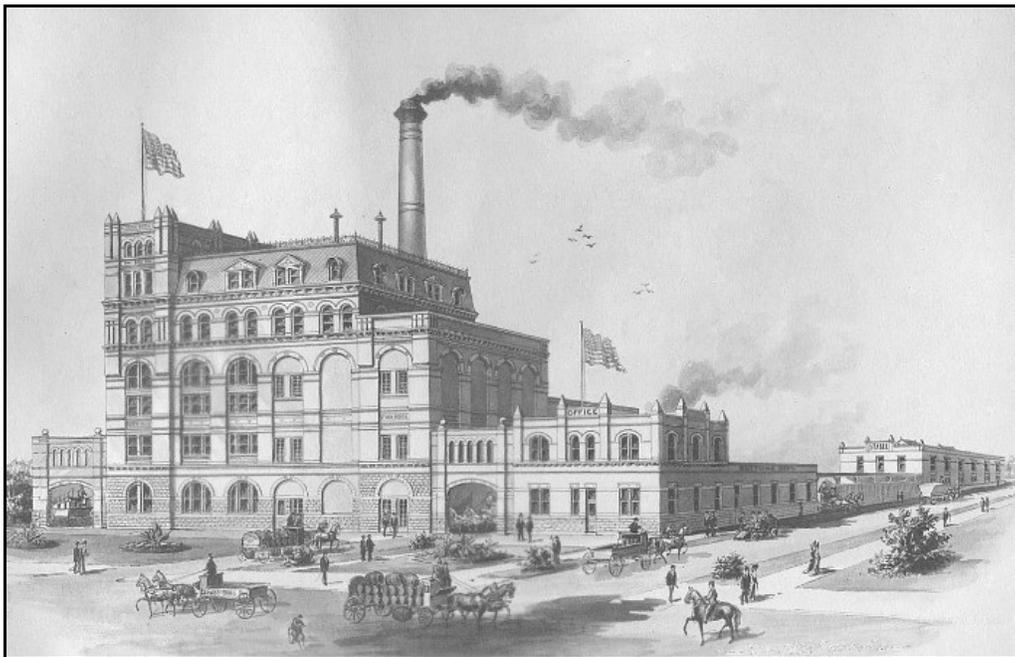


# Breweries and Beer Bottles at El Paso, Texas



Bill Lockhart  
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Chapter 4a  
The El Paso Brewing Association

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## **Chapter 4a**

### **Pure Beer Fresh from the Brewery: The El Paso Brewing Association<sup>1</sup>**

As noted in Chapter 1, prior to the arrival of the railroads, the primary alcoholic beverage in El Paso was wine. The early missionaries grew what came to be called the “mission grape,” and wine from the area gained considerable renown. Although a little wine was bottled, the common container was the cask or the wineskin. Bottles were an unusual sight in pre-railroad El Paso. The first trains brought in beer, whiskey, and other spirits and altered the drinking habits of the local people. Advertisements for more than 14 types of beer appeared in El Paso newspapers prior to Prohibition (see Chapter 3). About the turn of the century, local businessmen began to explore the idea of a brewery.

Because a fairly large volume of non-local beer was available in El Paso prior to Prohibition, it is quite understandable that local entrepreneurs would be interested in tapping such a lucrative market by establishing a brewery in the city. Such a brewery would not only keep more of El Paso’s money within the town, it would also enrich the owners. El Paso grew in the 1890s from a small village with less than a thousand residents to a town of more than 8,000 people. As the population rose to almost 16,000 in 1900, both local businessmen and outsiders became interested in the possibility of a local brewery.

#### **The Initial Interest**

##### **William G. Hammel**

One of the earliest tendrils was put out by William G. Hammel, prime mover behind the Illinois Brewing Co. of Socorro, New Mexico. Accompanied by his brother, Gustav, Hammel established a bottling plant on Manzanares Ave. at Socorro in 1882 and began selling beer and ale under the name of Hammel Brothers & Co. the following year. On February 5, 1886, the

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter was originally published in a collectors’ venue (Lockhart 2004), then in *Password*, the journal of the El Paso County Historical Society (Lockhart 2005a). Although I have made minor changes each time, this version is essentially the same as the earlier two.

Hammel Brothers signed a mortgage for the property on 6<sup>th</sup> St. that was to become their brewery's home for the rest of their lives (Lockhart 2005b:17-19; Wilson & McKee 2001).

The brothers renamed the business the Illinois Brewing Co. in 1887, and it retained that name even after Prohibition had brought an end to the brewing business in 1918. The brothers had bought the soda bottling machinery from Socorro's former bottler, Alfred F. Katzenstein, in August of 1910 and began bottling soft drinks soon after. The brewery never reopened after Prohibition, but Clarence Hammel continued to bottle carbonated beverages until the mid-1950s (Lockhart 2005b:17-19; Wilson & McKee 2001).

William Hammel saw that El Paso was ripe for its own brewery. Although the railroad had boosted the population with its arrival in 1881, the remote town was still very isolated from the rest of Texas and larger centers on both the East and West Coasts. In 1898, Hammel visited El Paso to determine the possibilities (Hennech 1990:51-52). He must have been dissatisfied with what he saw because he was never again involved in El Paso brewing, although William's son, Clarence Hammel, became a good friend of Harry Mitchell, a later El Paso brewer.

