logos used on the ACL bottles (Figure 5-89). Empire produced orange soda in this packaging and likely included other popular flavors of the day (Jim Cullen collection).

This bottle style, called the Stubby, was actually developed as the first non-returnable beer bottle in August 1935. By April 1936, less than a year later, the Steinie, a new non-returnable form, rapidly became more popular. The Stubby, however, although outclassed as a beer bottle, was increasingly used for other liquids and is still used for vinegar today.

Multicolored ACL Labels

By at least 1939, Empire followed another national trend, this time the adoption of bottles with Applied Color Lettering (ACL). These baked-enamel labels allowed for finer drawings, smaller lettering for detailed information, and colors. Bottlers, including Empire, trended toward multi-colored labels early on but quickly settled into bi-chromatic or single-color schemes. Empire first used a red and blue ACL label (Figure 5-90) and followed that with a white, red and blue design.

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Colorless

Size (in cm.): 24.5 (h); 6.4 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: Blue and Red ACL

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 12 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical with embossed stippling over entire outside surface

Front Description

Body: A complex blue rectangle background with an ornate scroll stenciled into the upper half that stated EXTRA / QUALITY on the right, EMPIRE in the center, and ESTABLISHED / 1906 on the left, all in red ACL. The word, PRODUCTS was stenciled through the blue background below the scroll. The city, El PASO, was stenciled beneath the left end of the scroll with, TEXAS, beneath the right. A red ornate shield occupied the lower center with the word REGISTERED beneath it.

Heel: Bare

Back Description

Body: Red ACL - The inside of a double three-quarter circle on the back

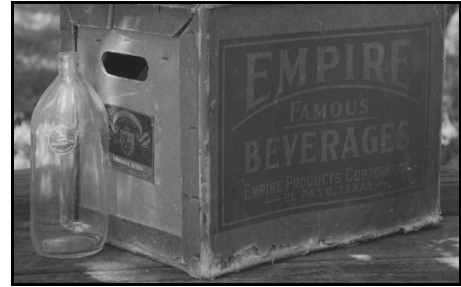


Figure 5-89 – Case for paper-labeled bottles (Jim Cullen collection)



Figure 5-90 – Blue & red ACL 12-ounce bottle

body suggested: RETURN TO YOUR DEALER / AND COLLECT / DEPOSIT ON THIS BOTTLE / OF 2¢ / CONTENTS 12 FL. OZS. Below the three-quarter circle the company was identified as EMPIRE PRODUCTS CORPORATION / EL PASO, TEXAS.

Base: Embossed - 9 I-in-an-oval-superimposed-on-a-diamond 9 (red & blue label)

Heel: Embossed - G874

Manufacturer: Owens Illinois Glass Co. (1929-1954)

Dating: [1939-ca. 1941] The “9” to the left of the Owens-Illinois logo indicates that the bottle was made at the Streator, Illinois, plant. The numeral “9” to the right is a date code for 1939 (Figure 9-91). An identical bottle had a “0” in the date code position – 1940. Containers of

this type were probably used from the change to ACL labeling in 1939 to at least the follow year, possibly as late as 1941.

Collection(s): Mike Morrison Collection, Las Cruces; Lawrence Angus collection; Jim Cullen collection; Willies F. Tarrazas collection; author’s collection.

Variations:

1. Red & Blue, 12-ounce (see above)

At least one example had an unusual Owens scar. It was entirely outside the base on the heel of the bottle.

2. White, Red & Blue, 12-ounce

The only notable body changes on this variation were the replacement of the blue rectangular background with a white one and the addition of a thick blue outline around the background (Figure 5-92). The model number on the heel was changed to G897. On my example, the heelcode was on the reverse side, but that may vary. The application of ACL was not yet fully precise, so the model numbers may appear on either front or reverse.



Figure 5-92 – White, blue, and red ACL 12-ounce bottle



Figure 5-91 – Base with Owens-Illinois label and codes

The base, too, had changed. Virtually all soda bottles by this time were made with the Duraglas process, and the base of this one was

fully stippled. The earliest base I have seen was embossed “9 I-in-an-oval-superimposed-on-a-diamond 2. / Duraglass (script)” – a date code for 1942. Another was identical, except for a “3.” date code – 1943. These were certainly used by 1942, possibly a year earlier and certainly for a year after that. They could have been used for a couple of years later.

3. Red & Blue, 32-ounce

The larger bottle measured 29.8 cm. in height by 9.1 cm. in diameter. The front and back labels were identical to the 12-ounce bottle, except that the deposit on the reverse was changed from “2¢” to “5¢” and “12 FL. OZS.” became “32 FL. OZS.” (Figure 5-93). The base on my example was embossed “9 I-in-an-oval-superimposed-on-a-diamond 3. / 1 / Duraglas (script) / G142.” Another “G142” (the model or style code) was embossed on the front heel. Although this example has a date code for 1943, these bottles may have been used as early as 1939, when the first bi-chrome, ACL 12-ounce bottles were made. They were probably discontinued sometime between 1943 and 1945.

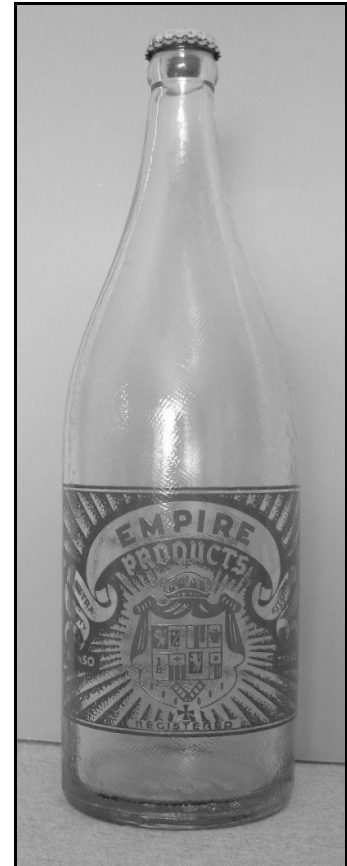


Figure 5-93 – Blue & red ACL 32-ounce bottle

The Ringed ACL Bottles

At some point, probably ca. 1945, Empire adopted a new style of bottle. These were similar to the specialty or proprietary styles but had ACL labeling. The initial bottle was bi-chromatic, with a black front-label background and white lettering (Figure 5-94). The only examples I have seen were 10 ounces in volume. These were followed ca. 1950 by almost identical bottles that only used white ACL labels. The white-labeled bottles were available in both 10- and 6½-ounce sizes.

