

# Breweries and Beer Bottles at El Paso, Texas



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Chapter 7e  
Harry Mitchell Brewery: Bottles and Labels, Part I

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## **Chapter 7e – Harry Mitchell Brewery: Bottles and Labels**

### **Part I**

Parts of this chapter were published in “Dating El Paso Beer Bottles and Cans  
Part 2, Bottles and Labels from the Harry Mitchell Brewery.”  
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The Harry Mitchell Brewing Co. and its successor, the Mitchell Brewing Co., offered a total of seven major brands, each with a distinctive type of label, as well as several variations of almost all types. The same labels were used for returnable and non-returnable bottles, although quart labels were larger and varied slightly from the smaller, twelve-ounce labels. Only two sizes of bottles were used (twelve-ounce and quart) in both returnable and non-returnable formats. Each label type and most variations can be dated using a variety of techniques. The result is a tight chronology of Mitchell beer labels from 1934 to 1956.

### **Bottles**

Harry Mitchell’s first beer bottles were purchased from the Three Rivers Glass Co. at Three Rivers, Texas, in 1934 (*El Paso Times* 11/21/1934). The Three Rivers Glass Co. was one of the very few glass houses within the state of Texas at that time. The plant operated from 1922 to 1936, when it was forced out of business by Hartford-Empire, one of the giant bottle-machine producers. The Ball Brothers purchased the factory and operated it for a single year, probably to honor existing contracts. The Balls then closed the plant permanently (Smith 1989).

Whenever possible, Mitchell intended to buy Texas products to supply the brewery. The very few photos of the earliest bottles (with Special Quality Lager Beer labels) show that they were export style – the standard by that time – and some were light aqua in color, possibly the ones made by Three Rivers. It is likely, however, that most were amber. By the time he used Quality Lager Beer Labels (1936), all bottles I have seen were amber.

One characteristic of returnable beer bottles influenced the color transition. Unlike the soda bottling industry, where bottles were very individualized, with embossed or Applied Color Lettering (ACL) labels, the vast majority of U.S. beer bottles were generic with paper labels – at least by the end of Prohibition. Since the labels disintegrated during the washing operation, there

was no need for customers – especially bars – to carefully segregate the bottles by brand. In a bar, *any* empty 12-ounce bottle would be placed in *any* empty case. As long as the case contained twenty-four 12-ounce bottles, everyone was happy. Since amber bottles were the industry standard, the bulk of Mitchell’s returns were almost certainly that color. Within a very few years, amber bottles had almost certainly replaced the vast majority of Mitchell’s original light aqua supply.

### Size

Aside from the sample bottles (discussed below), Mitchell used bottles in two sizes: 12-ounce and quarts. Although beer bottles were made in numerous sizes, by far the most popular one was the 12-ounce bottle – certainly the industry “standard” for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The quart was the most common of the larger sizes. A notable exception was the West Coast, where an 11-ounce standard developed. Aside from a brief period during World War II, when the War Production Board restricted container sizes to 12, 32, and 64 ounces, the West Coast has retained the 11-ounce standard in stark contrast with the rest of the country. Mitchell used 11-ounce cans for West Coast sales in two instances, but I have found no evidence for 11-ounce bottles.



Figure 7e-1 – Salesman’s sample bottle (eBay)

### Salesman’s Sample Bottles

Very early, likely about the time the brewery opened in 1934, Mitchell purchased at least two orders of small, probably two- or three-ounce bottles for use by his salesmen or as advertising gimmicks. I have not personally examined one of these, but I recorded several from past eBay auctions. Some were light aqua in color; others were amber (Figure 7e-1). Most were sealed with a crown cap but had no contents. One example had a continuous-thread finish, although it lacked a cap (Figure 7e-2).



Figure 7e-2 – Finish and label of a salesman’s sample bottle (eBay)

All examples on eBay had the Special Quality Lager labels – the earliest type used by Mitchell. The initial bottles, likely the aqua ones, were probably made by the Three Rivers Glass Co. The amber ones may have been manufactured by a different glass house.

## Returnable Bottles

The 12-ounce returnable bottle was the Mitchell brewery standard during the entire 22-

year history of the brewery. Mitchell may also have used returnable quart bottles, although that is unlikely.

According to former Mitchell’s employee, Alfredo Perea, pressure from Grand Prize Beer, an import into El Paso from Houston, forced the Mitchell Brewery to begin bottling in quarts. Grand Prize first appeared in El Paso in 1937, but it probably took at least a year, perhaps ca. 1938, for pressure from the outsider to increase sufficiently to force the Mitchell breweriana collectors (personal communication 3/16/2003), dated the use of quarts from early 1940s.



Figure 7e-3 – Owens-Illinois ad Returnable Quart (non-returnable) bottle (*Brewers Digest* 1954b:8)



Figure 7e-4 – Returnable quart beer bottle (eBay)

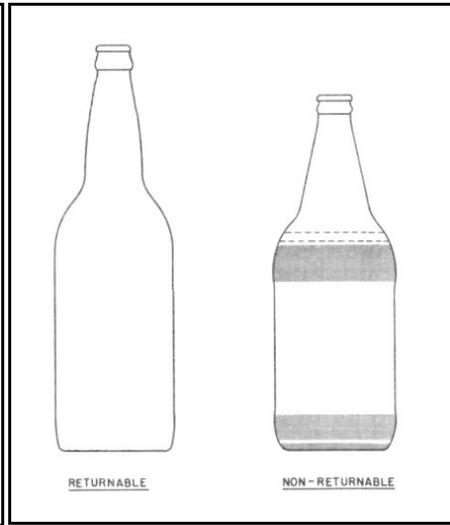


Figure 7e-5 – Comparison of returnable and non-returnable quart bottles (Glass Packaging Institute, 1977)

1938, for pressure from the outsider to increase change. Rick Chavez, one of the most committed

There is, however, one problem with collector wisdom, at least in this case. Collectors divide Mitchell quarts into “long-neck” and “short-neck” bottles. The short-neck designation is certainly a reference to the non-returnable bottle used during the 1940s and 1950s (see below). However, the long-neck term could refer to a returnable bottles (all of which had “long” necks) or one of the “tavern” non returnables – probably the latter (Figures 7e-3, 7e-4, and 7e-5). This will be resolved below.