### **Alfred Courchesne**

On November 14, 1899, the *El Paso Herald* predicted that "an up to date brewery will soon be a reality in El Paso." The president of the proposed corporation was to be a local man, Alfred Courchesne, with H. Lindlohe of Montana as vice president and general manager. Its secretary was only identified as "a Chicago capitalist." The El Paso Brewing and Ice Co. was to have a capital stock of \$150,000. According to the *El Paso Herald*, an existing local firm, the El Paso Ice and Refrigerator Co., had already "been absorbed by the new concern." Projected capacity was 20,000 barrels of beer a year along with an increase in ice production. Courchesne had jumped the gun, however – El Paso Ice and Refrigerator never became part of any brewery.

Courchesne, already president of the El Paso Ice and Refrigerator Co., planned to build the brewery adjoining the existing ice plant. He had commissioned an architect, Ernest Krause, and had an estimate of \$12,000 for the construction of the new structure. The corporation had already spent the tidy sum of \$30,000 on the machinery necessary to operate the new brewery. On January 9, 1900, the principals claimed they were only awaiting the arrival of the contracted lumber to begin construction (*El Paso Herald* 1/9/1900; Hennech 1990:52).

Krause was a very successful architect in El Paso. He arrived in town about 1886 and lived in Room 1, 110 San Antonio St. He moved to the Sheldon Block just before the turn of the century and was the superintendent of the building at the Plaza Block by 1902. He continued in the same positions until he formed a partnership with Alfred R. Fritch (Krause & Fritch). The partnership was very short-lived, and Krause returned to being a lone architect until he teamed up with B.W. Reeser to form Krause & Reeser in 1911. A year later, Reeser was also gone, and Krause had moved to the Morgan Building. He continued in business alone and apparently died or moved away from El Paso in 1915 (EPDC 1886-1915).

Along with W.C. Miller, Courchesne was still interested in the project in November of 1900, but there is no evidence that any actual construction took place. The persistent Courchesne next looked to the East for financial backers, or perhaps, they found him. In any event, Daniel Loew and Samuel Cole, “prominent men of Cleveland, with extensive brewery interests,” became attracted to El Paso’s brewing possibilities in 1902 and discussed with Courchesne and Mayor Benjamin F. Hammett the problem of a reliable water supply in the desert environment (*El Paso Herald* 3/13/1902; Hennech 1990:52).

Courchesne suggested that a deep well, such as the 300-foot well recently dug in connection with his ice and refrigerator business, could furnish sufficient water that would be “as good water as the mesa water.” According to the *El Paso Herald*, the demand for beer was “great enough to warrant the building of the brewery.” Representatives from the railroads serving El Paso were also “in consultation with the visitors,” each vying for the honor of serving the brewery (*El Paso Herald* 3/13/1902; Hennech 1990:53).

Loew was very prominently connected in the brewing world. Along with the Loew Filter Company, he was involved with the Sandusky Breweries, a syndicate that controlled thirteen brewing establishments. Loew said that he thought “the situation so favorable that you may reasonably predict a brewery here within a year.” Aside from the problem of water, Loew only needed “support of some of the saloons which have longtime contracts with outside breweries.” He suspected that both issues could be resolved. Loew expected most of the capital for the brewery to come from Cleveland and New York, but he also anticipated offering stock options to local businessmen (*El Paso Herald* 3/13/1902). Again, however, there is no evidence that any ground was actually broken. But the time was almost ripe.

## **The El Paso Brewing Association – First Corporation**

On June 22, 1903, the El Paso Brewing Assoc. incorporated with an initial stock issue of \$300,000 – \$200,000 of which was already subscribed “by eastern capitalists.” The final \$100,000 in stock would be sold to local subscribers including members of the Board of Directors. Along with George Pence, the local promoter, directors from El Paso included “Judge Peyton F. Edwards, E.B. Welch, the furniture man . . . John Klink, and John Sorenson” (Angus & Harris 1993:143-151; *El Paso Herald* 6/22/1903; Hennech 1990:42-43).

### **The Investors**

This was a very diverse group of men. Edwards arrived in El Paso about 1886 and was a practicing attorney. He formed a partnership with Josiah F. Crosby (Crosby & Edwards) by 1888 with an office in the Bronson Block.<sup>2</sup> Edwards was also the manager of the El Paso Abstract Co. located in the same building. A decade later (1898), he was in partnership with his son, Peyton R. Edwards (Edwards & Edwards) as well as being a notary. Their office remained in the Bronson Block. By 1903, he and his son had parted company, and he was a notary and manager of the El Paso Abstract & Loan Co. He remained a successful El Pasoan (EPCD 1886-1903).

Eugene B. Welch had appeared by the late 1890s and was operating a business that advertised “house furnishing goods, second hand furniture” at 105-107 E. Overland. Welch was also the proprietor of the Commercial Hotel. He moved to 1907-1911 Texas in 1902 and added stoves and ranges to his list of advertised items. Like Judge Edwards, he was a well-known and respected El Pasoan by the time he bought into the El Paso Brewery (EPCD 1898-1902).