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Colorless

Size (in cm.): 24.5 (h); 6.3 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: White and Black ACL

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 10 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical with a single embossed ring around the neck, four rings

around the shoulder, and two rings around the heel

Front Description

Neck/Shoulder: White ACL in a slight inverted arch - ENJOY / EMPIRE QUALITY

Body: A round-cornered black rectangle contained a colorless horizontal bar across the center. The word, EMPIRE, in white appeared within the upper section of the black area with BEVERAGES in white in the colorless bar. The lower section contained Wholesome / and / Refreshing in upwardly-slanted white script.

Heel: Embossed - NET CONTENT

Back Description

Neck/Shoulder: Same as front

Body: White ACL - EVERY / BOTTLE / Sterilized (script) / RETURN/TO YOUR DEALER / AND COLLECT DEPOSIT / ON THIS BOTTLE / Empire Products Corporation / El Paso, Texas

Heel: Embossed - 10 OZS.

Base: Embossed - 97-B-10 / J-in-a-keystone 9 / 3

Manufacturer: Knox Glass Bottle Co., Jackson, Mississippi 1932-1953

Dating: [ca. 1945-ca. 1948] These bottles likely date from the mid-1940s to the transition ca. 1950. White-labeled bottles were in use by at least 1952 and were used until the sale of the firm in 1956. Unfortunately, the Knox Glass Bottle Co. did not include date codes on its containers. Although the Keystone-J mark, used by the Jackson plant, was discontinued in favor of the more universal Keystone-K mark in 1952-1953, the black & white ACL bottles could not have been made later than 1949, when the first white ACL label was used.

Collection(s): Mike Morrison Collection, Las Cruces; author's collection.



Figure 5-94 – Black & white ACL 10-ounce bottle

Variations:

1. Black & white label, 10 ounce (above)
2. White label, 10 ounce

Aside from manufacturing data, the only notable difference in the white-only bottle is that the black background was replaced by a white outline and the stenciled central bar changed to a solid white bar with “BEVERAGES” stenciled in the center. The heel was bare except for an alignment dimple. These were used to keep the bottle in place while the ACL label was applied.

On earlier bottles, sometimes the label was applied over the side seam. The alignment dimples or bumps were designed to keep the labels centered on each mold half.

These bottles may have been ordered more than once, but I have only recorded a single set of base data. My example is embossed “NET / CONTENTS / 10 - OZS. / 15 I-in-an-oval-superimposed-on-an-elongated-diamond 52 / 2” on the base. The Owens-Illinois Glass Co. opened Plant No. 15 at Waco, Texas, in 1941, and the factory is still operating in 2010. The “52,” of course, is the date code for 1952. The white ACL label was in use by at least 1949, possibly a year or so earlier. These bottles were certainly used until the sale of the company in 1956 and are by far the most common Empire bottles that have survived (Figure 5-95).

3. White label, 6½ ounce

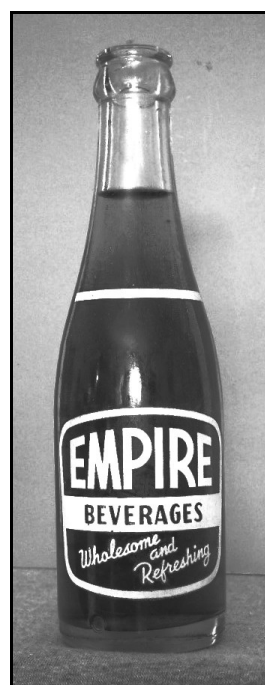


Figure 5-96 – White ACL 6½-ounce bottle

These smaller bottles are generic in style, lacking the rings that characterize the 10-ounce sizes. Instead of a label at the neck/shoulder area, these have a single white bar extending ca. 1/3 of the way around the bottle on both front and back. The front and back body labels are identical to those of the white-labeled, 10-ounce bottles, except for the addition of “MINIMUM CONTENTS 6 ½ OZ.” followed by three small dots in a triangular form, all in white below the back label (Figure 5-96).

The base of my example is embossed “G-94 / Duraglas (script) / 15 I-in-an-oval-superimposed-on-an-elongated-diamond 53 / 1.” The codes are as on the larger white bottle. However, the “3” is stamped over a “0” – suggesting that the original mold (at least the baseplate) was used in 1950 (a 1949 code on another white ACL bottle confirms an earlier date). While not completely definitive, this suggests that the white ACL style was in place by 1950. The “G-94” model or style number was used extensively by the Seven-Up Bottling Co. for its forest-green bottles and was one of the most commonly used styles made by Owens-Illinois.



Figure 5-95 – White ACL 10-ounce bottle

Larger ACL Bottles

The white ACL bottles were also available in larger sizes in both returnable and non-returnable forms. An ad in the September 1, 1950, *El Paso Times* shows a large, non-returnable Empire bottle. The ad states: “ALL EMPIRE Mixers & Flavors in throwaway large bottles 20c at all dealers[.] Save Empire Bottle Caps for Valuable Prizes” (Figure 5-97).

E 09a

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Colorless

Size (in cm.): unknown

Primary Labeling Style: White ACL

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 28 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Wide cylinder

Front Description

Neck/Shoulder: White ACL - ENJOY / EMPIRE QUALITY

Shoulder/Body: Embossed - NO RETURN NO DEPOSIT NOT TO BE REFILLED (encircling the bottle)

Body: A round-cornered, white-outlined rectangle contained a horizontal white bar across the center. The word, EMPIRE, in white appeared within the upper outline with BEVERAGES stenciled in the bar. The lower section stated: Wholesome / and/Refreshing in upwardly-slanted white script.

Heel: unknown

Back Description

Neck/Shoulder: Same as front

Body: White ACL - EVERY / BOTTLE / Sterilized (underlined script) / Empire Products Corporation / El Paso, Texas

Heel: unknown

Base: Embossed - 1-WAY BEVERAGES (downward arch) / G2784 / CONTENTS / 1PT.12FL.OZS. / Duraglas (script) / 7 I-in-an-oval-superimposed-over-an-elongated-diamond 9 / 1 (all horizontal)

Manufacturer: Owens-Illinois Glass Co.