## Non-Returnable Bottles

From the late 1930s or early 1940s until about 1955, Mitchell's also used a variety of non-returnable bottles. The non-returnables were undoubtedly inspired by the introduction of beer cans on a national scale in 1935 (*Fortune* 1936:75-82). Since cans almost immediately captured a share of the market for home sales of beer, the glass industry was quick to respond with its countermeasure, the non-returnable bottle.

The Owens-Illinois Glass Co. announced the availability of the Stubby – a non-returnable beer bottle – in August 1935. The stubby eventually became used as a returnable bottle and was often used for other foods and drinks, including grape juice, vinegar, wine, catsup, and other food liquids (*Brewers Technical Review* 1935:275-276). The bottles are still in use in non-beer capacities – and for beer on the West Coast (e.g., see U.S. Brewers Assoc. 1973:Series 69) – in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Figure 7e-6).

The next non-returnable bottle was called the Steinie. These had swelled necks and looked like squat export beer bottles (Toulouse 1937:344-345; 1939:62-68). Steinies were available by October 1936 and were used until at least the 1970s, although their popularity declined by 1947 (U.S. Brewers Assoc. 1973:Series 66). Initially, Steinies were only used as non-returnable bottles, but they were soon refilled. Unlike the Stubby,



Figure 7e-6 – Western Stubbie

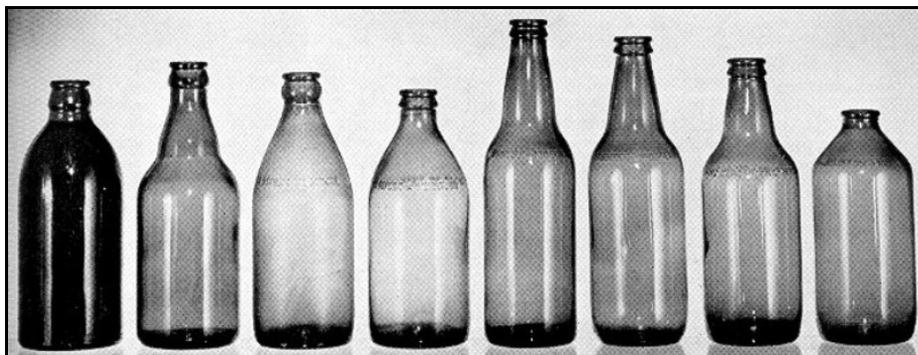


Figure 7e-7 – Series of non-returnable beer bottles, 1935-1963 (*American Brewer* 1963:19)

they were just tall enough to use the same bottling and capping machines as those used for 12-ounce returnable bottles. Figure 7e-7 shows a photo of the eight standardized non-returnable beer bottles.

The Steinie was the first non-returnable bottle used by Mitchell, probably during the late 1930s, certainly by 1942. I have three examples of quart Steinie bottles in my collection, all identical (Figure 7e-8). Each has the Type I, Variation A paper label (see below for label types) used by Mitchell from 1940 to ca. 1946. Each of my bottles is embossed “9 <0> 2. / 22” on its base. The “9” identifies Plant No. 9 at



Figure 7e-9 – Harry Mitchell 12-ounce Steinie bottle

Streator, Illinois; the “<0>” indicates the Owens-Illinois logo used from 1929 to ca. 1960; and the “2.” is at date code for 1942. The “22” is a mold code.

A 12-ounce example in my collection has the Type II, Variation B Premium Beer label (see below for label types), used by Mitchell from ca. 1947 to 1952 (Figure 7e-9). The base of the bottle was embossed “203-A / R-in-a-Triangle / 7 12 46.” The logo was used by the F.E. Reed Glass Co., Rochester, New York, from 1923 to 1956. It is unlikely that Mitchell ordered beer bottles from New York. This one may have been refilled by Mitchell.

The label on my 12-ounce example is made of foil. Rick Chavez claims that foil labels on Steinie bottles are forgeries (i.e., labels soaked off of returnable bottles and reapplied to Steinies).

However, he noted that this style of paper label was applied during the same time period when Steinies were used.<sup>1</sup> According to Chavez, these bottles are scarce, possibly indicating that they were only used for a short period of time. This scarcity is not surprising; Steinies were being rapidly replaced by the late 1940s.

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<sup>1</sup> I tend to disagree with Rick on this one. I have an identical foil label on a returnable bottle with a 1947 date code. I suspect that the foil labels on Steinie bottles from this period *are* genuine.



Figure 7e-8 – Harry Mitchell Steinie quart bottle

Steinies were generally replaced nationally by the “No Deposit” or “Packie” bottles, developed in 1939 and used for about a decade. The major characteristics of these bottles were their much lighter weight and the distinctive stippling over their entire bodies. The bottles were a bit shorter, with a gentle slope to their shoulders (*Glass Packer* 1939:332).