John L. Klink came from a different social group. He was a machinist with the Galveston, Harrison, and San Antonio Railway who also arrived in El Paso during the 1890s. By 1906, however, Klink had vanished from El Paso records, probably moved to another location by the railroad. John S. Sorenson was a pioneer who arrived prior to 1885 and set up his contracting business on the corner of Kansas and Franklin Streets. He went into partnership with John K. Kneale (Sorenson & Kneale) in 1888 and again with Joseph E. Morgan (Sorenson & Morgan)

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<sup>2</sup> El Paso had several buildings that occupied an entire block each. Instead of a street address, it was customary to only list the building name, followed by “block.”

from 1900 to 1911. The firm was noted for its brick and masonry construction. Sorenson retired in 1912 (EPCD 1888-1912).

Pence, himself, is worthy of note. He first appeared in El Paso records in 1902 with J.H. Murphy in the firm of Pence & Murphy, dealers in real estate and investments with an office on the corner of Mesa and Texas. Although he moved to 110 St. Louis in 1904, he remained in real estate as well as being a notary public. He was joined by his brother, Milton, to form Pence Bros. at 201 Texas in 1909. Like Pence before, the brothers specialized in real estate. Pence disappeared from El Paso records in 1911 (EPCD 1902-1911).

### **The Plans**

With these men and other backers, the Brewing Association's Board of Directors planned to put all of the money realized from stock sales into the building and equipment to set up the brewery. Although they had not yet selected the location for the building, they were considering three possible sites. The planners had already ordered the machinery and contracted for the bricks needed for construction. In addition to beer, Pence and his associates planned to bottle ale and porter as well as producing commercial ice. Pence predicted that "dirt will be flying on the foundation excavations within two weeks." The *Herald* cooed that "the long talked of brewery for El Paso is at last to be realized" (*El Paso Herald* 6/22/1903; Hennech 1990:42-43).

Before the ground was even broken, the new brewery faced the possibility of local competition. A group of "Pittsburgh capitalists" announced on July 11 that they would erect a second brewery in competition with the El Paso Brewery. Although the brewery was not named, an (also unnamed) local law firm representing the promoters announced that the new company would incorporate with a capitalization of \$200,000. An initial \$150,000 would be subscribed by the Pittsburgh backers, and the remainder would be offered to local speculators. This group, too, had tested the local water and pronounced it suitable for brewing purposes (*El Paso Herald* 7/11/1903).

The group may have been connected with Consumers Ice and Cold Storage Co. By December of 1903, Consumers "secured an amendment to its charter permitting it to engage in the brewing business" (Hennech 1990:53). As with the efforts of Hammel, Courchesne, and Loew, there is no evidence that this project (or these projects) moved beyond the planning stages.

## Wilhelm Griesser

Pence, Welch, and the other backers of the El Paso Brewing Assoc. called a meeting for July 21, 1903, to introduce the public to Wilhelm Griesser, owner of the Wilhelm Griesser Construction Co., a firm of architects, builders, and engineers. Griesser specialized in building breweries and distilleries and had been selected as the designer and builder of the El Paso Brewery. Griesser was enthusiastic about the project (*El Paso Herald* 7/20/1903).

Although Griesser was to head the project, the actual work was contracted out to the local firm of Sorrenson & Morgan. Pence, acting for the Association, signed the contract in the presence of Judge Peyton F. Edwards, attorney for El Paso County, on July 21, 1903. The Association had already purchased property “between Dunn’s road house and the [Southern Pacific Railway] tracks a little northeast of the roadhouse ” (*El Paso Herald* 7/22/1903).

Along with Sorrenson & Morgan, the Association invited “county and city officials and the business men in general,” as well as the rest of the public, to meet on July 23 at the street car transfer station located on the corner of Oregon and St. Louis. The group would then follow the contractor to the new location and witness the groundbreaking for the new brewery. The agreed-upon completion date was January 1, 1904, just over five months away. Initial output was forecast at two hundred barrels per day with plans for additional machinery to increase the production to five hundred barrels each day (*El Paso Herald* 7/22/1903).

A special railroad car transported the group to the brewery site at 9:30 AM, and Mayor Morehead threw the first shovelfull of dirt at 10:15. Other business leaders also added their token labor but were soon replaced by the paid workers, who increased the pace. Located on a five-acre plot of ground, Griesser based the construction plans on those of a brewery his company had built at Fort Worth, Texas.<sup>3</sup> Griesser, Judge Peyton Edwards, and “Kid” Hadlock “who said he represented the consumers” all gave speeches. The promoters served appropriate beverages – Lemp’s Extra Pale beer – and a toast was proposed: “To the success of the El Paso brewery” (*El Paso Herald* 7/23/1903).

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<sup>3</sup> This could only have been the Texas Brewery at 9<sup>th</sup> and Jones Streets (see Van Wieren 1995:368).

The proposed building was described as “one of the handsomest in the state, and is to be built of red brick with stone trimmings, and the machinery is to be the latest known to the brewer’s art.” In addition, the Association planned to build an ice plant “in connection with the brewery” (*El Paso Herald* 7/23/1903). The final building, in fact, reflected the intended plans.