Dating: [ca. 1948-1956] These bottles likely date from the late 1940s to the to the transition to

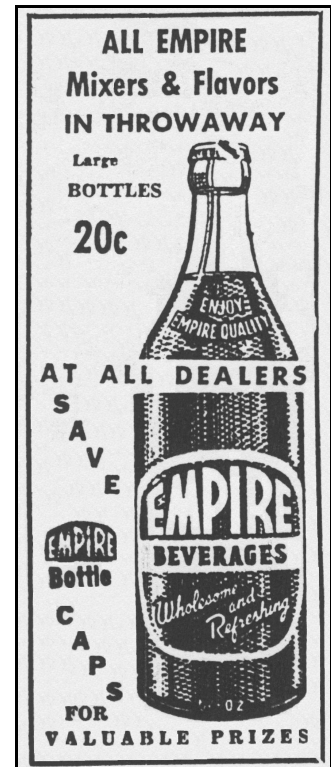


Figure 5-97 – Non-returnable 28-ounce bottle (*El Paso Times* 9/1/1950)

Empire Bottling Company in 1956. Note that even though Owens-Illinois adopted a two-digit date code as early as 1945, exceptions abound.⁴

Collection(s): eBay

Variations:

1. Non-returnable (see above)

2. Returnable

The shape of the returnable variation was almost identical to that of the smaller white ACL bottles – wider, of course. The front label, too, was identical to both the smaller bottles and the non-returnable variation (Figure 5-98). The reverse label, again, is identical to that on the smaller bottles. The bottle was 29.9 cm. in height (with the cap on) and 8.5 cm. in diameter. The base is embossed: “NET CONTENTS / 28 OZ. / 7 I-in-an-oval 54 / 1.” Note the new Owens-Illinois logo that was adopted in 1954, the year of this date code. These bottles were probably used from ca. 1948 to 1956.



Figure 5-98 –
Returnable 28-ounce
bottle

⁴ All discussions about Owens-Illinois marks and codes in this book refer to soda bottles *only*. The dot codes to refer to 1940s, for example, were *only* used on soda bottles. Some bottle types, notably medicinals, used a single-digit date code intermittently into the 1970s!

Table 5-5 – Empire Product Corp. House Brand Bottles

Style Changes	Dates
6-panels; machine made; 6½ oz.; Empire Beverages	1929
6-panels; machine made; 6½ oz. Beverages REGISTERED	1929
Specialty bottle – FRUIT ACID ARTIFICIAL COLOR ADDED	1931-1932
Specialty bottle – EMPIRE GIANT BEVERAGES; 7 oz.	ca. 1932-ca. 1936
Specialty bottle – EMPIRE GIANT BEVERAGES; 9 oz.	ca. 1932-1938
Red & white ACL – 12 oz.	1939-ca. 1941
Red & white ACL – 32 oz.	ca. 1940-ca. 1945
Red, white & blue ACL – 12 oz.	1942-ca. 1945
Ringed; white & black ACL; Wholesome and Refreshing – 10 oz.	ca. 1945-ca. 1950
Ringed; white ACL; Wholesome and Refreshing – 10 oz.	ca. 1948-1956
Plain; white ACL; Wholesome and Refreshing – 6½ oz.	ca. 1948-1956
Ringed; white ACL; Wholesome and Refreshing – 28 oz.	ca. 1948-1956
Plain; white ACL; Wholesome and Refreshing; non-returnable – 28 oz.	ca. 1948-1956

Crown Caps

Several caps have survived, although it is difficult to link them accurately to a bottle type. The three in my collection all arrived on bottle tops (Figure 5-99). Two of these are on empty bottles and were placed there by someone along the way. They could be original or could have been added later. The caps are genuine; however, there is no way to be certain that they are on the type of bottles they originally adorned. The final one is on a bottle that has never been opened and still contains the original strawberry soda. I have identified the bottles in brackets on the cap descriptions below.

On a polychrome example, the cap is orange with what may have been a white stripe across the center. Viewed from the top, the cap is lettered: EMPIRE (white on the upper orange area) /



Figure 5-99 – Empire bottle caps

ORANGE / NECTAR (orange on the white stripe) / CONTAINS CARBONATED WATER / SUGAR, CITRIC ACID, ORANGE / OIL FLAVOR AND / ARTIFICIAL COLORS (all in white on the lower orange section). EL PASO, TEXAS appears on the lower side of the cap with LESS THAN 1/100 OF 1% BENZOATE OF SODA on the upper side. [red, white & blue ACL, 12-ounce]

A 32-ounce bottle is topped by a cap and contains some original cola residue. The cap is white around the edges (with a red ring and the initials, CCS) with a red top and white letters that read: EMPIRE / COLA / EMPIRE PRODUCTS CORP. / EL PASO, TEXAS. [red & white ACL, 32-ounce]

Another cap has a red top, outlined in a circle with a thin white line. White letters announce “ARTIFICIAL (arch) / STRAWBERRY / SODA (both horizontal) / FLAVOR & COLOR (inverted arch).” Around the skirt, red letters state: “PRESERVED WITH SODIUM BENZOATE / 20-46” with a union stamp farther to the right. [white ACL, 28-ounce] It is interesting that this last bottle, made in 1954, is topped with a generic cap – where older caps are marked with the Empire name.

Ginger Ales

As noted in the section on the Empire Bottling Works (Chapter 5b), ginger ale was packaged in different containers from the other flavors offered by Empire. This trend continued during the Empire Products Corp. period. See Table 5-6 for a chronology of ginger ale bottles.

Colorless 10-Ounce Bottles

As noted in Chapter 5b, Empire continued to use larger, ten-ounce bottles with paper labels for ginger ale. At least some of these, used during the Empire Products Corp. period were colorless with embossed plates (Figure 5-100). The switch from green to colorless was made sometime between 1922 and ca. 1926, probably about the time of the reorganization that created Empire Products Corp. These probably still used the diamond-shaped paper labels, although I have not found any ads during this period

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Colorless

Size (in cm.): 23.5 (h); 5.5 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: Embossed

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 10 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical

Front Description

Body: Embossed plate on upper body: EMPIRE (downward arch) / BEVERAGES (horizontal) / EL PASO TEX. (upward arch)

Heel: Embossed: CONTENTS 10 OUNCES

Back Description

Body: Bare

Heel: Bare

Base: Embossed - S-in-a-star / EMPIRE / 1 (Figure 5-101)⁵

Manufacturer: Southern Glass Co (1917-1931)

Dating: [ca. 1925-early 1930s] Unless I find a much larger sample of these bottles, there is no way to be sure how long they were used. The Southern Glass Co. adopted the “Southern Star” logo at some point during 1926. However, by 1928, the firm began using date codes on its bottles (Lockhart et al. 2009:56). Thus, this bottle could not have been made later than early 1928.

Collection(s): Author’s collection.

