

Bottles on the Border:

The History and Bottles of the Soft Drink Industry

in El Paso, Texas, 1881-2000



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Chapter 9b

Chapter 9b

Nicholson Bottling Works (1925-1979)

With seven other bottlers operating in El Paso at that time, including the powerful Empire Products Corp. and the Magnolia Coca-Cola Bottling Co., Gus Nicholson's decision to independently join the competition was courageous to say the least. As a locally owned and operated company, Nicholson Bottling Works remained in business for an impressive fifty-four years.

Nicholson Bottling Works (1925-1979)

History

After his partnership with John Beys failed, Gus Nicholson was still determined to stay in the bottling business, so, in 1925, the same year he became a U.S. citizen, he founded the Nicholson Bottling Works. He built his plant at an ideal location for his convenience – right in back of his house. For the duration of the company, the address was listed in El Paso city directories as “rear of 1024 Wyoming” (Figure 9-10) Although the building is older and wore gangland graffiti in 1996, it is clearly recognizable as the same building shown in the 1927 photograph (Figures 9-11, 1-12, and 9-13).

Although most of his other children eventually chose different occupations, Nicholson's son, Alkividias (always known as Alkie) remained in the bottling business (Figure 9-14). Alkie described the functioning of the bottling business as a great deal of hard work. His typical day started early. He would load his truck with 300 cases, run the route, and be back by noon. In early days, Alkie would service the Lower Valley one day, Second Ward the next day, Northeast El Paso the following day, and continue in that manner until the entire city had been served and it was time to start over.

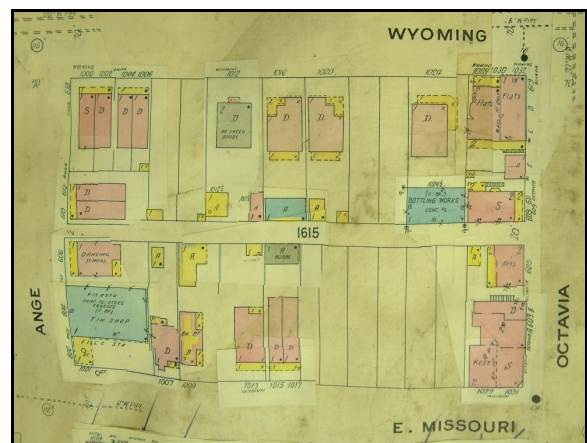


Figure 9-10 – Location of Nicholson Bottling Works (Sanborn Map, 1947)



Figure 9-11 – Nicholson Bottling Works, 1927 - From left to right: a friend of the family, C. P. “Gus” Nicholson, his wife Anna, daughter Jenny, the family’s maid, sons Solon, Alkie, and Kimon, at that time the manager (courtesy of Andy Nicholson)



Figure 9-12 – Nicholson Bottling Works building, 1996 – taken from almost the same angle in the alley.



Figure 9-13 – Nicholson building in 1996 – taken from other end of the alley.

While on the route, he checked the Nicholson displays in stores, replaced the product that had been sold, and loaded the empty bottles onto the truck. In addition, he would service the many households that bought Nicholson sodas by the case. Frequently, at that time, Nicholson, as well as other bottlers in town, would mix the different flavors in a single case to provide variety for stores as well as individual home customers. The idea of six-pack carriers did not appear until the late 1920s. Alkie got up at 4:00 AM every morning to prepare machines and sometimes worked until 10:00 o'clock at night.¹

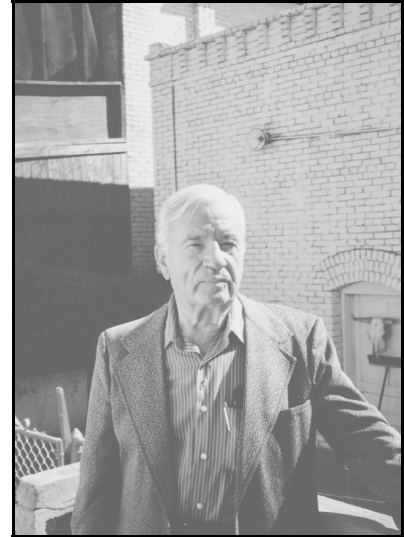


Figure 9-14 – Alkivides (Alkie) Nicholson on his back stoop, with the bottling works in the background, 1996.