On July 28, George Pence, president of the association advertised 1,000 shares of stock for sale at \$100 each that could be purchased at his office at 205 Texas St. The *Herald* noted that

the subscriptions are payable 10% cash, 15% upon completion of the first story of brewery building; 20% upon completion of second story; 20% upon completion of third story; 20% when roofs are on all buildings; 15% upon final completion of plant, ready to manufacture beer (*El Paso Herald* 7/28/1903; Hennech 1990:43).

Despite Pence’s enthusiasm, things did not run smoothly, and Griesser, relocated to El Paso to become president of the corporation and supervise construction. Griesser told the *Herald*, “I have decided that El Paso is a city worth tying to and I have moved my home here from New York, closed my Pittsburg office and invested almost \$100,000 here personally.” He admitted that “the brewery is of course small now, but we do not expect to stop building” (*El Paso Herald* 6/25/1904; Hennech 1990:44).

Even though the brewery, itself, was completed in July 1904, almost a year after Pence began selling stock and a full seven months after the contracted completion date (January 1, 1904), Griesser was brimming with enthusiasm and predicted a great future for the brewery. He bragged, “I am not the least bit afraid of the success of the institution.” On July 14, he predicted that the brewery would begin to manufacture its beer within a week, and he was already planning his expansion. He had contracted for the building of a home for his new brewmaster, Joseph Gabler, as well as residences for himself, his engineer, bookkeeper “and other officials” (*El Paso Herald* 6/25/1904; Hennech 1990:44).

Workers had already begun construction of the office and bottling house, and Griesser was planning for an ice plant. In addition, he had bought Dunne’s Road House and planned to operate an electric plant that would “furnish light and power to the people of East El Paso and Latta’s addition” along with the brewery. He bragged that he had beer kegs already on hand, had ordered the bottles, and planned to purchase special refrigerator cars to ship beer. The long-awaited brewery was almost ready for action (*El Paso Herald* 6/25/1904; Hennech 1990:44).

## The Grand Opening

Griesser set an opening date for July 20, 1904. The *Herald* crowed that “the citizen of El Paso who believes in patronizing home industries and is also afflicted with that dry thirst, is counting the days until the new local brewery is in operation.” Except for cleaning the new machinery, everything was in place (*El Paso Herald* 7/14/1904; Hennech 1990:44-45).

It seems that the brewery experienced more delays. The *Brewers Journal* commented that the El Paso Brewing Co. held its grand opening on November 6 with “many county officials, lodges and numerous citizens” attending. The journal added that “a fine collation and copius (*sic*) supply of the company’s product and good music made the opening a memorable event” (Hennech 1990:45). Although the ceremony was apparently so “memorable” that the journalist lost his ability to spell, the brewery was open at last!

The brewery when complete was a large brick building located on North Stevens at the southeast corner of the Galveston, Harrison, and San Antonio Railway. This meant not only convenience for shipping beer but ease in construction and importing both regular supplies and building materials. The location was so well suited for the purpose that both of El Paso’s later breweries used the same site.

Prior to the opening, the Association posted a full-page ad in the *Herald* (10/29/1904). The ad included a woodcut that was “a true representation of El Paso’s New Brewery now in operation and running day and night” (Figure 4a-1).<sup>4</sup> The term “true representation” was stretching things a bit. An actual photo of the brewery shows three stories in the brewery – rather than the *five* in the drawing (Figure 4a-2).

The *Herald* ad boasted that the brewery maintained “a capacity large enough to supply ALL EL PASO and every town within a radius of 200 miles.” The wily promoters noted that “\$100,000 a year is sent out of El Paso for beer” and asked, “Why not patronize a home industry and keep that money here?” To stifle the competition, they noted that Golden Pride was “pure beer, fresh from the Brewery, not shipped thousands of miles” (*El Paso Herald* 10/29/1904).

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<sup>4</sup> The same drawing was reproduced in a number of other sources – including a 1909 Chamber of Commerce publication, shown in Figure 4a-2.

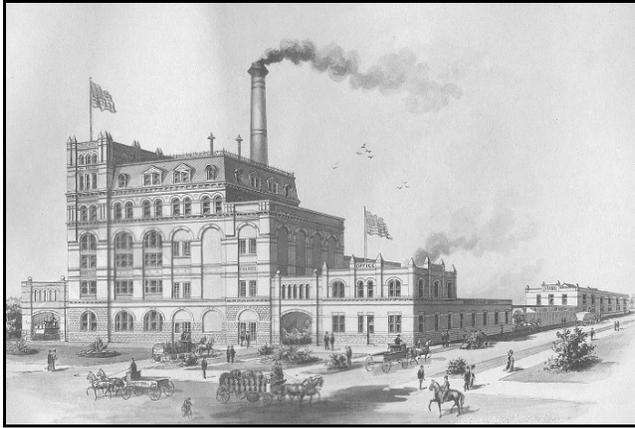


Figure 4b-1 – El Paso Brewery drawing (El Paso Chamber of Commerce 1909)