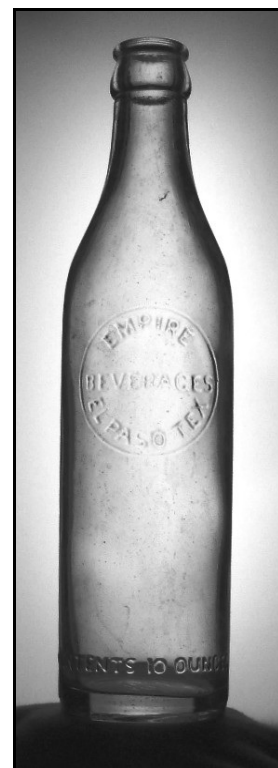


Figure 5-100 –
Colorless ginger ale
bottle, 1926



Figure 5-101 – The
“Southern Star” logo of the
Southern Glass Co.

Paper Labels in the 1920s and 1930s

I have been unable to determine just when Empire moved away from the diamond-shaped paper labels and adopted rectangular ones. However, the change was in place by the mid-1930s. The *El Paso Times* ran an ad on May 4, 1935, that illustrated what appeared to be a 12-ounce ginger ale bottle with a paper label (Figure 5-102). The bottle has “Empire / Pale Dry” on the neck label and the same words plus others that are illegible in the drawing on the body label. Although the label is rectangular, the older, diamond-shaped label is reproduced inside it. The neck of the bottle is wrapped in foil below the crown cap. These continued in use until ca. 1940 for quart bottles.

⁵ Some of these earlier bottles have an embossed star – raised above the surface of the base. The “S” is embossed atop the star. Later logos have an outlined star.



Figure 5-102 – Ad for ginger ale, mixers, and Budweiser (*El Paso Times* 5/4/1935)

Unfortunately, the dating sequence is broken at this point. As noted above, specialty or proprietary bottles replaced the paper-labeled Empire house-brand flavor bottles in 1929, and these were probably also used for ginger ale. Bottles with polychrome ACL labels replaced these embossed bottles in 1939, and these, too, may have been used for ginger ale. While an ACL quart bottle was especially designed for ginger ale by 1940, I have never seen one from that era in a smaller size. Alternatively, for ginger ale use, paper-labeled bottles may have continued until the mid-1940s or even ca. 1950.

Bi-Chromatic Quarts

By at least 1940, Empire adopted a bi-chrome ACL quart bottle. The front label closely resembled the old diamond-shaped paper labels (Figure 5-103). As noted above, I have never seen this style or any other smaller green bottles from the 1940-1950 decade. It is probable that Empire returned to a paper-label format by ca. 1945.

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Forest Green

Size (in cm.): 29.5 (h); 9.0 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: Yellow and Red ACL

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 32 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical

Front Description

Neck/Shoulder: Yellow ACL - EMPIRE / PALE DRY with thin lines above and below the word, EMPIRE

Body: A yellow triple-rectangle formed a base superimposed with a yellow diamond and a thin red diamond outline. The upper point of the diamond contained a complex coat of arms. Both left and right points contained double circles surrounding an EPC monogram. A horizontal red bar stretched across the center of the diamond with GINGER ALE in yellow above CONTENTS / 32 FLD. OZS. in red. Yellow ACL letters identified EMPIRE

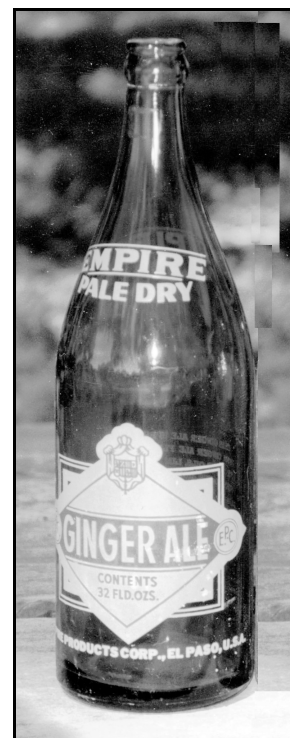


Figure 5-103 – Bi-chrome 32-ounce ginger ale bottle, 1940 (Jim Cullen collection)

PRODUCTS CORP., EL PASO, U.S.A. below the diamond.

Back Description

Neck/Shoulder: Same as front

Body: Yellow ACL - THIS GINGER ALE IS PREPARED / FROM GINGER ALE FLAVOR BLENDED / WITH CITRUS OILS, LIME JUICE, SUGAR, CARAMEL COLOR AND IS GUARANTEED / TO CONTAIN NO HARMFUL SUBSTANCE / RETURN BOTTLE TO YOUR DEALER / AND COLLECT 5¢ DEPOSIT ON BOTTLE.

Base: Embossed - 3 I-in-an-oval-superimposed-on-a-diamond 0 / 56 G187

Manufacturer: Owens Illinois Glass Co. (1929-1954)

Dating: [ca. 1940-ca. 1945] These bottles were probably only used during the ca. 1940-1945 period, concurrent with the bi-chrome quart bottles used for the Empire house brand flavors.

Collection(s): Jim Cullen collection; Lawrence Angus collection.

Forest Green ACL Bottles

By at least 1950, possibly as earlier, Empire adopted ginger ale bottles that matched the style used for other Empire house brands. These came in both 10- and 6½-ounce sizes and were identical to the white ACL house brand bottles described above (Figure 5-104) – except for the forest-green color of the bottles (the same color used by Seven-Up). Unfortunately, the only examples I have ever seen were in the Willie Terrazas collection that I photographed when I was very new to bottle research. I did not record the date or plant codes on the bottle bases.

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Forest Green

Size (in cm.): 24.5 (h); 6.2 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: White ACL

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 10 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical with a single embossed ring around the neck; four rings around the shoulder; and one ring around the heel

Front Description

Neck/Shoulder: White ACL in a slight inverted arch - ENJOY / EMPIRE QUALITY

Body: A round-cornered, white-outlined rectangle contained a horizontal white bar across the



Figure 5-104– 10-ounce forest-green ginger ale bottle (Willie Terrazas collection)

center. The word, EMPIRE, in white appeared within the upper outline with BEVERAGES stenciled in the bar. The lower section stated: Wholesome / and / Refreshing in upwardly-slanted white script.

Back Description

Neck/Shoulder: Same as front

Body: White ACL - EVERY BOTTLE / Sterilized (script) / RETURN / TO YOUR DEALER / AND COLLECT DEPOSIT / ON THIS BOTTLE / EMPIRE PRODUCTS CORP. / EL PASO, TEXAS

Base: Embossed - MINIMUM CONTENTS 10 FL. OZ. / I-in-an-oval-superimposed-on-a-diamond

Manufacturer: Owens-Illinois Glass Co. (1929-1954)

Dating: [ca. 1950-1956] Because these bottles are virtually identical to the last colorless house brand bottles used by Empire, they were likely used during the same period, ca. 1950-1956.

Collection(s): Willies F. Tarrazas collection.