Nicholson started his bottling works in the middle of Prohibition. It was the era of the speakeasy, but, of greater importance to bottlers, it was also the era of near-beer. Non-alcoholic grain beverages permeated the market, and Nicholson could see the advantage of being a distributor. Accordingly, the company sold Goldcrest, Golden Glow, and NIB (which Nicholson apparently brought with him from his split with Beys at Union Bottling Works) until the end of Prohibition in 1933. In addition, the firm bottled Howdy Orange and Muscadine Punch during the same period. About the end of Prohibition, Nicholson ceased bottling franchised brands to concentrate on his own Nicholson flavors.

In 1931, Nicholson employed five workers in the plant during peak season, decreasing to two employees in the winter (even to one – probably Gus, himself – in December). At that time, the company used three one-ton capacity trucks and sold 9,042 cases of six-and-a-half-ounce drinks and 1,690 cases of eight-ounce beverages (a total of 10,732 cases) per year. Nicholson flavors sold for 65¢ per case, wholesale. Although family members worked longer hours, employees generally labored eight hours a day, six days a week, a very light work-load for the early 1930s (U.S. Census of Manufacturers, 1931).

¹ Unless otherwise cited, the information for this section came from a series of interviews with Alkividias (Alkie) Nicholson in November/December 1995. It is notable that documentary evidence, when available, confirms Nicholson's memory for both events and dates.

In the early days at Nicholson, Alkie received \$1 per day, even though he was married and had two children. He was offered \$35 per week for delivering the Las Cruces route for the Sure-Best Bread bakery which he described as “a big outfit with sixteen trucks.” Alkie enjoyed the work for about a year but quit because he could not stand watching his father run the Nicholson routes in the winter. He took over as manager of Nicholson Bottling Works in 1945.

In October 1948, C.P. Nicholson died at the age of seventy-eight. His wife Anna, had preceded him by only three months, passing away in July. The couple had borne six children: George, Kimon, Alkividias (Alkie), Solon, Jenny, and Bill. George, the eldest, remained in Greece after the family’s return and was killed fighting Germans in World War II. Kimon was a sharp businessman; he owned the Olympic Ice Cream Parlor, Arizona #1 & #2 (bars), the Red Star Inn on Oregon, and, in partnership with his brother, Solon, an apartment building on West Missouri. Kimon also managed the bottling plant until his untimely death of Malta Fever following a trip to Mexico in 1945.

Solon had managed Arizona #2 and enjoyed working at the bar. After Kimon’s death, Solon traded his interest in the apartment building to Kimon’s widow for the title to the bar. Both considered the deal a success; Solon had his bar, and the widow later sold the apartment (originally purchased for \$11,000) for \$60,000. Solon took his turn at managing the plant in 1958 and 1959 but was replaced again by Alkie in 1960 (EPCD 1958-1960). Sister Jenny married Andrew Meletis and moved to Albuquerque, but she later returned to El Paso.

Alkie was born in 1910 and spent most of his life working in the bottling business with his father. He met his first wife, Sarah Luevano, at a tea dance, and the couple wed in 1936. Two children were born to the union, Melissa (1937) and Andrew (1942). The marriage sadly ended in divorce in 1942 (Anonymous 2003). Alkie remarried in 1945 to Emma Ortiz, and they were still together in the house in front of the old bottling plant, when I interviewed Alkie in 1996. Alkie operated the Red Star Inn for three months but decided to return to the soda business after a fight with two customers over nonpayment of their bill. Although Alkie won the fight, he decided that the business was not worth the aggravation.

Along with his involvement in the bottling works, Alkie managed prize fighters for over twenty years – including top-ranked Manny Ortega who won professional fights for ten years. Nicholson and Ortega traveled all over the U.S. including fights in Puerto Rico and Honolulu,

Hawaii. In 1947, Ortega fought the first world-championship boxing match shown on closed-circuit television at the El Paso Coliseum (Harrison [2002]).

Nicholson's wholesale price for a case of bottled carbonated beverages was 60 cents (65¢ by 1931). Since the soda retailed at 5 cents per bottle, the stores made a gross profit of 60 cents – a 100% markup. The company bottled only with cold water because it gave the resulting beverage a better taste and because it mixed better with the carbon dioxide gas. Tap water at ordinary temperature does not absorb the gas well. They used city water that was purified by passing it through two filters. According to Alkie, it made “the ideal soda pop.”

The Nicholsons obtained most of their bottles from the Liberty Glass Co. of Sapulpa, Oklahoma, although they also purchased some from a Mexican glass company (almost certainly Vidriera Monterrey). The bottles manufactured in the U.S. endured much better (lasting about three times as long) and were of higher quality than the less expensive Mexican bottles. See the section on bottles for more information.