One-Way bottles, in turn, replaced the Packies. Although the One-Way bottle was developed in 1944, it was initially restricted to military use. One-Way bottles were in general use by the brewing industry from 1947 into the 1950s – although the style remained available in the 11-ounce size until at least the 1970s. Like the Packie, these were fully stippled bottles, but the shape was slightly different; they were lighter in weight; and there was a modification to the finish. The traditional crown finish had two parts – the upper “crowning ring” or “locking ring” and the lower “reinforcing ring.” On returnable bottles and the first three non-returnable styles, the reinforcing ring was much larger than the crowning ring – to take the pressure of repeated fillings. In the “One-Way” bottle, the reinforcing ring was reduced in size until it was almost as small as the upper ring

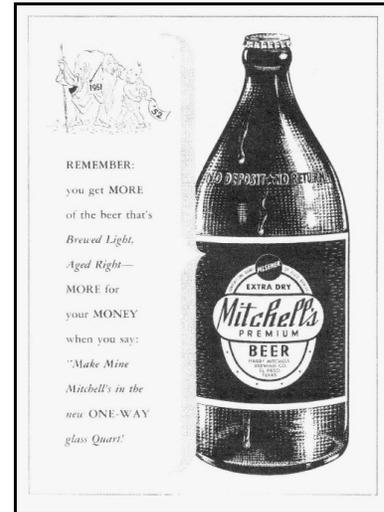


Figure 7e-10 – Mitchell’s non-returnable quart bottle (Sun Carnival Program 1951)

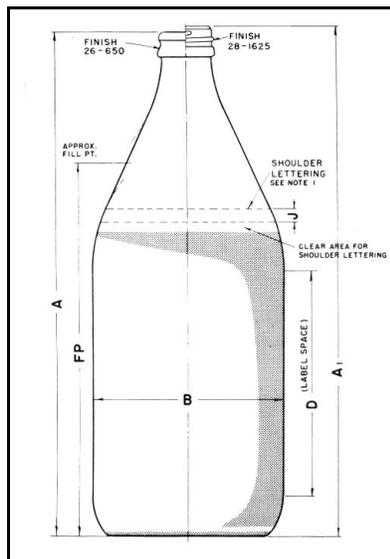


Figure 7e-11 – Single Trip Beer Bottle – Quart (U.S. Brewers Assoc. 1973:Series 60)

(*Brewers Digest* 1944:10-11; Toulouse 1945:45-47). I have found no evidence that Mitchell used the 12-ounce One-Way bottle.

Apparently, the quart-size ONE-WAY bottle was more closely patterned after the “packie” bottle. These had the “packie” slope to the shoulder and the full-size crown finish. Mitchell advertised the bottle in a quart size in late 1951 as the “new “ONE-WAY” glass quart” (Figure 7e-10). This “packie” quart style also appeared in a photo of a meeting between Mitchell salesmen and officials of the Ritter-Walker Distributing Co. of Tucson. Notably, all 12-ounce bottles in the photo are returnables (Sun Carnival Program 1951; *Arizona Brewers Journal* 1951:105). This “packie” style ONE-WAY quart bottle remained in use until at least the 1970s as the Single

Trip Beer Bottle, although the finish was available in either the “double-ring” or a non-continuous-thread types by that time (U.S. Brewers Assoc. 1973:Series 60 – Figure 7e-11).

In 1948, the industry introduced a new “Tavern” bottle – advertised by Owens-Illinois as the Tall One-Way bottle – that was very similar in shape to the export beer bottle. This was non-returnable and was intended to replace the returnable bottles for use in bars and restaurants. Some breweries, however, offered these for sale to the public (*Modern Packaging* 1948:94-101). It is possible that Mitchell used this variation, but I have found no evidence.

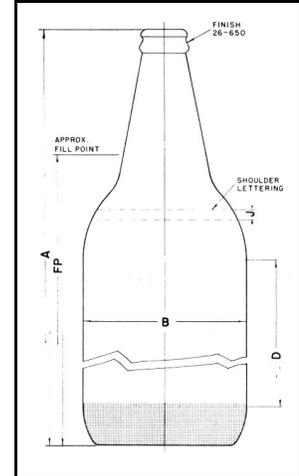


Figure 7e-12 – Export Shape One-Way Beer Bottle (U.S. Brewers Assoc. 1973:Series 165)



Figure 7e-13 – Mitchell’s final quart Tall One-Way bottle (eBay)

About the same time – certainly no later than 1950 – the Tall One-Way bottle became available in a quart size. These bottles had a slight curve in the neck, reminiscent of the export beer bottle (Figure 7e-12). They continued in use to at least the 1970s as the “Export Shape One-Way Beer Bottle” (U.S. Brewers Assoc. 1973:Series 165). Like the 12-ounce size, the quart bottles were available in at least two neck sizes, although I have been unable to determine whether these were temporally defined or was more tied to different manufacturers. It is certain that the Anchor Hocking Glass Co. offered more than one size (e.g., see Hopper 2000:111, 116). For the most part, however, the quart size remained virtually unchanged throughout the span when they were offered (compare Figures 7e-3 and 7e-13).

These Tall One-Way Quarts were the last non-returnable quart bottles used by Mitchell. An eBay seller auctioned one of these that was embossed “15 {I-in-an-oval} 6 / 3 / GB-1812” on the base. As noted above, the “15” indicated the plant at Waco, Texas; the Oval-I was the logo used by the Illinois Glass Co. between 1954 and the present; the “6” was a date code for 1956; the “3” was a mold number; and “GB-1812” was the model or catalog number for the bottle.

The final quart had the body label (Style 3, Variation A) with the tiny “HARRY” within the curl of the “M” in “Mitchell’s” at the bottom (Figure 7e-13). The neck label had “Mitchell’s” in black letters. These were the first of this style of label and are thus quite late to appear on a bottle with 1956 date code. To further complicate the issue, the cap on the bottle is the very last type used by the Mitchell Brewery. The only explanation is that the firm had the labels made ca. 1952 and continued to use them until the brewery closed.