Variations:

2. 6½ ounce (see above for 10-oz. variant)

Unfortunately, I did not photograph the smaller bottle, nor did I accurately record all of its attributes – notably, whether the smaller bottle also had the concentric rings. The bottle was 20.2 cm. in height, and 5.9 cm. in diameter. The base was embossed “MINIMUM CONTENTS 6½ FL. OZ.” along with the Owens-Illinois mark.

Table 5-6 – Empire Product Corp. Ginger Ale Bottles

Style Changes	Dates
Colorless; plate mold; machine made; 10 oz. Empire Beverages	ca. 1924-ca. 1934*
Generic bottles with rectangular paper labels	ca. 1934-ca. 1939
Green, with yellow & red ACL – 32-ounces	ca. 1939-ca. 1945
House-brand bottles	ca. 1945-ca. 1950
Green, with white ACL – 10 ounces	ca. 1950-1956
Green, with white ACL – 6½ ounces	ca. 1950-1956

* Empire’s house brand flavor bottles may have been used during part of this time, especially after 1930. See Table 5-5 for dating house-brand bottles.

Mixers

There is no indication that the Empire Bottling Works ever carried mixers. By the time the Empire Products Corp. was formed, Prohibition was in full swing, and there was no need for them – at least on this side of the border. The first ad I have found for mixers was run in the *El Paso Times* on May 4, 1935 (see Figure 5-102). The ad illustrated Lime Rickey, Ginger Al, and the recently reinstated Budweiser Beer bottles, all with paper labels. Although the drawings are small, the mixer shown has a very different label from the ones I have seen on eBay (Figures 5-105 & 5-

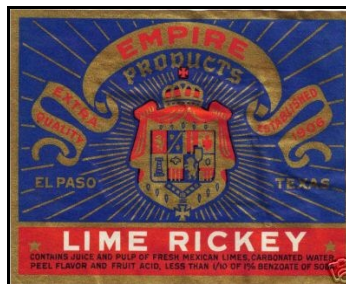


Figure 5-105 – Lime Rickey label (eBay)



Figure 5-106 – Aces-Up label (eBay)

106). Very little in the drawing is recognizable except the name “EMPIRE / Lime Rickey” on the body label and “Empire / Beverages” on the neck label.

The remains of a paper label on the neck of a 32 oz. bottle indicates that it contained Lime Ricky. Paper neck labels and designations on caps were the early method used by Empire for identifying flavors. This suggests that the generic bottles with paper body labels had been replaced by the ACL bottles, probably when they were first used in 1939.

Siphon Bottles

Like the preceding company, the Empire Products Corp. also offered siphon (seltzer) bottles. These were made in at least two colors and by various manufacturers (Figure 5-107). Since Empire Products Corp. began operations during Prohibition, and seltzer was mainly used as a mixer, the sale of siphon bottles may not have begun until alcohol was again legal on the Texas side of the border in 1934.

Method of Manufacture: Turn Mold

Color: Forest Green

Size (in cm.): 24.1 (h); 10.5 (d) (measured without spout - 29.7 with spout)

Primary Labeling Style: Acid Etched

Finish: Rimmed - siphon spout was three-piece; two pieces formed a continuous thread base for

the third – a squirt ejector.

Capacity: 35 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical with nickel dispenser cap.

Front Description

Cap: Seltzer siphon with spigot stamped EMPIRE PRODUCTS CORP around heel

Body: Etched - interlocking EPC surrounded by a wide etched ring stenciled with EMPIRE PRODUCTS CORP. (arch) / EL PASO TEXAS. (inverted arch). Stenciled dots separated top and bottom stencils. A thinner etched ring surrounded the first one. REGISTERED was etched above, and an arched etched band was below, stenciled with CONTENTS 35 FL OZ.

Back Description

Body: Bare

Base: Etched - MADE / IN / CZECHOSLOVAKIA / debossed balloon with 3 in the center

Manufacturer: Unknown

Dating: [1925-1956] Seltzer bottles were probably distributed from the end of Prohibition until Nell Gardner began downsizing the Empire Products Corp. ca. 1950.

Collection(s): David Cole collection; Jim Cullen collection; author's collection.



Figure 5-107 – Empire siphon bottles

Variations:

1. Forest Green (above)

A slight variation, also forest green in color had a slightly different base, etched “MADE / IN / CZECHO- / SLOVAKIA / {debossed balloon with 3 in the center}.”

2. Electric Blue

An electric blue variation had the same etched label on the front and same measurement, except that it was 29.9 cm. in height because of the slightly taller and more down-turned spout. The spout was marked the same but had a period after CORP. The base was etched “Made / In / Germany” in a circle.

Franchised Brands

Despite the popularity of its own house brands in El Paso, Empire offered a variety of nationally franchised brands. The firm inherited Orange Crush from its predecessor, but the others were all brought on after 1925. Aside from Budweiser (Figure 5-108), the only beer advertised by Empire (not counting near-beers offered by the Empire Bottling Co.), the Empire Products Corp. sold Orange Crush, Dr Pepper, NuGrape, Mission Beverages, and 76. Budweiser was probably dropped from the product line during Nell Gardner's downsizing ca. 1950.

Orange Crush

Aside from the early advertisement, almost certainly from the Empire Bottling Works period (see Chapter 5b, pages 136-167), I have found no ads for Orange Crush by any of the Empire incarnations. The Tri-State Beverage Co. advertised Orange Crush in paper-labeled bottles from 1919 to 1923, and the Empire Bottling Works probably picked up the brand immediately after Tri-State ceased operations in late 1923 or early 1924. Empire Products Corp. almost certainly inherited the brand (Figure 5-109). The brand was likely dropped in the early 1930s due to pressure from the Great Depression. See Table 5-7 for a list of Orange Crush bottlers in El Paso.

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Colorless

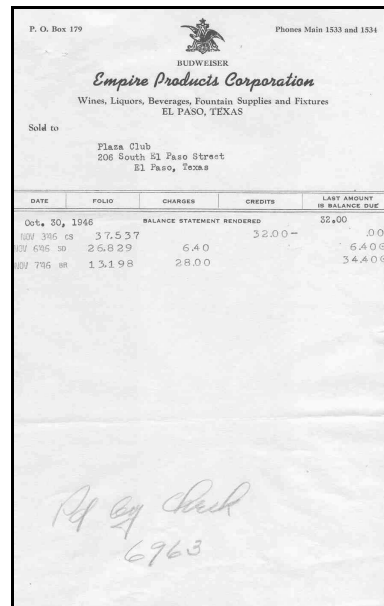
Size (in cm.): 19.5 (h); 5.6 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: Embossed

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 6 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical with an embossed basketweave effect created by a series of three vertical ribs evenly spaced to make four columns interspersed with horizontal ribs evenly spaced from heel to the neck/shoulder joint. The neck, itself, contained embossed



P. O. Box 179
Phone Main 1533 and 1534

BUDWEISER
Empire Products Corporation
Wines, Liquors, Beverages, Fountain Supplies and Fixtures
EL PASO, TEXAS

Sold to
Flaco Club
206 South El Paso Street
El Paso, Texas

DATE	FOLIO	CHARGES	CREDITS	LAST AMOUNT OR BALANCE DUE
Oct. 30, 1946				\$2.00
10/30/46	305	CR 37.537		.000
10/30/46	305	DR 26.829	6.40	6.400
10/30/46	305	DR 13.198	28.00	34.400

*Ref by check
6963*

Figure 5-108 – Empire receipt for Budweiser sales – 1946



Figure 5-109 – Orange Crush

stippling.