Flavoring extracts were ordered from companies in California and Wisconsin at \$25 per gallon. The Crown caps that were used to seal the bottles were purchased from the western branch of the Crown Cork & Seal Co., located at 1601 Magoffin Avenue in El Paso. The Crown Cork & Seal Co. was first listed in the Telephone books in 1920 at 413 E. Boulevard (Yandell). City Directories, however, did not include the company (along with Western Stopper Co. – both at 1601 Magoffin Ave.) until 1938. In 1943, the name was changed to Western Crown Cork & Seal Co., and the firm became the Crown Cork & Seal Co., Western Division, in 1956. The company was last listed in the 1970 El Paso Telephone Directory. Crown caps and their accompanying cork seals were imported from the parent company rather than manufactured in El Paso.

The caps were purchased in 1,000 gross lots and were originally applied with a foot pedal machine that simultaneously filled and capped each bottle. The foot operation was later replaced by the complete automation of the bottling process. Nicholson used only pure cane sugar, three 100 pound sacks per batch. The operators originally stirred the vats with hand paddles but later upgraded to mechanized mixing. The new mixers had a propeller in the bottom of the vat connected by a pole to the motor fixed above the surface level of the beverage. Mechanization improved the quality of the mix as well as conserving manpower. The returnable bottles were

cleaned in an automatic bottle washer that ran at 300 degrees centigrade. The bottles came out “like a diamond” (Nicholson interview).

Nicholson Bottling Works delivered to El Paso’s Upper Valley, reaching as far north as Mesilla and Las Cruces, New Mexico, and to the Lower Valley, as far south as San Elizario, Clint, and Fabens. During its heyday, the firm operated four trucks, one for the Upper Valley, one for the Lower Valley, one for the City of El Paso, and one as a spare. The Nicholsons were proud of the service they gave their customers.

In 1942, the United States introduced the *Bracero* program, allowing and encouraging Mexican laborers to legally cross over to the American side of the river as agricultural workers. Nicholson took advantage of the influx of new drinkers, selling large quantities of soft drinks to employers of braceros in the Lower Valley. Nicholson set a special price for Amen Wardy who employed between 1,000-8,000 braceros at a time to work on his farm in Ysleta and bought 300-400 cases of Nicholson soft drinks per day for his workers. Wardy set dozens of bottles of soda on a large table where the bracero workers formed long lines to await their turns for the refreshing drinks provided by their employer at the end of the day. During the later part of the business, one truck provided home deliveries to Northeast El Paso where some families bought as much as five cases of drinks per week. Although Nicholson advertised twice in the telephone directories and placed a few ads in local newspapers, he mainly relied on word of mouth from satisfied customers to promote his product.

Alkie Nicholson retired from the bottling business in 1971, selling the bottling works to Herman and Herbert S. Vitela who continued to operate under the original name until closing the business in 1979 (EPCD 1972-1979). Nicholson continued to live in the house in front of the plant and continued to rent the old Nicholson Bottling Works building as a warehouse for dry goods. Alkie Nicholson died on April 16, 2002, at the age of 92 (Harrison [2002]).



Figure 9-15 – The Nicholson family of bottles

Bottles and Artifacts

Nicholson House Brand and King Kola

Nicholson Bottling Works produced Orange Squeeze, King Kola, and eighteen other flavors, including pineapple, apple, lime, lemon, orange, root beer, grape, and grapefruit – all carbonated. All flavors, including King Kola, were bottled in identical containers. The names of the individual flavors, excluded from the bottle labels, were identified by markings on the crown caps. The Nicholson advertisements in the 1956 and 1957 telephone directories offered “BEVERAGES 10 BIG FLAVORS . . . Also SWEET SODA & MIXERS” and suggested that the buyer “Check Our Prices.” King Kola and Orange were included in the directory listings as early as 1945 (Figure 9-15).

The original embossed bottles were made of thick glass and were very heavy (Figure 9-16). Alkie claimed that they would bounce if they were dropped on concrete.² These were some of the early specialty bottles.

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Colorless

Size (in cm.): 19.8 (h); 5.5 (d) (flat side to flat side)

Primary Labeling Style: Embossed

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 6.5 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical at base and neck with body divided into eight vertical panels and a thick, raised labeling area extending diagonally across 4 vertical panels

Front Description

Body: Embossed - NICHOLSON / BRAND diagonally on raised labeling area

Heel: Embossed - CONTENTS 6½ FLU. OZS.