About 1953, the 12-ounce Tavern bottle was modified slightly, reducing the size from 8" to 7.5" in height (*Brewers Digest* 1954a:10-14). Judging by eBay auctions, these were the most popular of the three Tavern bottle sizes. Mitchell adopted these bottles at some point, probably during the brewery’s last year in business, but I have never found an ad for them. The example in the Wil Mitchell collection had the I-in-an-Oval logo used by the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. beginning in 1954 and a “6” (1956) date code (Figure 7e-14). Unfortunately, the angle of the photo made it impossible to determine the plant code. Since Mitchell preferred to deal with Texas firms, the bottle was probably made at Plant No. 15, Waco, Texas. The base was also embossed “DB-7” – the Owens-Illinois model number for the modified Tavern bottle – along with “Duraglas” in script. When Falstaff purchased the Mitchell plant, it used an identical bottle – with its own label, of course.



Figure 7e-14 – Mitchell’s 12-ounce Tavern bottle (Wil Mitchell collection)

A second, shorter modification (to 7") occurred in 1954 and was used until ca. 1965, but there is no sign that Mitchell used these (*Modern Brewery Age* 1965:47). The final industry standard style – the “Handy Bottle” – was not introduced until 1959 – well after the Falstaff Brewing Co. had purchased the El Paso brewery (*Modern Packaging* 1961:42). Used until 1965 or later, this was the main style of non-returnable bottle used by the El Paso Falstaff plant. See Table 7e-1 for a chronology of Mitchell non-returnable bottle styles.

**Table 7e-1 – Non-Returnable Beer Bottles**

Type	Size	Label Type*	Dates
Steinie	Q	Quality Lager; parallelogram with red bar [Type 1, Variation A]**	ca. 1939-ca. 1943
Steinie	Q	Premium; oval label (gold) on blue background [Type 1, Variation A]	ca. 1940-ca. 1947
Steinie	Q	Premium; oval label (yellow) on blue background [Type 1, Variation B]**	ca. 1940-ca. 1947
Steinie	12	Premium; oval label on red background; IRTP [Type 2, Variation A]	ca. 1946-ca. 1947
1-Way	Q	Premium; oval label on red background; no IRTP; contents in white border [Type 2, Variation A]	1951-1953
Tavern	Q	Premium; “bell tower” [Type 3, Variation A]†	1955-1956
Tavern	12	Premium; “bell tower” [Type 3, Variation A]	1955-1956

\* See discussion of label types for explanations about the classification system.

\*\* These are dated by the labels only; I have not seen actual examples of the bottles.

† These are almost certainly the “long-neck” quart bottles referred to by collectors.

## Receipts

Unfortunately, I have only discovered five receipts from the Mitchell firms. They are informative both in what they show and by what is absent. The earliest was written on June 10, 1943, and had spaces under “Container Deposits” for 1/2, 1/4, or 1/8 “barrels” as well as “Cases 24/12’s” (i.e., 24 12-ounce bottles in the case) and “Cartons” of the same size – as well as a column for “Sales” (Figure 7e-15) The “Sales column was for the beer, while the former column detailed the amount paid for deposits on the containers. A separate area near the bottom of the receipt showed “Credit for Containers Returned.” The form did not include different kinds of beer or anything about non-returnable options. “Cases” may have been wooden, while “Cartons” may have been made of cardboard.

Container Deposits				SALES	
QTY.	UNIT	PRICE	AMOUNT	PRICE	AMOUNT
1	Barrels				
1	Barrels				
5	Cases 24/12's	2.50	12.50		
	Cartons				
(2) (3) TOTAL				BEER (1) TOTAL	8.30
Credit for Containers Returned				Total Chg. for Contn.	2.50
1	Barrels			Total Beer & Contn.	10.80
1	Barrels				
1/2	Barrels				
2	Cases 24/12's	1.63	3.26	Total Credits	1.63
	Cartons			Net Charge (7)	9.17
(4) (5) TOTAL				BEER (1) TOTAL	9.80
				AMOUNT RECEIVED	9.80

Figure 7e-15 – 1943 Mitchell receipt (Mike Hennich collection)

HARRY MITCHELL BREWING CO.  
 49-32 EL PASO, TEXAS 7-5-1949  
 Sold to: *W. E. Hennich*  
 Address: *1111 N. 1st St.*  
 Ship: *W. E. Hennich*

Container Deposits				BEER			
Quant.	ITEM	PRICE	AMOUNT	PRICE	AMOUNT		
	1/2 Barrels						
	1/4 Barrels						
2	Cases 24/12	1.20	2.40				
Total (1) (3)							

Credit for Containers Returned				Total for Beer			
Quant.	ITEM	PRICE	AMOUNT	PRICE	AMOUNT		
	1/2 Barrels						
	1/4 Barrels						
2	Cases 24/12	1.20	2.40				
Total (4) (5)							

Received Payment for H. M. B. Co. By *W. E. Hennich*  
 Customer's Signature

Figure 7e-16 – 1949 Mitchell receipt (Mike Hennich collection)

My next receipt, from July 9, 1949, is virtually identical, except that the line for 1/8 barrels is missing as was the line for “Cases.” The column formerly marked “Sales” was now labeled “Beer” (Figure 7-16). This suggests that the brewery eliminated the smallest keg size by the end of the 1940s as well as wooden cases for the bottles.

HARRY MITCHELL BREWING CO.  
 P. O. Box 2036 Phone 2-6557  
 1684-9 EL PASO, TEXAS 2-11-1950  
 Sold to: *W. E. Hennich*  
 Address: *1111 N. 1st St.*  
 Ship: *W. E. Hennich*

Container Deposits				BEER			
Quant.	ITEM	PRICE	AMOUNT	PRICE	AMOUNT		
	1/2 Barrels						
	1/4 Barrels						
6	Bottles 24/12	.50	3.00	.22	1.32		
	Cans						
Total (2) (3)							

Credit for Containers Returned				Total for Beer			
Quant.	ITEM	PRICE	AMOUNT	PRICE	AMOUNT		
	1/2 Barrels						
	1/4 Barrels						
7	Cases 24/12	.24	1.68				
Total (4) (5)							

Received Payment for H. M. B. Co. By *W. E. Hennich*  
 Customer's Signature

Figure 7e-17 – 1950 Mitchell receipt (Mike Hennich collection)

A sales ticket written on February 11, 1950, was virtually identical, except that a line for “Cans” had been added. Although the

receipts from 1943 and 1949 did not include the name of the manufacturer, the 1950 receipt was made by the Baltimore Salesbook Co., El Paso, Texas (Figure 7e-17). Since the can line was added in December 1949, these new tickets were printed especially to include can sales. Mitchell still used an identical receipt on October 21, 1952, although these were made by “Hill’s–El Paso.”