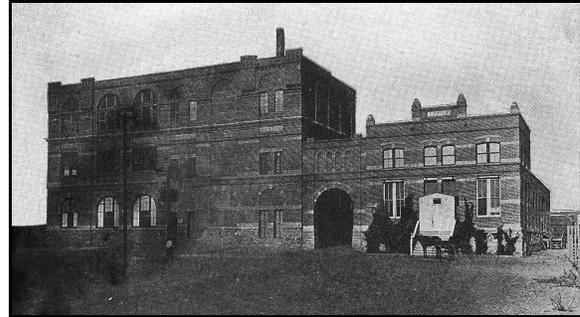


Figure 4b-2 – Photo of the Brewery in 1908 (Courtesy of the El Paso County Historical Society)

Despite Griesser's bright predictions and the support of the *Herald*, the brewery continued to be beset with problems. Although details are currently lacking, the association was obviously unable to pay its bills. In February 1905, creditors, including contractor Louis Hammer, brought suit against the Association. Rumors had it that "St Louis capitalists" were interested in the business. Although Judge James R. Harper did not appoint receivers, stockholders and creditors elected T.B. Dockery and two others to serve as a committee to bargain with major stockholder William Griesser [note that his first name was Americanized by this time] to solve the problem (Hennech 1990:45). That year, 1905, is the only year that Griesser was listed as president and general manager of the brewery in the El Paso city directory.

The Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. chose 1905 as a year to update its map of El Paso and thereby gave us a picture of the brewery at that time. The map noted that the building was made with "Fire Proof Construction" and had a 40 ton ice machine. The drawing shows seven rooms in the main building and two more rooms in the office and "Storage & Bottling Works" just to the south. Map notes inform us that "9 men work at night. Fuel : Coal. Lights : Elec. Water from 60' Deep Well. . . Buildings not completed" and "Cap'y 80 Bbls. a Brew."

Because of an early tax law, the bottling plant could not be part of the actual brewing building. This separation required that beer be stored in kegs that could then be taxed prior to being transported across a street or alley to be bottled. By 1890, however, the law had been modified to allow for a pipeline from the brewery storage area to bottling house (Baron 1962:245-246). Although I have found no mention about this process in connection with the El Paso Brewery, it certainly explains the separation of the bottling house from the main building.

## J. P. Dieter and the Second Corporation

### The Auction

In the end, the stockholders decided to sell. As usual, the *Herald* covered the affair and commented: “Richard Caples, receiver for the brewery, started the sale of that institution at public auction on the court house steps at 2:20 this afternoon [March 14, 1905].” Although Caples estimated the value of the property at \$110,000 (including 2,793 barrels of beer at \$30,000, the building, itself, at \$50,000, nine sets of bar fixtures, and an equal number of saloon leases), the high bidder was J. Phillip Dieter with a final price of \$66,000 (*El Paso Herald* 3/14/1905; Hennech 1990:46).

The bidding, itself, is informative. Richard Burges opened with a bid of \$25,000. T.B. Dockery raised by \$10,000, but was shunted out of the running by George Pence (the original promoter) who bid \$55,000. Pence, it seems, was still interested in his original project. William Griesser, the former Board President and majority stockholder, entered the race and soon surpassed Pence. The last to enter the bidding was J. Phillip Dieter, who then competed with Griesser until Dieter’s final bid of \$66,000 won the day. The action consumed at total of 25 minutes (*El Paso Herald* 3/14/1905; Hennech 1990:45-46).

Dieter was confident that the brewery would become a success. He told the *Herald* that “the El Paso brewery will remain an El Paso institution. It will be improved and enlarged and its product will be brought up to the highest possible standard of excellence.” Although Dieter made the purchase with his own funds, he planned to organize a corporation and offer stock for sale, although, he said, “the controlling interest and active management will remain in my hands (*El Paso Herald* 3/14/1905; Hennech 1990:46).”

The brewery’s creditors were *not* satisfied. In April, the Milwaukee-Western Malt Co., along with the El Paso Brick Co., petitioned the district court at El Paso to disallow the sale because the price was inadequate to cover their losses. The petitioners wanted a sale price of \$160,000. Although the court agreed to a resale, the lot of the creditors was not greatly improved. On April 8, Dieter again bought the brewery for \$76,000 – an increase of \$10,000. While less than the petitioners desired, the price must have satisfied the court because Dieter gained possession (Hennech 1990:46).

## **Dieter Takes Charge**

John Phillip Dieter was a well-known character in El Paso. His friendship with A.L. Houck, his partner in the liquor and soft drink business, went back to his days in Wichita, Kansas, prior to his arrival in El Paso in 1880. The firm of Houck & Dieter was the second soda bottler in the city, opening a plant in 1881 to complement the company's already thriving liquor business begun a year earlier. The firm was the agent for national brewers and was a wholesale distributor to bars and saloons in the city. Dieter was involved in numerous enterprises in El Paso and became quite successful (Lockhart 2010, Chapter 5 – also see Chapter 3 of this work).

By June 1905, Dieter had made good on his promise to incorporate. The new El Paso Brewing Assoc. began with a capital stock of \$225,000 with W.H. Long, Walter Earhart, and J.P. Dieter as the original incorporators (EPCD 1906; Hennech 1990:47). Dieter's son, Henning, added some interesting details in his annotations to his mother's diary. He recalled that on March 1, "Dieter bought the El Paso Brewery for \$76,500, paid \$25,000 down, signed a note for \$51,500. He sold the brewery in September for \$225,000 cash and paid off the note on December 7" (Dieter n.d.). The sale referred to by Henning is, of course, the incorporation.