Figure 9-16 – Nicholson’s first 6½-ounce specialty bottle

² Growing up in the 1940s and 1950s, I dropped 6½-ounce Coca-Cola bottles on concrete surfaces without breaking the bottles until the second or third bounce. The Nicholson bottles were made of thicker glass, so Alkie was almost certainly correct – they would not break easily.

Back Description

Body: Embossed - the back four panels were vertically embossed
PROPERTY OF / NICHOLSON / BOTTLING WORKS / EL
PASO, TEXAS

Heel: Embossed - 6.5 oz - 4039A ROOT 25

Base: Embossed - NICHOLSON (Figure 9-17)

Manufacturer: Root Glass Co. (1901-1934)

Dating: [1925-1936] These bottles are datable from the inception of Nicholson Bottling Works in 1925 to about 1936 (see discussion below for more explanation about dating). Since these bottles were manufactured by at least four different companies, it is very likely that they were the only ones used during the 1925 to 1936 period. With its 1925 date code, the Root bottle was certainly the first one ordered by Nicholson.

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

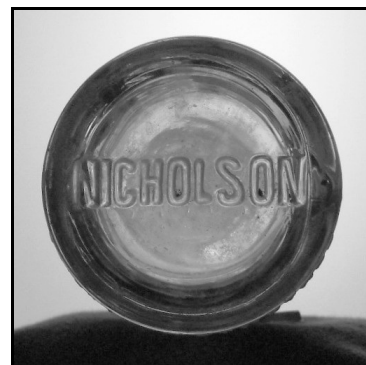


Figure 9-17 – Base of the first bottle

Variations:

Variation 1 – see above

Variation 2 – This bottle was identical to Variation 1, except that the back heel was emboss with the S-in-a-star mark (called the Southern Star) used by the Southern Glass Co. from 1926 to 1930. The firm also embossed date codes on the bottles beginning in 1928. Unfortunately, when I recorded this variation from the Mike Morrison collection, I was very new to bottle research and did not include numbers. As a result, we can only date this variation between 1926 and 1930. Sequentially, however, this falls between the original 1925 bottle made by Root and the 1931 bottle described below. I can therefore speculate that the bottle was made ca. 1928.



Figure 9-18 – Nicholson bottles – 6½- and 9-ounce sizes

Variation 3: This variation was larger – 9 oz – and measured 23.5 cm. in height and 5.5 cm. in diameter (flat side to flat side). It was made in the same style as the smaller bottles, but the front heel was embossed “CONTENTS 9 FLU. OZS.” The back heel was embossed with the IPG-in-a-triangle mark followed by “1768.” The logo was used by the Illinois-Pacific Glass Corp. from 1925 to 1930. The reinforcing ring on the crown finish was embossed “31,” a date code for 1931. Illinois-Pacific used date codes on soda bottles from 1927 on (Figure 9-18).

Variation 4: A photo of a 6.5-ounce Nicholson bottle appears in Smith (1989:49); the bottle was made by the Three Rivers Glass Co., ca. 1925-1937. Unfortunately, Three Rivers never used date codes, so these bottles may have been made at any time during the 1925-1937 period.

Variation 5: There may be other variations of this bottle style. With the present sample, it appears that Nicholson added a nine-ounce size in 1931, although the plant probably also offered the 6½-ounce bottles until the end of the 1930s. The Three Rivers order may have occurred about 1934 or so, and those bottles were probably used until they wore out. The trend by the 1930s was toward the larger 10- to 12-ounce sizes.

Nicholson used a second embossed bottle, another specialty style that was much lighter in weight (Figure 9-19).

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Colorless

Size (in cm.): 23.5 (h); 5.4 (d – central labeling area)

Primary Labeling Style: Embossed

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 8 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical with small labeling areas encircling center and heel; a ring just above the heel labeling area separated it from an embossed, double band that spiraled up to another ring defining the base of the central labeling area; another band topped the labeling area from which 20 embossed, vertical



Figure 9-19 – Nicholson's second specialty bottle

double bands extended to another ring at the base of the neck

Front Description

Body: Embossed - NICHOLSON

Heel: Embossed - MIN. CONT. FULL ½ PT. / 3 RIVERS (star)

Back Description

Body: Embossed - BTG. WKS.