Front Description

Body: Inside a diamond-shaped labeling area was embossed PAT'D / JULY 20, 1920 / ORANGE / CRUSH / BOTTLE / 6 FL. OZS

Heel: Embossed - 1019 28

Back Description

Body: Same as front

Base: Embossed - 8 / EMPIRE / I-in-an-elongated-diamond

Manufacturer: Illinois Glass Co. (1915-1929)

Dating: [ca. 1924-1928, poss. early 1930s] The other firm controlled by the Gardners, the Southwestern Coca-Cola Bottling Co., carried Orange Crush from ca. 1924 to 1928 in these same colorless specialty bottles. Empire probably also offered Orange Crush for a similar period of time. The example I have has the “28” heelmark, noting that the bottle was made in 1928.

Collection(s): Author’s collection.

Table 5-7 – Orange Crush Bottling Styles and Probable El Paso Use Dates

Bottle Style	Dates in Use*	Bottling Co.
Generic with paper label	1919-ca. 1923	Tri-State Bottling Co.
Colorless specialty (pat. 1920); EMPIRE on base	ca. 1924	Empire Bottling Works
Colorless specialty (pat. 1920); EMPIRE on base	ca. 1924-1930	Empire Products Corp.
Amber specialty (Orange & White ACL); El Paso on label†	1945-ca. 1955	Barq’s Bottling Co.
Colorless; White & Green ACL; no city or company designation	1956-ca. 1969	Empire Bottling Co.

* According to Rosman (2002:13), there is a great deal of overlap in Orange Crush bottle usage. He divides use into four periods: 1) Ward’s Orange Crush era, paper labels (1910-1920); 2) “krinkly” clear bottles (1920-mid-1960s); 3) “krinkly” amber bottles (mid-1940s-mid-1960s); and 4) “diamond pattern” bottles (mid-1950s-mid-1960s).



Figure 5-110 – Empire Dr. Pepper ad (El Paso City Directory 1931)

Dr. Pepper

Beginning in the 1931 city directory, Empire featured Dr. Pepper. The ad showed the Dr. Pepper logo in the upper left corner, the slogan “Drink a Bite to Eat at 10 - 2 - 4 O’Clock” in the right-center, and a drawing of the bottle in the upper left corner. The bottle pictured is debossed (possibly embossed) with a clock and the numerals 10, 2, and 4 (Figure 5-110 & 5-111). Although bottles of other soda brands replaced Dr. Pepper in the directory ad, the logo and slogan remained until 1945 (EPCD 1931-45). The

firm may have continued to bottle Dr. Pepper as late as 1949. In 1952, the Trone Bottling Co. began offering Dr. Pepper. The exact sequence and transference is currently unknown, but this is consistent with Nell Gardner’s obvious downsizing of the company after her husband’s retirement in 1944.

Although Dr. Pepper franchisers used embossed containers from about 1923-24 to 1930 or later (personal communication from Mildred G. Walker, Curator of Collections, Dr Pepper Museum, Waco, Texas), the company officially changed to debossed bottles about 1930 and continued to use debossed designs until long after the industry in general had converted to ACL containers. Although Dr. Pepper was not advertised until 1931, the first bottles used by Empire were embossed, and these may have been ordered during 1930. See Chapter 11 for a chronology of Dr. Pepper bottles.

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Colorless

Size (in cm.): 20.5 (h); 5.7 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: Embossed

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 6.5 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical

Front Description

Body: Embossed - Dr. Pepper in script with an underlining tail sweeping back from the final “r”

Figure 5-111 – Empire receipt with Dr. Pepper ad – 1945

that contained the words, GOOD FOR LIFE

Heel: Embossed - EMPIRE - EL PASO, TEX.

Back Description

Body: An embossed, stippled clock face with three hands pointing to the numerals 10, 2, and 4 in approximately the same position in which they are located on a normal clock

Heel: Embossed - 6½ OZS.

Base: Embossed - 3 RIVERS [star] / Dr. Pepper (with underlining tail) / F

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

Dating: [ca. 1930] Unfortunately, the Three Rivers Glass Co. did not emboss date codes on its bottles. However, as noted above, embossed bottles were only made until ca. 1930. Empire may have ordered the bottles in 1930, or may have begun selling the brand in 1930, too late for inclusion in the city directory. These bottles are rare and were almost certainly used until they wore out.

Collection(s): Robert Sproull collection; author's collection.

Dr. Pepper changed to a debossed bottle because of problems with the harsh cleansers roughing up the embossing and the rubbing of bottles wearing the embossing away (Figure 5-112). The roughening of the embossed letters made the bottle very unattractive – which repelled some potential buyers. Debossing the same information solved the problem.⁶

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Colorless

Size (in cm.): 20.6 (h); 5.6 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: Debossed

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 6.5 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical

Front Description

Body: Debossed - Dr. Pepper in script with an underlining tail sweeping back from the final “r” that contained the words, GOOD FOR LIFE

Heel: Bare

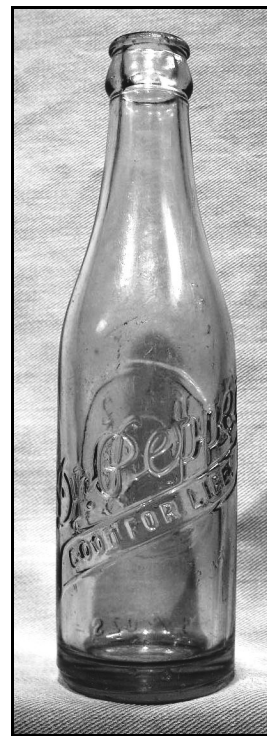


Figure 5-112 –
Debossed Dr. Pepper
bottle (Lynn Loomis
collection)

⁶ In the debossing process, the letters are sunken into the glass – rather than protruding as in embossing.