As expected, Dieter attained the position of president with Earhart as vice-president and Long as secretary-treasurer. The new Board of Directors followed the pattern set by Griesser in committing \$30,000 to "extensive improvements." By 1906, the brewery had acquired a telephone with 1588 as the number. The new corporation also brought in a new brewmaster, Alfred Luettich, who served until at least 1910 (EPCD 1906; Hennech 1990:47, 51).

The 1908 Sanborn map shows essentially the same layout as the 1905 map, although there were a few changes. The ice machine was replaced by two "Refr. Machines" with 120 and 70 ton capacities, and a previously unfinished area to the west now housed "Ice Storage" and "Freezing Tanks." Two new wells, a sewer hookup, and a loading platform completed the north building (Figure 4a-3).

The south building with the office and bottling works remained the same except for a small new platform, and four buildings to the east were new. Three of these were very small, and their purposes were unmarked, but the one furthest to the east, across Latta St., was an adobe building used to house "Bar Fixtures." The capacity was now "100 Barrels Per. Brew.," with

“Men on Premises at all Times.” The brewery now had both city and well water and was apparently complete (Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1908).

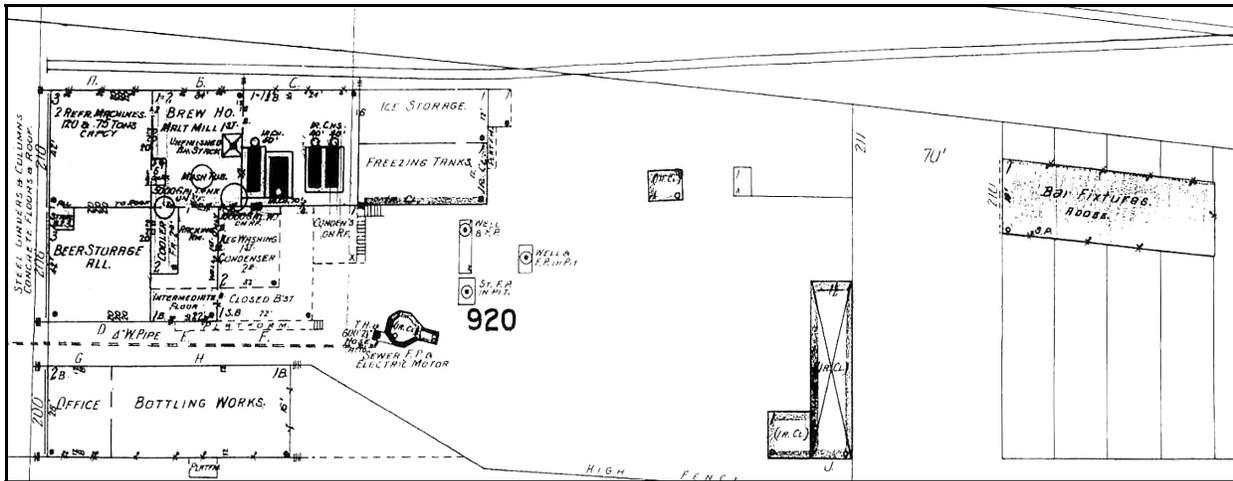


Figure 4b-3 – The El Paso Brewery (Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1908)

### The Brewery After Dieter

John Phillip Dieter died on September 23, 1907, forcing a realignment of power within the corporation. R.W. Long became the new president with Earhart remaining as vice-president and W.H. Long continuing as secretary-treasurer. The manager of the brewery was Constantine Bremme. The 1901 city directory listed a C. Bremme who roomed at the St. Charles hotel but gave no occupational details. The name was not again mentioned until 1906, when Bremme was a bookkeeper for Consumers Ice & Storage Co. He apparently became manager of the brewery the following year, although he was not listed as such in the city directories until 1910. Bremme seemed to have held the position until 1914, when he was listed at his residence at 707 N. Kansas, but no occupation was included. By 1917, he was no longer listed in the directories (EPCD 1901-1917).

Other changes occurred as well. The year, 1908, marked the first use of the title, El Paso Brewing Assoc., Successors. This may indicate that there was more happening than just a realignment of power, although I have found no other references to indicate what may have occurred. Despite the loss of Dieter, by early 1908, several of the “extensive improvements” were in place. The group had added a new, 260-horse-power safety water tube boiler, a duplex flywheel air pump, a deep well pump, and a boiler feed pump (Hennech 1990:48).

Although not as successful as Dieter, the Longs also had a history in El Paso. William H. Long had been in El Paso since at least 1888, although his brother, Ralph Walter Long was not recorded in city directories until a decade later. I have found no information about the brothers prior to their El Paso years, or after they left town in 1923.

### Another Brewery?

An interesting item in the American Brewers Review bears consideration at this point. The Review notes that, at some unspecified point in 1908, the Chihuahua Brewery at El Paso, Texas, was “entirely destroyed involving a loss of \$150,000, fully covered by insurance.” The brewery was owned by the Creel family (Hennech 1990:53). Although previously unmentioned in sources I have found, this may refer to the El Paso Brewery on the Mexican side of the river. The Mexican community had been known as El Paso, Mexico, was renamed in honor of Benito Juárez on September 16, 1888.