Heel: Bare

Base: Embossed - Ball (script – upside down) / EL PASO / TEX (no period) (Figure 9-20)

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

Dating: [1937] This bottle can only have been made in 1937. The Ball Brothers purchased the plant that year and continued to manufacture bottles throughout the year to honor the existing contracts made by Three Rivers. At the end of the year, Ball Brothers disbanded the operation, although they used the plant as a warehouse for several more years (Smith 1989:26). Marks from both Three Rivers and Ball can only have come from the final year of operation. A photo of an identical bottle appeared in Smith (1989:51), but it was made for the Ideal brand.

Collection(s): Author's collection.



Figure 9-20 – Base of Nicholson's second bottle



Figure 9-21 – Nicholson family of ACL bottles

A third embossed bottle or even a paper-labeled style may have been used after the Three Rivers/Ball bottle. It is also possible that the first ACL bottle (see below) came into use by the late 1930s. Although ACL bottles became available as early as 1934, most bottlers made the transition to new styles in the late 1930s or early 1940s. As a small operator, Nicholson was probably not one of the early innovators. I suspect that he did not change until the early

1940s or even as late as 1950 or even later. Since I only know of one bottle style used between 1938 and 1963 (a 26-year period), there was almost certainly *some* other bottle style used (Figure 9-21).

The first ACL bottles were labeled with blue lettering on bottles made in Mexico (Figure 9-22). According to Alkie Nicholson, Mexican bottles were cheaper, but they did not survive the rigors of use as well as bottles made in the U.S., so Nicholson returned to the use of U.S. bottles, although he retained the same color and pattern. He later changed to a white and blue label with the same pattern.

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Colorless

Size (in cm.): 23.3 (h); 5.4 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: Blue ACL

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 8 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical with an orange peel surface on the shoulder terminated by an embossed double ring at the neck and a single ring at the body. The extreme lower body was offset from the labeling area by a single embossed ring to enclose an orange peel surface superimposed with outlined bow-ties extending to the heel.

Front Description

Body: Blue ACL - QUALITY / NICHOLSON / SODA (upwardly slanted) with CONTENTS / 8 FL. OUNCES below in small print, followed by Beverages (in script)

Back Description



Figure 9-23 – Base of blue-label bottle made by Vidriera Monterrey

Body: Blue ACL - Contains / CARBONATED WATER, / SUGAR, CITRIC ACID, / ARTIFICIAL FLAVOR / AND COLOR. / Bottled by (italics) / Nicholson Bottling Works / EL PASO, TEXAS superimposed over a logo depicting various sized bubbles

Base: Embossed - BOTTLE MADE IN MEXICO / MV-in-a-circle / 4 9 (Figure 9-23)

Manufacturer: Cartel Vidriera Monterrey, Monterrey, Mexico (mid-1950s-at least 1980)

Dating: [1940?- ca. 1963?] Blue-label Nicholson bottles are uncommon, so it is difficult to set a date range based on actual



Figure 9-22 – Blue-label Nicholson ACL bottle

evidence. The Mexican-made containers were probably the first ACL bottles used by Nicholson, but these do not have useable date codes. It is possible that either the “4” or the “9” were date codes for either 1954 or 1949, but I have not found any solid evidence for the use of single-digit date codes by Vidriera Monterrey. The firm used double-digit date codes on some later bottles.

Collection(s): Author’s collection.

Variations:

Variation 1: Mexican bottle – above.



Figure 9-24 – Base of blue-label bottle made by the Liberty Glass Co.



Figure 9-25 – White & Blue label bottle made by the Liberty Glass Co.

Variation 2: These were identical to the Mexican bottles, but slightly shorter, ca. 23.5 cm. in heights and 5.4 cm. in diameter. The bases of all examples I have seen were embossed “502-1 L-G / 8 FL.OZ. / 63” (Figure 9-24). The L-G logo was used by the Liberty Glass Co., and this bottle was made in 1963. Because Nicholson was small, and the 1960s were characterized by a trend toward national brands, the firm may only have ordered a single set of bottles in 1963 and used them until the next order in 1967 (see next entry). Examples came from the Andrew Nicholson collection; Mike Morrison Collection; Andy Nicholson Collection; and the author’s collection.

Variation 3: Although this variation is made on the same embossed bottle, it differs in having alternating white and blue ACL on “QUALITY / NICHOLSON / SODA” on the front label (Figure 9-25). The

back label had the same wording as the blue-labeled bottles but in white ACL. The bases were embossed “502-1 L-G / 8 fl. oz. / 67” (Figure 9-26). As with the blue-labeled bottles from the same glass house, these were probably only ordered once and were used until the



Figure 9-26 – Base of white & blue label bottle

next replacement in 1969. Examples came from the same collections listed for Variation 3.