By March 13, 1953, the tickets had been greatly modified – with seven entries:

- Export Bottles 24/12
- Cans 24/12
- Cans 12/12
- N.R. Bottles Quarts 12/32
- N.R. Bottles 24/12
- 1/2 Barrels
- 1/4 Barrels

As with the earlier receipts, the main area was divided into “Container Deposits” and “Beer.” A separate section allowed for “Credit for Container Returns.” Hill’s still made the tickets. It is clear that Mitchell offered non-returnable bottles in both 12-ounce and quart sizes.

The format was virtually unchanged on February 22, 1955, although the “Bell Tower” logo had been added to the upper left corner (Figure 7e-18). Once again, the receipt listed both 12-ounce and quart sizes of non-returnable bottles.

### Speculations on Non-Returnable Bottles

There were apparently three periods when the Mitchell Brewery used non-returnable bottles. All Mitchell non-returnable bottles that I can find in advertisements or collections have one thing in common: All could be filled by the bottling equipment already in use at the brewery – at least in the sizes used by Mitchell. By the late 1930s, one of the selling points for the Steinie bottle was that it was just tall enough to be filled and capped by all brands of existing bottling machinery (*Brewers Digest* 1938:57). The same was true with quart sizes. The Packie and One-Way 12-ounce bottles, however, required a change of production equipment.

Containers Deposits		BEER	
QTY	PRICE	QTY	AMOUNT
4	24/12	96	10.40
4	24/22	96	10.40
TOTAL		192	20.80
Credit for Containers Returned		192	2.00
TOTAL		192	18.80

Figure 7e-18 – 1955 Mitchell receipt (Mike Hennich collection)

In addition, there was extensive newspaper coverage of the installation of the can unit in 1949 and the renovations of 1951. Even though the bottling line was mentioned in numerous places, there was *no* reference to any modification for non-returnable bottles. Mitchell advertised sporadically in the El Paso newspapers but almost never advertised non-returnable beer bottles – even though cans received heavy coverage after their introduction in 1949. It is *very* clear that non-returnable bottles always played a minor part in Mitchell sales.

Mitchell used non-returnable bottles during three time periods: 1) late 1930s-1940s; 1951-ca. 1953; and 1955-1956. Each of these has a different set of ramifications and explanations. It is possible that the use of one non-returnable style continued until the next bottle type replaced it, but there is no strong evidence to support that hypothesis.

#### 1. Late 1930s-1940s

According to the Perea interview, Mitchell began using quart bottles due to pressure from local sales of Grand Prize Beer. Since Grand Prize did not set up a sales office at El Paso until 1937, and it would presumably take awhile for a new product to establish a local market, that

pressure may not have been a sufficient force until 1939 or even later. However, there was another force at work.

The United States entered World War II in 1939. Congress created the War Production Board in January 1941 to deal with real or potential shortages that could affect the U.S. participation in the conflict, and two of the first items to be restricted were glass bottles and sheet steel (used for making crown caps). This scarcity caused the reuse of crown caps, scavenged from the local bars. According to local tradition, Harry Mitchell, himself, went to local bars to beg for the used crown caps that were then refurbished by the women in the bottling department. To help alleviate the glass restrictions, many brewers began using quart bottles – often called “Victory Quarts.” In addition to using less glass, they also used less than half as many crown caps in comparison to 12-ounce bottles (Baron 1962:334-335; *Canning Age* 1942:143-144; Gass 1941:29-30).

It is thus likely that Mitchell adopted the quart Steinie bottle ca. 1939 or 1940, possibly not until 1941. Chavez stated that quarts were not used until the 1940s, and the earliest quart label was for Quality Lager Beer – the style used between ca. 1939 and 1943. The next label style – for Mitchell’s Premium Beer – was adopted in 1940 and used until ca. 1947. The labels were made in two variations (see label section), one for local use, the other for sales outside El Paso. The only Steinie quarts I have personally examined had the local version of this label and date codes on the bottles for 1942. A Mitchell receipt for 1943 did not have a specific place for either non-returnable bottles or for quarts.

Because of the war restrictions on glass, it is virtually certain that Mitchell used Steinie quarts as returnable bottles. It is also probable that Mitchell discontinued the use of quarts fairly soon after the end of the war in 1945. They were likely not used after the end of 1946. However, Mitchell apparently briefly offered a 12-ounce Steinie bottle, apparently in 1946 and 1947. Chavez described the 12-ounce Steinie as “scarce”; these were probably ordered once and refilled until they wore out. El Pasoans apparently preferred returnable bottles. As noted above, there was no mention of either quarts or non-returnable bottles in the extensive coverage of the introduction of the can line in 1949.

## 2. 1951-1953

Harry Mitchell announced his retirement from active business in July 1951 and stated that both he and Lela had sold all of their stock in the brewery. This created a complete reorganization of the firm and the Board of Directors. Charles A. Kuper, assumed the presidency, with Walter A. Vetter as vice president. The new Board elected to return to the non-returnable quart bottle.

There are at least two advertisements and a photo in an article (cited elsewhere – also see Figure 7e-10) that clearly show the 1951 bottle (called “new” in a late 1951 ad) to be the “One-Way” bottle, developed in 1944 and initially restricted to military use. As noted above, One-Way bottles were in general use by the brewing industry from 1947 into the 1950s and later. Mitchell receipts for July 1949 and February 1950 do not include spaces for either quart sizes or non-returnable bottles, although the 1950 ticket had a space for cans.