Back Description

Body: A debossed, stippled clock face with three hands pointing to the numerals 10, 2, and 4 in approximately the same position in which they are located on a normal clock

Heel: Bare

Base: Embossed - EL PASO / 9 I-in-an-oval-superimposed-on-a-diamond 3 / TEXAS

Manufacturer: Owens Illinois Glass Co. (1929-1954)

Dating: [1931-1949] These containers followed the embossed bottles described above and were probably used by Empire in El Paso between 1931 and 1949. The final date derives not only because Empire dropped the distribution of Dr. Pepper in 1949, but also because the Dr Pepper Company changed designs in that year. In 1949, a prototype bottle with the same design was marketed in aqua color. By the next year, however, a new bottle design appeared, so aqua containers with script lettering are unusual (personal communication from Mildred Walker). The individual Owens Illinois bottle in this example was manufactured in 1943.

Collection(s): Willile F. Tarrazas collection; El Paso Coliseum Collection; author's collection.

Variations:

The only variations are identical except for changes in manufacturer data. The front heel was embossed "6½ OZS. / C1299," while the embossing on the base was "EP PASO / 1 {interlocked GC} 3 / TEXAS. The monogram consisting of an interlocked "G" above a "C" was used by the Glass Container Corporation, in business from 1934 to 1967. Although Toulouse (1971:220) dates Glass Container Corp. use of the design "Since 1945," that is almost certainly incorrect. Giarde (1980:45-46) suggests 1934-1967, a date range more in keeping with current findings by the Bottle Research Group. Three colorless Dr. Pepper bottles were excavated at the El Paso Coliseum, one manufactured by Glass Container Corp., two by Owens Illinois (see Lockhart & Olszewski 1995). Bottles from the site predate 1942, the year the Coliseum was built. The pre-1942 date supports Giarde's date range.

Empire apparently ordered from the Liberty Glass Co. in 1938. A Dr. Pepper bottle base is embossed "EL PASO (arch) / L-G 38 / TEX. (both inverted arches)." Another Owens-Illinois base had a 1947 date code. Unfortunately, all the debossed bottles I have found only have the city and state designations – no reference to Empire.



Figure 5-113 – Empire NuGrape ad (El Paso City Directory 1933)

NuGrape

The NuGrape Company of America, Atlanta, Georgia, was organized in 1921 under the management of O.R. Randall. By the 1950s, the name had been changed to National NuGrape Co., but the home office remained in Atlanta. By the 1990s, NuGrape was distributed by the Monarch Company of the same city (Riley 1958:264, 286-288; Beverage World 1995-1996 DATABANK, 254).

Empire acquired the NuGrape franchise in 1933, during the early days of the Depression. A single ad for NuGrape appeared in 1933 (EPCD 1933 – Figure 5-113). The bottle replaced the Dr. Pepper bottle's position in the upper right corner of the ad, but no accompanying text touted the new product. I have found no other ad or listing for NuGrape by Empire. The drink was probably only offered for a short time.

At this point, I have not been able to find a single example of the embossed NuGrape bottle with either El Paso or Empire embossed on the base (Figure 5-114). Specialty bottles, like the one in the ad, however, are fairly common. I call them the double-snowball style because the bottle has globular lower and upper body halves joined by a narrow waist.

Mission Beverages

Like most long-term beverage companies, Mission went through a variety of names and locations. The first products were offered by California Crushed Fruit from Los Angeles. After the initial success of Mission Orange in the beverage market, the Mission Dry Corp. was formed and became Mission of California, Inc., of New Haven, Connecticut by the 1950s (Riley 1958:286-287). At this point, I have only found evidence that the first ACL bottle offered by Mission was ever used by Empire (Figure 5-115).



Figure 5-114 – Nugrape bottle (eBay)

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Colorless

Size (in cm.): 22.2 (h); 5.8 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: White and Black ACL

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 7 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical with embossed rounded vertical ribs extending from upper body to the shoulder then sloping to the right to curl around to a final embossed ring around the center of the neck. The ribs continued at the heel area below the labeling area in the center of the body.

Front Description

Body: A white ACL, round-cornered square enclosed a somewhat round black background with white lettering with a logo of a mission followed by the words MISSION / BEVERAGES / Naturally Good (script). Stenciled across the top of the white square was the message BOTTLED BY QUALITY BOTTLERS EVERYWHERE and across the bottom with UNDER LICENSE OF MISSION DRY CORPORATION

Heel: Embossed - NET CONTENTS 7 OZS.

Back Description

Body: White ACL - Naturally (script) / Good (script) / EMPIRE PRODUCTS CORP. / EL PASO, TEXAS

Heel: Embossed - NET CONTENTS 7 OZS.

Base: Embossed - G1140 / 3 I-in-an-oval-superimposed-on-a-diamond 6. / 1.

Manufacturer: Owens Illinois Glass Co. (1929-1954)

Dating: [1940s] The only examples I have found that were labeled with “EMPIRE PRODUCTS CORP.” were date coded 1944 and 1946, respectively. This suggests that the product was probably only carried by Empire in the 1940s. By the end of the 1940s, Nell Gardner was downsizing the company until only Empire products were still carried. This style of bottle remained in use at by other franchises until at least the mid- to late 1950s.

Collection(s): Bill Ethridge collection; El Paso Coliseum collection; Lawrence Angus collection; Mike Morrison Collection, Las Cruces; Viola Salas Collection, Alamogordo; author's collection.

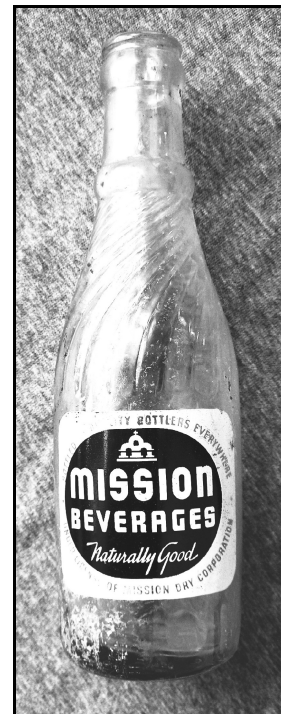


Figure 5-115 –
Mission Beverages
bottle (El Paso
Coliseum collection)

The bottle described above is from the El Paso Coliseum collection (Lockhart & Olszewski 1995). A second bottle was reported in an unpublished survey in El Paso. Survey

notes say “empire products el pasotx.” and show a drawing of a base embossed “Mission Dry Corp. / 9 {I-in-an-oval-superimposed-on-an-elongated-diamond} 4 / duraglass [*sic*].” Although not included on the drawing, the “4” was probably followed by a dot. In any event, the “Duraglas” guarantees that the date could not have been 1934.