A second style of ACL bottles was used later (Figure 27). These bottles eliminated the embossed designs on the sides.

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Colorless

Size (in cm.): 23.6 (h); 5.6 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: White and Blue ACL

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 8 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical with embossed “swellings” that encircling the body just above the heel and just below the shoulder (note that all embossing on former bottles is absent)

Front Description

Neck/Shoulder: Bare

Body: White and Blue ACL - QUALITY / NICHOLSON / SODA (upwardly slanted) with CONTENTS / Beverages (in white script) / 8 FL. OUNCES (white)

Back Description

Neck/Shoulder: Bare

Body: White ACL - Contains / CARBONATED WATER, / SUGAR, CITRIC ACID, / ARTIFICIAL FLAVOR / AND COLOR. / Bottled by / Nicholson Bottling Works / EL PASO, TEXAS 79902.

Base: Embossed - CONTENTS 8 FL. OZS. (arch) / LG 903 1 69 (inverted arch)]

Manufacturer: Liberty Glass Company (1954-present)

Dating: [1969] Although the examples can be no older than the zip code inception date of July 1, 1963, bottles of this type were probably not used until the late 1960s and may only have been ordered in 1969. As noted above, Nicholson was a small firm, and national brands entirely dominated the market by ca. 1960. A single order of bottles, therefore, may have lasted for several years. As with the other ACL bottles, I have only seen the 1969 date code on this type.

Collection(s): Andy Nicholson Collection; author’s collection.



Figure 9-27 – Second White & Blue label 8-ounce bottle

Variations:

Variation 1 – 8-ounce bottle described above.

Variation 2 – The second variation was similar but in 10-ounce size (Figure 9-28). The bottle measured 24.3 cm. in height and 6.1 cm. in diameter. The neck/shoulder now had a white ACL geometric design that formed a background for an upwardly-slanted, NICHOLSON, in blue. This bottle was labeled “CONTENTS 10 FL. OUNCES” in white ACL below the front label, with “LG 71 / 909 22” embossed on the base.

The timing for this bottle is interesting. The date code indicates that the bottle was made by the Liberty Glass Co. in 1971. That year, Alkie Nicholson sold the bottling works to the Vitelas. Therefore, the bottle may have been the last one ordered by Nicholson or the initial (probably only) order by the Vitelas. Evidence points in both directions. The bottle is very similar to the one used by Nicholson, and the label is identical to the 8-ounce bottle made two years earlier. This, of course, points to Nicholson. However, the bottle is two ounce larger than the ones previously used by Nicholson, suggesting that the Vitelas made a slight change.

Shells

Nicholson cases (commonly referred to as shells) were manufactured from wood and were painted a dark red-orange with stenciled black letters proclaiming the Nicholson name (Figure 9-29). As with most shells of the time, these were bound together with light steel strips nailed around the end pieces. Each end had an 8.8 x 3.0 cm. oval opening to serve as a handle for ease of carrying. Internal wooden dividers separated each bottle for easy removal and protection during transportation (Figure 9-30). Although filled bottles were handled a bit more gently, shells containing empty bottles were frequently thrown to the tops of trucks. The thick glass of the returnable bottles could take considerable punishment.

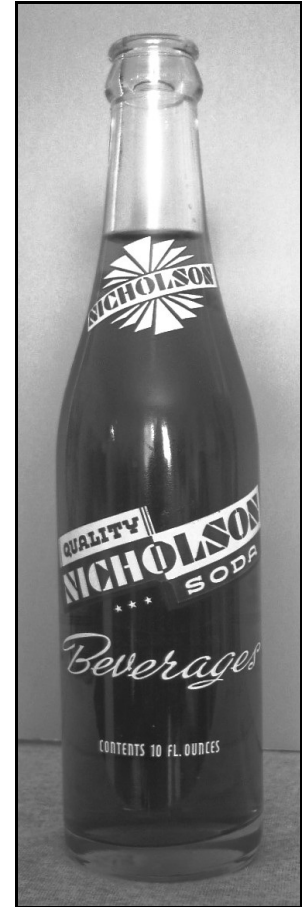


Figure 9-28 – The final Nicholson 10-ounce bottle



Figure 9-29 – Empty Nicholson shell (owned by Andy Nicholson)

Other Products Bottled by Nicholson

Nicholson carried Howdy Orange, Muscadine Punch, Goldcrest, Golden Glow, and NIB from at least 1927 until the end of Prohibition in 1933. Both Howdy Orange and Muscadine Punch may have been distributed slightly longer. Goldcrest, Golden Glow, and NIB were all near-beers. Along with Muscadine Punch, none of their containers have been locally identified. It is virtually certain that all near-beers utilized paper labels on export beer bottles (although Anheuser-Busch used squat, malt-style bottles for Bevo, its near-beer). Muscadine Punch may have been similarly labeled. If so, containers used for these products now contribute to the large variety of unidentifiable, generic glass artifacts in the archaeological record.