Promotion of the “new” quart disappeared almost as soon as it began. I can find no ads for the bottle after 1951. It is highly likely that the brewery only ordered the bottles once and used them until they were all sold. The label shown in the ads was the one adopted in 1951, and the 12-ounce variation of the label continued in use for a couple more years.

In an uncited article from the Hennech collection, Charles A. Kuper, president of the Mitchell Brewing Co., stated that the brewery produced “packaged beer [in] bottles, cans and one-way glass bottles” in 1953. An extant March 1953 Mitchell receipt confirms the date – with rows for both 12-ounce and quart sizes of “N.R.” bottles.

## 3. 1955-1956

Although I have found no historical evidence for the brewery’s adoption of the final non-returnable beer bottle, the July 8, 1954, meeting of the Board of Directors noted that “if the 12.63% increase in sales continued and projecting 1955 sales, the Company would be 12,000 bbls. over capacity.” In other words, the brewery would not be able to keep up with the demand. The Board discussed “enlarging the plant” but reached no firm conclusion. This projection likely led to a new attempt at using a non-returnable bottle. A receipt used in February 1955 had spaces for both 12-ounce and quart non-returnable bottles.

As noted above, the Wil Mitchell collection contains a modified Tavern bottle, that was introduced to the market ca. 1953 and used for several years. These bottles resembled returnable bottles (including the long, swelled neck) and could be filled on the same machinery. They were intended for use in bars, taverns, and restaurants but could also be sold for home use. The bottles referred to by collectors as “long-neck quarts” were almost certainly the larger version of the Tavern bottles – that had long necks (see Figures 7e3, 7e4, and 7e5).

Although not the very last one used by the firm, the label on the Wil Mitchell bottle was one of the last ones used, and his bottle had a 1956 date code. The quart labels are so rare that collectors say there is only one known. These bottles were probably adopted in mid- to late 1955 and used until the sale of the brewery to Falstaff in April 1956. As a post-script, the exact style of 12-ounce non-returnable bottle was used by Falstaff at the El Paso brewery – apparently continuing the Mitchell tradition.

### **Harry Mitchell Labels**

The Harry Mitchell Brewing Co. and its successor, the Mitchell Brewing Co. used a total of seven major brands, each with a distinctive type of label on its bottles as well as several variations of almost all types. The same labels were used for returnable and (later) non-returnable bottles, although quart labels were larger and varied slightly from the smaller, twelve-ounce labels. Each label type and most variations can be dated using a variety of techniques. The result is a close chronology of Mitchell beer labels from 1934 to 1956.

### **Fonts**

The words, Harry Mitchell’s (and later, Mitchell’s), appeared in five different fonts (Table 7e-2 and Figure 7e-19). The first brand, Special Quality Lager Beer, used a script font for “Harry Mitchell’s.” The “Harry Mitchell’s” font for the second brand, Quality Lager Beer, and for Bock Beer used a stylized font with an extended “y” and “M” that I have called Style I. A block font with capital letters (Style II) was used for the word “Mitchell’s” on the first label type for Premium Beer and for Select Beer. The second type of Premium Beer label used another highly-stylized font (Type III), which was modified for the Bell Tower Premium label type (Style IV). During the last two years, the apostrophe-s was deleted from the label, although the font style remained the same.

**Table 7e-2 – Fonts used for Harry Mitchell Name**

Font	Label	Name	Dates
Script	Special Quality Lager Beer	<i>Harry Mitchell's</i>	1934-1937
Style I	Quality Lager Beer; Quality Bock Beer	Harry Mitchell's	1936-1943
Style II	Premium Beer (Label Type 1) Select Beer	MITCHELL'S	1940-1947
Style III	Premium Beer (Label Type 2)	Mitchell's	1947-1953
Style IV	Premium Beer (Label Type 3)	Mitchell's*	1953-1956

\* Labels during the 1955-1956 period dropped the apostrophe-s – Mitchell.

**Twelve-Ounce Labels**

**Harry Mitchell's Special Quality Lager Beer (one type)**

**Type 1 (1934-1937)**

The first label for Quality Lager Beer was characterized by the word “SPECIAL” in outlined letters diagonally across the parallelogram-shaped label. This is one of the few labels with no sub-variations (Table 7e-3). The label had the Internal Revenue Tax Paid (IRTP) inscription on the left side along with the U-permit



Figure 7e-20 – Harry Mitchell Special Quality Lager Beer label (Jim Mitchell collection)



Figure 7e-19 – The five different Mitchell fonts – from earliest (top) to latest (bottom)

number (Figure 7e-20).<sup>2</sup> U-permits were required by the Federal Government from 1933 to at least 1935, although some were still used in 1936 (Kay 2002, 2012). Each brewery had its own number; U-508 was assigned to Harry Mitchell. The words, Harry Mitchell, appeared in script. A letter in the Jim Mitchell collection had a date of January 26, 1937, and a drawing of the Special Quality Lager Beer label (Figure 7e-21). It is possible that the brewery was just using up old stationery, but the brand may also have still been carried early in 1937.



Figure 7e-21 – Harry Mitchell letterhead, January 1937 (Jim Mitchell collection)



Figure 7e-22 – Neck label for Special Quality Lager Beer (*El Paso Times* 5/4/1935)

Some labels have perforations forming numerals in the center of the label (e.g. +5●+4●3+3). Neck labels were horizontal rectangles and were marked “Mitchell’s / Special” to the left and “Quality / LAGER / BEER” to the right (Figure 7e-22; also see Figure 7e-2). Mitchell began placing advertisements in the El Paso

newspapers when the brewery first opened (*El Paso Times* 11/21/1934) and continued to run ads for Special Quality Lager as late as April 23, 1936, in the *El Paso Times* (Figure 7e-23). The next style had appeared in an ad by August 31, 1936.