An 1881 ad crowed, “HURRAH! for the El Paso Brewery. El Paso, Mex.” The brewery offered beer at \$9.00 per keg, \$3.00 for a dozen bottles, and 12½¢ for drinks at the bar. They directed mail orders to Jno. [brothers] Forster Co. in El Paso, Texas (*El Paso Herald* 9/7/1881). I have found no other reference to this brewery and none for the Forster brothers in El Paso.

Another series of ads in the *El Paso Times* featured the “Depot Brewery and El Paso Distillery, East of the Mexican Central Depot, El Paso, Mexico” with Julius Boisselier as the proprietor (Figure 4a-4). The ads ran from 1881 to 1884, but, again, I have found no other references. It seems probable that Bosselier purchased the brewery from the Forster brothers; the combined population of El Paso and Juárez during that time period was unlikely to have supported more than one brewery.

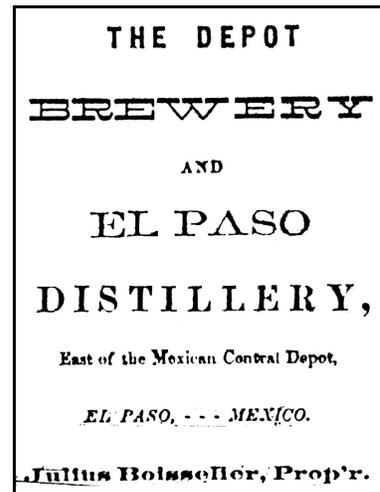


Figure 4b-4 – 1881-1884 ad for the Depot Brewery, El Paso, Mexico (*El Paso Times*)

## More Trouble

As if the El Paso Brewery had not faced enough trouble, the laborers became dissatisfied and struck. Although I have been unable to find the beginning date of the strike, the *Herald* noted on July 12, 1909, that it was settled “after months of labor trouble.” Involved in the strike was Joseph Proebstie, the international financial secretary of the United Brewery Workers and H.M. Walker, a national labor organizer. The two reached an agreement with Major W.H. Long, the Association President, that increased the laborers’ wages and allowed them to return to work. In some departments, the new wage was substantial – from \$1.00 to \$2.00 per week! Walker told the *Herald* that Long “has always been friendly disposed toward labor” and noted that Long had employed union workers in his cigar enterprise. Beginning August 1, 1909, the El Paso Brewery became a union organization (*El Paso Herald* 7/12/1909; Hennech 1990:48).

In 1911, George Sauer, a former partner of J.P. Dieter, replaced Earhart as vice-president and retained that position – despite his move to Red Bank, New Jersey – until Prohibition caused the end of brewing in 1918. Sauer had become Dieter’s partner in the firm of Dieter & Sauer by at least 1898 in Juárez, Mexico. Upon Dieter’s death, Sauer opened his own business and later became involved in the brewery (for more information on Sauer and the firm of Dieter & Sauer, see Lockhart 2010). By 1915, Frank Brenk was the brewmaster, and W.T. Emberton had taken over as manager of both the office and brewery (EPCD 1911-1915; Hennech 1990:49).

Brenk appears to have moved to El Paso to work in the brewery, or it was his first job after leaving home. He first appeared in the El Paso city directories in 1909 with his occupation listed as “brewer.” By 1911, he was a kettleman (presumably a promotion) but was working as a grocer on the side in 1914. In 1915, he was promoted to brewmaster which left him no more time for the grocery business. He was still listed as brewmaster in 1920, but the company was called the Tri-State Beverage Co. by that time.

In 1921, he was no longer employed with the brewery and was managing the Brenk Apartments at 2408 Texas while living in apartment #6. In 1927, Brenk was listed as a farmer, and his wife, Louise, managed the apartments; however, Brenk, himself, was again the manager of the apartments the next year. In 1929, he also worked as a contractor and continued that until at least 1933 when he joined the Tannhauser Brewing Company, an operation that never made it past the groundbreaking ceremony (EPCD 1920-1933; also see Chapter 6).

Brenk briefly served as brewmaster for the Harry Mitchell Brewery in 1939. He then went back to managing the apartments and continued there until 1944. At that point, he either died or retired, as he is no longer listed in the 1945 directory. Emberton, however, must have been very temporary; he was only listed in the 1915 city directory (EPCD 1939-1944).

In 1911, the plant was described as

a modern fireproof structure of brick, steel and concrete and has a capacity of 100 barrels a day and storage capacity in its vats of 8,000 barrels. The malt house and cold storage rooms are four stories in height with substantial walls and foundation built with a view of adding additional stories as the increase of business required more space. The bottling plant, like the other departments, is modern in every particular and is provided with the latest type of improved machinery, while the ice plant, with capacity of 25 tons a day, and the cold storage warehouse with capacity of 225 tons are special features (El Paso Chamber of Commerce 1911:75).