Figure 9-30 – Nicholson case with bottles (owned by Andy Nicholson)

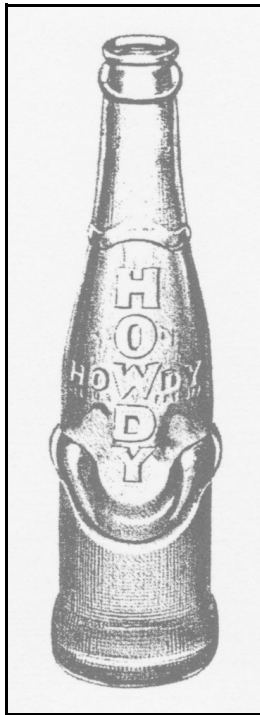


Figure 9-31 – Original embossed Howdy Orange bottle (Owens-Illinois 1930:B14)

Howdy Orange

Howdy Orange was invented by Charles Leiper Grigg, a former employee of Vess Bottling Company and the inventor of the drink, Whistle. After a disagreement with Vess Jones in 1919, Grigg teamed up with Edmund G. Ridgeway to form the Howdy Company as a vehicle to franchise Grigg's latest invention, Howdy Orange (Rodengen 1995:79-80).

The initial Howdy bottle, used in 1927 and 1928, was colorless and had a finely embossed horizontal checkering on the heel and lower body and the neck area. The labeling area was set apart and covered the upper body and shoulder. The word, HOWDY was embossed vertically and joined at the "W" by a second, horizontal, HOWDY to form a cross. The term "REG. U.S." reposed below the "HO" with "PAT. OFF." beneath "DY." The front heel was embossed, 6½ FL. OZS. The heel was notably wider than the body of the bottle creating an unstable condition for

packing that caused its replacement in 1929. The shoulder was so low and gently sloped that it created a slightly conical effect (Rodengen 1995:81).

The second bottle followed the basic design of the first but was easier to stack. Differential circumferences between the heel and body were reduced and the body sides were straightened to a vertical placement, pushing the shoulder into a more typical position. The labeling area was increased, reducing the checkering on the lower body. Checkering was retained on the neck but was absent on the heel. The embossed HOWDY cross was retained with the same positioning of “REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.,” but the entire logo was countersunk into the labeling area (Rodengen 1995:78).

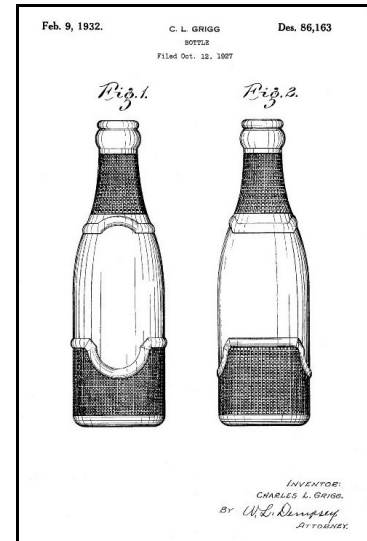


Figure 9-32 – Grigg’s original patent for the Howdy bottle, filed in 1927 but not issued until 1932

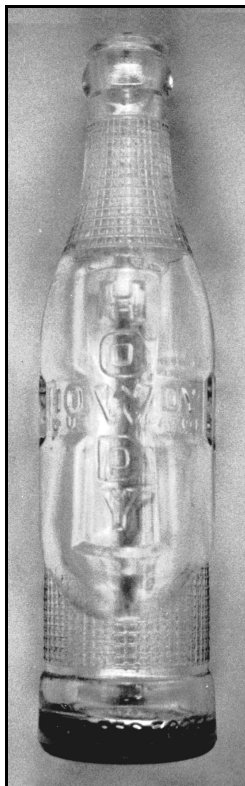


Figure 9-33 – Second embossed Howdy Orange bottle

Although there is no way to specifically discover which bottles were used by Nicholson, signs advertising Howdy orange were prominently displayed on either side of the door in the 1927 photo of the Nicholson plant. Thus, Nicholson probably used both of the earliest embossed Howdy bottles. I have not seen an example of the earliest bottle in an El Paso context, but they were advertised at least as late as 1930 (Owens-Illinois 1930:B14 – Figure 9-31).