Figure 7e-23 – Ad for Special Quality Lager Beer (*El Paso Times* 4/23/1936)

**Table 7e-3 - Harry Mitchell’s Special Quality Lager Beer (1934-1936)**

Type	Variation	Identifying Characteristics	Dates Used
1	A	Special in outlined letters	1934-1937*

<sup>2</sup> The IRTP was required by law in June 1935.

\* It is almost certain that these labels all contain a U-permit (U-508) required by the Federal Government from 1933 to at least 1935, although some companies still used the numbers in 1936 (Kay 2002, 2012).

**Harry Mitchell’s Quality Lager Beer (two types)**

**Type 1 (1936-1943)**

These are mostly similar to the Special Quality Lager Beer labels (including the parallelogram shape) except that the word “SPECIAL” is missing (Figure 7e-24). The labels continued to be parallelograms, but this type had a total of five variations (Table 7e-4). The same neck label was used with all variations of body label. These were marked “Harry Mitchell’s (stylized - Style I) / QUALITY (olive green) / LAGER BEER (red)” (Figure 7e-25). A special neck label was simply labeled Winter Beer (Figure 7e-26). Although Rick Chavez told me these are found on Quality Lager Beer bottles, I have been unable to pin their use down to only one label variation. They must therefore be dated to the full period of use of the Quality Lager labels (1936-1943).



Figure 7e-24 – Ad for Harry Mitchell’s Quality Lager Beer (Mike Hennech collection)



Figure 7e-25 – Quality Lager Beer neck label (Jim Mitchell collection)

It should also be noted that there was an overlap in the production of Quality Lager Beer and Premium Beer from 1940 to 1943 (Figure 7e-27).

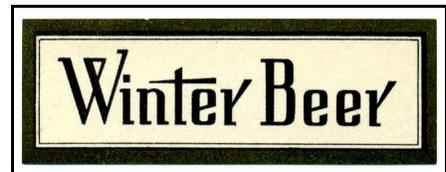


Figure 7e-26 – Winter Beer neck label – found on Quality Lager Beer bottles (Jim Mitchell collection)

Both brands were frequently advertised together in El Paso newspapers during that period. All variations used the Style I font for Harry Mitchell’s.



Figure 7e-27 – Ad showing both Quality Lager Beer and Premium Beer (*El Paso Herald* 8/27/1940)



Figure 7e-30 – Quality Lager Beer label – Solid Letters, No Bar (Jim Mitchell collection)



Figure 7e-31 – Quality Lager Beer label – Red Bar, Flat Letters (Jim Mitchell collection)

Variation A – Solid letters for LAGER BEER; U-permit # U-508 (Figure 7e-28). Ads began in the *El Paso Times* on August 23, 1936; the labels were probably only used for a very short time. The only bottle I have personally examined with the label was embossed “6 <0> 6<sup>3</sup> / 33 / G II” on the base (Figure 7e-29). The bottle was made at the Alton, Illinois, plant of the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. in 1936.

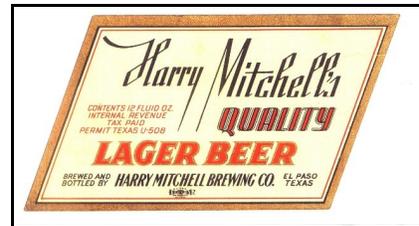


Figure 7e-28 – Quality Lager Beer label with U-permit # U-508 (Jim Mitchell collection)

Variation B – same as Variation A but no U-permit (Figure 7e-30). These were probably used from late 1936 to late 1938 or early 1939.

Variation C – red bar across the label with white LAGER BEER (Figure 7e-31). Ads ran in the *El Paso Times* from at least May 6, 1939 until September 7, 1943. The only bottle I have examined was embossed “7 <0> 7 / 13. / A / G II” on the base (Figure 7e-32). The bottle was made at the Streator, Illinois, factory of the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. in 1937. Being returnable, the bottle was probably in circulation several times before the Variation C label was applied to it.



Figure 7e-29 – Quality Lager Beer bottle with U-permit

<sup>3</sup> The <0> indicates the Owens-Illinois symbol used from 1929 to ca. 1960.



Figure 7e-32 – Quality Lager Beer bottle – Red Bar

Variation D – same as Variation C but white letters in LAGER BEER are three dimensional (Figure 7e-33). Currently, I have found no way to tell any difference in dates between this variation and Variation C. Both should be dated 1939 to 1943.



Figure 7e-33 – Quality Lager Beer label – Red Bar, 3-D Letters (eBay)

Variation E – same as Variation A, but LAGER BEER is in outlined letters – found in El Paso newspapers from at least July 3, 1937, to the summer of 1938 (Figure 7e-34); however, according to Rick Chavez, no labels of this kind have ever been found. Despite the newspaper ads, no labels of this kind were ever printed.

**Type 2** (dates unclear – possibly ca. 1936-1939)

There was only one variation of the Type 2 label. The label has essentially the same layout as the Type 1 label but was rectangular in shape



Figure 7e-35 – Rectangular Quality Lager Beer label (Jim Mitchell collection)



Figure 7e-34 – Newspaper Version of Quality Lager Beer label (*El Paso Times* July 3, 1937)

(Figure 7e-35). According to Rick Chavez, this was used during the 1936-1939 period because of their close resemblance to the Type 1, Variation B label. These are very rare and may have been a trial to check public opinion on a label change or may have been a short-lived error. However, the public – or Mitchell – apparently preferred the parallelogram shape. The only known label is in the Jim Mitchell collection.