76

At some point Empire Product Corporation carried a drink named only by the numerals 76 in an italicized configuration. Thus far, I have discovered two variations used in El Paso, but I have been unable to locate any information on the American 76 Co.

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Forest Green

Size (in cm.): 20.3 (h); 5.7 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: Red and White ACL

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 7 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical

Front Description

Neck: A white ACL horizontal oval stenciled to allow the green glass color to show through in the form of a 76

Body: A white ACL rectangle with red horizontal bars across top and bottom. The top red bar contained the word, Drink, in white script, followed by a red 76, flanked by a single star on either side in the white area. Below the 76, T.M. REG. U.S. PAT. OFF. was stenciled into the white enamel. The final red bar proclaimed REFRESHING (star) DELICIOUS in italicized capitals. Below the logo in fine print was the message BOTTLED UNDER AUTHORITY AMERICAN 76 CO. CHICAGO in red.

Back Description

Neck: Same as front

Body: A red ACL line drawing on white background of three marching cartoon minutemen with fife and drums with Get in the Spirit! above the drawing and DRINK 76 below. Red ACL lettering below proclaimed, CONTAINS CARBONATED WATER, SUGAR / AND CITRIC ACID. FLAVOR DERIVED / FROM LEMON AND LIME OILS. / CONTENTS 7 FL. OZ. / BOTTLED BY / EMPIRE PRODUCTS / EL PASO, TEXAS

Base: Embossed - G - 47 / Duraglas (script) / 3 I-in-an-oval-superimposed-on-a-diamond 5. / 6

Manufacturer: Owens Illinois Glass Co. (1929-1954)

Dating: [ca. mid-1940s] Very little historical information exists, but reports in Bates et al (1996a:S-7) suggest a usage of this bottle style during the mid- to late 1940s. The El Paso examples are dated 1945 and 1946. Both bottles I have examined have centering lugs at the heel (to center the ACL), but both are still out of alignment relative to the mold lines. As with the Mission Beverages, 76 was probably phased out during the late 1940s, when Nell Gardner downsized Empire Products Corp.

Collection(s): Bill Ethridge collection; El Paso Coliseum Collection; author's collection.

Variations:

1. 76 on neck stenciled (see above – Figure 5-116)

2. 76 on neck circled

The variation is slight. On the neck, the white disk is replaced by a white ACL circle

surrounding a white



Figure 5-118 – 76 bottle, second variation – reverse side



Figure 5-116 – 76 bottle, first variation (El Paso Coliseum collection)

Figure 5-117 – 76 bottle, second variation

76. The front body label, too, is very similar, but the top red bar contains the words “ICE COLD” in snow-capped letters below the word “Drink”; the “T.M. REG. PAT. OFF.” is in red ACL; and the “BOTTLED UNDER AUTHORITY AMERICAN 76 CO. CHICAGO” is in white ACL (5-117 & 5-118). The base is embossed “G 67 / Duraglas (script) / 3 I-in-an-oval-superimposed-on-a-diamond 46 / 2.” The bottles were only made two years apart.

Chocolate Soldier

Chocolate Soldier⁷ (Figure 5-119) was offered by Empire before the plant sold in 1956. I have not discovered any bottles with the Empire name on them or the El Paso designation. Unless one or more bottles surfaces, I will assume that Chocolate Soldier bottles were unmarked with local names. During the 1950s, many national franchises stopped identifying local bottlers on the bottles.

Squirt

Apparently, Nell Gardner added Squirt to the Empire product list ca. 1953, possibly as a replacement for ginger ale (Figure 5-120). The only Squirt bottle I have found from El Paso was offered at an eBay auction. It was marked “SQUIRT BOTTLING CO. / EL PASO, TEXAS.” By the 1950s, it was increasingly more common for local franchises to have multiple listings

(e.g.,

Empire
Products

Corp. and

Squirt Bottling Co.). According to information in Bates et al. (1992a:S-26-S-27), these “splash” bottles were replaced by spiral containers between

1954 and 1958. Thus, this bottle style was probably used by the Empire Products Corp. prior to the sale to Price in 1956. The photo of the reverse (Figure 5-121) is from Artesia, New Mexico, but it is the same except for the plant name and city/state.

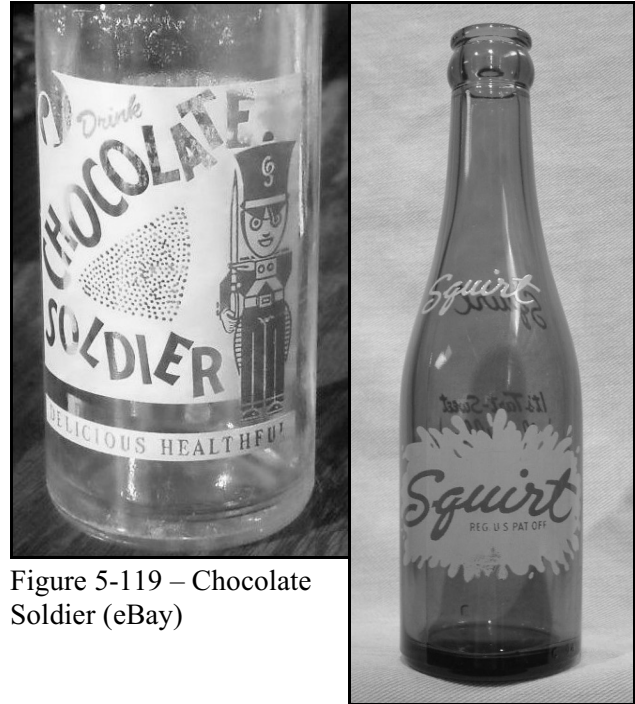


Figure 5-119 – Chocolate Soldier (eBay)

Figure 5-120 – Squirt (Lynn Loomis collection)

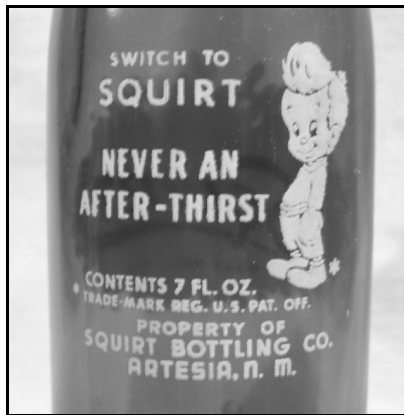


Figure 5-121 – Squirt – reverse side (Lynn Loomis collection)

⁷ These bottles are virtually un-researched. The photographed example had a 1962 date code, and it may have been the same style used by Empire Products Corp.