Charles L. Grigg applied for a patent for his first bottle design on October 12, 1927, but he did not receive Design Patent No. 86,163 until February 9, 1932 (Figure 9-32). By the time the actual patent had been processed, Grigg had already patented a new design, and the older style was obsolete. This explains the “REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.” on the front embossed label and the lack of a patent number on the bottle. The patent for the first design was still pending during the entire use life of the bottle!

I have recorded two Howdy bottles, both of which were examples of the second style. One bottle was embossed on the heel with the IPG-in-a-triangle logo used by the Illinois-Pacific Glass Corp. from 1925 to 1930

(Figure 9-33). The second bottle was embossed “21 I-in-an-oval-
superimposed-on-a-diamond 5 / 6½ FL. OZ.” on the base and
“PAT. NO. DES. 78351” on the back heel.

Apparently, Grigg had despaired of ever receiving a patent
for his first bottle, so he altered the design. He applied for a second
design patent on January 19, 1929, and received Design Patent
Number 78,351 much quicker, on April 23 of that same year – a
turnaround time of just over three months (Figure 34). Therefore,
he received his first patent almost two years and nine months *after*
the date of issue for his second patent!

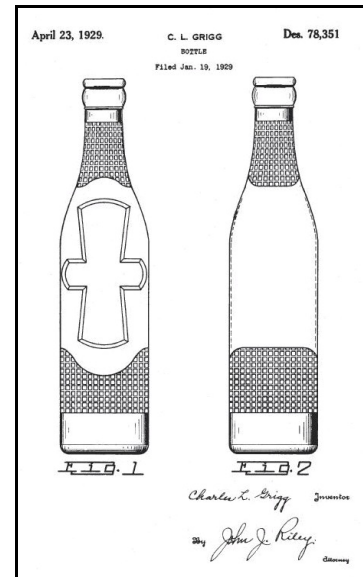


Figure 9-34 – Grigg’s second
Howdy patent issued in 1929

I have been unable to determine how long the embossed
bottles were used. Howdy Orange was eventually bottled in ACL
containers, but there is no evidence that those were used by Nicholson. The product was likely
dropped from the Nicholson line before 1940.

NIB

Union Bottling Works originally carried this brand. Since it was advertised on the
Nicholson plant wall in 1927, it was obviously retained by Gus Nicholson when he separated
from Beys in 1925. The bottle style is dealt with in the Union section (Chapter 9a).

Goldcrest

Goldcrest was manufactured by the Tennessee Beverage Co. (the makers of NIB – see
Chapter 9a). Although the Goldcrest name was used for a near-beer and for a brand of barley
malt syrup, the company also apparently produced sodas. Ken Flemming (2002) offered the
following comments:

As for Goldcrest, no label, bottle or sign has surfaced over the years. There’s no
way to know what the label actually looked like. Odds are, it was a paper label as
almost everything the company did was paper label. I do have a soft drink style
bottle in my collection with Tennessee Beverage Company, Memphis embossed

on it. There has never been another company in business in Memphis by that name so I think it can be safely assumed that it came from the company. Company letterhead of that time references Goldcrest Cereal Beverage as one of their brands.

Kay (2007:118-119) illustrated 12 different Goldcrest Beer labels. It is very likely that the Goldcrest near-beer label was very similar to one of the later beer labels.

Golden Glow

The Blumer Brewery, located in Monroe, Wisconsin, attempted to survive Prohibition by bottling Golden Glow, a near beer. Accordingly, it renamed itself the Blumer Products Corp. and included ice cream and soft drinks in its merchandise list. After repeal, the business again became a brewery (Halina 2010).

Kay and his associates (2008:139) illustrated two Prohibition-era Golden Glow labels. Both labels noted that Golden Glow was “MADE FROM A FULLY FERMENTED SPECIAL BREW” along with the slogan “It’s the After Glow.” Both also had the Blumer Products Corp. name (Figures 9-34 & 9-35).



Figure 9-35 – Golden Glow Special Brew label (Kay et al. 2008:139)



Figure 9-36 – Golden Glow label on bottle (Kay et al. 2008:139)

Muscadine Punch

Although the internet is replete with dozens of recipes, I have been unable to find a single reference to bottled Muscadine Punch. It is possible that Muscadine Punch just one of the flavors that Nicholson bottled.