**Table 7e-4 - Harry Mitchell's Quality Lager Beer - 12 oz. (1936-1943)**

Type	Variation	Identifying Characteristics	Dates Used
1	A	Parallelogram; No Special; Quality LAGER BEER (solid letters); with U-Permit*	1936
1	B	Same as A but no U-Permit**	1936-1939?
1	C	Same but red bar across label with white LAGER BEER	1939-1943
1	D	Same as C but LAGER BEER letters are 3-dimensional	1939-1943
2	A	Same as 1B but rectangular label†	1936-1939?

\* In the first Mitchell ad for Type 1 labels (EPT August 1, 1936), the label clearly shows a V-508. I have never actually seen a V-permit on a Mitchell's label.

\*\* A label similar to Type 1, Variation B but with outlined letters and a darker outline around the label (designated Variation E) is found in ads but was never actually used on bottles (Chavez, personal communication 3/16/2003).

† These are very rare and were probably used only briefly. Since they look like Type 1, Variation B, they can be dated to the same period.

**Harry Mitchell's Bock Beer (one type)**

**Type 1 (1938-1941)**

Only one type of label is known for Harry Mitchell's Bock Beer (Table 7e-5). The brew was only bottled in returnable, twelve-ounce containers. Bock was sold concurrently with Quality

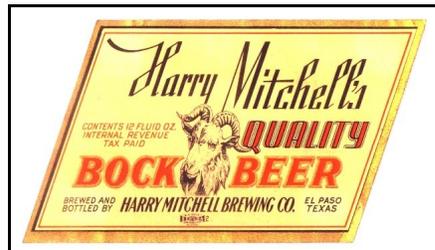


Figure 7e-37 – Bock Beer Label (Jim Mitchell collection)



Figure 7e-36 – Bock Ad – Date Unknown (Rick Chavez Collection)

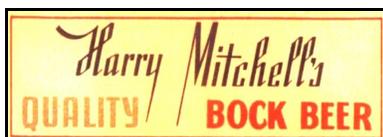


Figure 7e-38 – Bock Beer neck label (Jim Mitchell collection)

Lager from 1938 to 1941, although these dates are not as solidly verified by newspaper advertising as most of the others. The label was essentially the same as Quality Lager Beer, Variation B, except LAGER was replaced by BOCK and a ram's head was added in the center; the label

also had a slightly darker beige background (Figures 7e-36 & 7e-37). Bock beer labels used the Style I font for Harry Mitchell’s. The neck label, too, was the same as those for Quality Lager Beer except for the word BOCK (Figure 7e-38).

**Table 7e-5 - Harry Mitchell’s Bock Beer (1938-1941)**

Type	Variation	Identifying Characteristics	Dates Used
1	A	Bock; Ram’s head	1938*-1941*

\*Rick Chavez dates

**Harry Mitchell’s Select Beer (one type)**

**Type 1 (1941-1942)**

Mitchell’s Select Beer was an experiment that failed. The public expressed its disinterest by not buying the brew, so Mitchell discontinued Select Beer after just a little over a year on the market. The brewery introduced the beer in 1941, but “it was agreed among the directors that the manufacture of the brand known as ‘Select’ beer will be discontinued as of July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1942” (Harry Mitchell Brewing Co. Corporation Records 5/13/1942).

Only one type of parallelogram-shaped label was used. Along with the volume, IRTP, and brewery identification, “MITCHELL’S” was printed in black block letters with red outlines above “Select” in red script on a yellow background. The word “BEER” – in the same lettering as “MITCHELL’S” was below “Select.” The entire label was surrounded by a blue border (Figure 7e-39).



Figure 7e-39 – Mitchell’s Select Beer Label (Jim Mitchell collection)



Figure 7e-40 – Select Beer neck label (eBay)

The neck label had the same fonts as the body label with “MITCHELL’S / Select BEER” (Figure 7e-40). Like Bock, Select Beer was only bottled in twelve-ounce, returnable containers, and the labels used Style II (block capitals) font for Harry Mitchell (Table 7e-6).

At some point, Harry Mitchell had become good friends with Clarence Hammel, the owner of the Illinois Brewing Co. at Socorro, New Mexico. Although the Illinois Brewery never produced beer after the introduction of New Mexico Prohibition in 1918, Hammel, by his own admission, was raised drinking beer and probably came in contact with Mitchell by visiting the Mint in Juárez during Prohibition. Although Hammel only bottled soft drinks at Socorro (even after the U.S. became “wet” again in late 1933), he also ran a wholesale liquor business and distributed Harry Mitchell’s Beer in the central part of New Mexico.

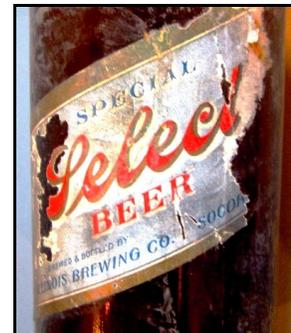


Figure 7e-41 – Select Beer Label – Illinois Brewing Co., Socorro, New Mexico

As a demonstration of their friendship, an autographed drawing of Mitchell adorned the wall above Hammel’s desk in his office and still occupies that position today in the old brewery, now the Socorro County Historical Society Museum (see Figure 7b-10). The pre-Prohibition brand of beer bottled by the Illinois Brewing Co. was called Select (Figure 7e-41), and it is very likely that Mitchell’s Select Beer was so named in honor of the old brew bottled by the Hammel family in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see Lockhart 2005 for a history of the Illinois Brewing Co.).

**Table 7e-6 - Harry Mitchell’s Select Beer (1941-1942)**

Type	Variation	Identifying Characteristics	Dates Used
1	A	Mitchell’s Select	1941*-1942

\*Rick Chavez date; corporation minutes show discontinuance in 1942.

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### **Important Disclaimer and Photo Information**

Photos came from a variety of sources under an assortment of conditions. Some are better than others. Because most of the photos came from bottles belonging collectors, I have credited the collections in which they reside or at least resided when I photographed them. If the owner of the collection took the photo, it is labeled “Courtesy of . . .” Unlabeled photos are from the author’s type collection.

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