Beer from the brewery was sold as far east as Sanderson and Big Spring, Texas, and as far west as Arizona. The Association generally employed 40 men (El Paso Chamber of Commerce 1911:75).

Business may have been improving. In 1916, the company added a second phone and changed numbers to 4800 and 4801. Improved business, however, could not hold back the tide of the reformers. The brewery, along with other alcohol-related enterprises in El Paso, received a setback when congressional law mandated a cessation of liquor sales to military personnel on May 18, 1917 (Langston 1974:25). But even greater frustrations were on the way.

### **The Specter of Prohibition**

In January 1918, factions in El Paso waged campaigns for and against alcohol. Texas allowed local Prohibition, and the movement in El Paso was strong. The “wets” defended El Paso’s two most important sources of alcohol, the El Paso Brewery and the California Wine Co., bragging that they were “the only two concerns in El Paso who are paying the internal revenue tax.” The “drys” countered that alcohol would find its way to the troops quartered at Fort Bliss

as well as their usual moral objections. On January 30, the officials counted the ballots, and El Paso County remained wet by a margin of only 200 votes (Langston 1974:30-32).<sup>5</sup>

Representative W.D. Cope presented a bill to the Texas legislature on February 25, 1918, to create state prohibition and ratify the national prohibition amendment. Because of opposition, the house altered the bill on March 5 to forbid the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages within the State of Texas, although it allowed the sale and production of non-alcoholic near-beer. The senate agreed on March 5 and only allowed a little more than a month for alcohol-related industries to cease sales and production. Texas Prohibition began to be enforced on April 15, 1918 (Langston 1974:30-35). Brewing was officially at an end.

### **Beer Brands and Bottles**

During its tenure, the El Paso Brewery produced four types of beer (as well as the two near-beers made during the early days of Prohibition). The first corporation initiated Golden Pride in 1904, probably only in draft form. No further mention of the brand appears after 1914. A little-advertised brand, Weurzburger, was brewed from 1905 until 1911. The brewery produced Southern Bud, the apparent local favorite, from 1905 until Prohibition stilled beer production in 1918. The company only offered Premium Lager from 1915 to 1918.

Initially, the beer was sold on draft and in large “quart” (actually 26-ounce), cork-stoppered bottles. The brewery’s bottling operation probably joined the national conversion to crown caps about 1910 or so and shifted away from the larger bottle in favor of 8- and 12-ounce sizes during the 1913-1915 period. From about 1913 or 1914 until the start of Prohibition, the brewery used amber bottles embossed with EL PASO BREWERY on the front and THIS BOTTLE NOT TO BE SOLD on the back – but only for the smaller sizes. Beer bottles then, as now, were far more likely to rely on paper labels for identification (see Chapter 4b for more information on El Paso Brewery bottles.

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<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 6 for a more thorough coverage of local, Texas, and National Prohibition.

## Prohibition, Tri-State Beverage Co., and the End of Production

Within days of the declaration of Texas Prohibition, the El Paso Brewing Assoc. announced that it would convert its production to a cereal beverage or near-beer called Bravo. However, a new problem was plaguing the brewery. In order to conserve food for the war effort (World War I), the Federal Food Administration ruled that rice, wheat, or barley could no longer be used for malting, and barley was an essential ingredient for brewing. The brewery only had a six-month supply of grain and was unable to find an alternative source. Another law restricted the purchase of sugar after January 1, 1918, although the local Price Interpreting Administrator, C.N. Bassett, agreed to file a waver on the grounds that too many local men would face unemployment (Hennech 1990:44).

Despite the shortages, the Association continued to sell Bravo until at least 1920, the last year it advertised the drink. In that year, it also offered “Bock and other non-intoxicating drinks.” Although the boom for cereal beverages had already somewhat abated – especially so close to the border where real beer was available just across the river – the problems of obtaining sugar and creating malt may have also been involved in the decision to give up brewing. In any event, the brewery ceased advertising near-beers in 1920 and was no longer listed in the city directories after 1921 (EPCD 1918-1922).

In an attempt to remain solvent, the Association bottled soft drinks in the old brewery through its subsidiary organization, the Tri-State Beverage Co., while moving most of its brewing equipment across the Rio Grande to Ciudad Juárez (See Chapter 5 for more about beer and liquor at Juárez). The firm advertised Triangle Brand soft drinks (its own house beverage brand), Orange Crush, Lemon-Crush, Javo (carbonated, bottled coffee), Triple-X Ginger Ale, Parfay, Dr. Swett’s Root Beer, Delaware Punch, and R-Porter, a wine-like strawberry drink (see Lockhart 2010, Chapter 12b for more information on Tri-State).

The Tri-State subsidiary faded into oblivion when it was placed into receivership with Fred G. Lemley in 1923. However, an *El Paso Herald* article shows that the company was still in business until at least the end of January 1924. The *Herald* noted that “burglars who entered the building of the Tri-State Beverages company Monday night made off with soft drink extracts valued at \$75. Police are searching for the men” (*El Paso Herald* 1/29/1924). Since the subsidiary was no longer listed in the 1924 city directory, the miscreants may have targeted the

building because the business was closed. The El Paso Brewing Assoc. was finished, and brewing would not again exist in the city until after the Repeal of Prohibition – another decade in the future.

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