

Breweries
and
Beer Bottles
at
El Paso, Texas



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Chapter 8b
Cans and Bottles from the Falstaff Plant

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Chapter 8b

Cans and Bottles from the Falstaff Plant

The El Paso Falstaff plant primarily produced kegs and canned beer, although it also filled non-returnable bottles and some returnables. The following study describes and dates the changes in can styles and the accompanying paper labels found on bottles. It should be noted that these dates only reflect the use of these cans and labels *by* the El Paso plant. They do not necessarily correspond to time periods for their use by other plants (e.g. the first can used in El Paso was used earlier by some of the older units).

Note that only cans (and bottle labels) with EL PASO, TEXAS as the first-listed city are considered as filled at El Paso. I have included dates given by Martells (1976) as well as my own interpretations. Martells (1976:47) noted on his attempt at dating cans: “This has never before been done, but should serve as a guide to the approximate ‘vintage’ of a can.” His dates for Falstaff cans (Martells 1976:67) are also intended for the company in general, not the El Paso unit. My dates are also approximate, although I have cited the more “solid” evidence for dates (such as the opening and closing dates for the plant). All cans used at the El Paso plant were made of steel.

Although the Falstaff brewery immediately followed Mitchell, two major trends had virtually reversed themselves by the time of the transition. The Harry Mitchell Brewery was founded on the idea of returnables. When the brewery opened in 1934, the only choice was draft beer – sold in kegs – and beer in returnable bottles. Even though cans and non-returnable bottles became available in 1935, the main focus of the Mitchell operation remained the returnable bottle until the plant closed its doors in 1956, just prior to the sale to Falstaff.

When the plant opened back up as Falstaff in the summer of 1956, both the trend away from returnables and the trend *toward* cans had taken effect. Judging by labels (see the Bottles section), returnable bottles continued to be used throughout the life of the Falstaff plant, and that was probably true of non-returnable bottles as well. However, throughout the entire tenure of Falstaff at El Paso, the bulk of the small container business (along with kegs) was concentrated on canned beer.

Falstaff Cans

During the time that Falstaff Plant No. 9 was in operation at El Paso, the brewery used cans with four different labels. Both the first and last cans had no major variations, but slight differences existed within the middle two can types (see Table 8b-1). In the case of each can variation, I will address six characteristics (description, size, top, seam, manufacturer, base) as well as dating.

Type 1 – Sir Falstaff Can

Variation A

There was only one variation of the Type 1 can. These cans were probably first used by Falstaff in 1959, prior to the opening of the El Paso plant. Rick Chavez called these the “Sir Falstaff” cans.

Description: White background with thin gold bands at top and bottom (heel) – Falstaff shield (bisected with a diagonal line – black lower half and gold upper half) with three-dimensional gold outline flanked by heads of grain on front. Below the shield

was “BEER /The Choicest Product of the / Brewers’ Art (cursive).” The registered ® symbol appeared in three places: under the lower bar of the second “F” in “FALSTAFF”; below and just to the left of the bottom point of the shield; and just below the “s” in “Brewers’ Art.” Above the shield and to the right was “Contents / 12 fluid ozs.” in cursive. Circling the entire heel was “Brewed and Packaged by FALSTAFF BREWING CORP., EL PASO, TEXAS, also St. Louis • Omaha • New Orleans • San Jose • Fort Wayne • Galveston” (Figure 8b-1).

The back of the can had two drawings of Falstaff (Shakespear’s character) to the left and right of the seam – with a small Falstaff Shield above his head (Figure 8b-2). The shield only appeared on one face, and the can had no stars in the background. This can was designated Falstaff #17 by the Beer Can Collectors Assoc. (BCCA 2001).



Figure 8b-1 – Front of Sir Falstaff can



Figure 8b-2 – Sir Falstaff, himself (back of can)



Figure 8b-3 – Top of Sir Falstaff can

Size: 12-ounce – although Falstaff made 16-ounce cans in this style, none are known from El Paso.

Top: Flat Top (steel – gold color), reinforced with raised circle; Falstaff shield printed in red surrounded by AMERICA’S PREMIUM QUALITY BEER (Figure 8b-3)

Seam style: three barely visible alignment notches, otherwise even soldering (Figure 8b-4) – late 1950s according to Martells (1976:44)

Manufacturer: unknown – a tiny mark by the seam says 83A



Figure 8b-4 – Sir Falstaff seam – magnified code in inset

Base: Gold color; steel; reinforced with raised circle; stamped “2AET” in black ink (“A” is very blurred)¹

Dates: Martells dated the style at 1959; however, since this was the first can used in El Paso, a more likely date range is 1956-1960. Falstaff reopened the old Mitchell plant in June 1956.

Type 2 – Gold-Star/Gold-Band

All cans of this style had the same basic markings. The main differences in the variations were in the tops and size.

Description: Falstaff shield with three-dimensional gold outline. The word “BEER” appeared in gold just below the shield and to the right of the point. Two gold registered ® symbols were on the can, one just below the lower bar of the “F” in “FALSTAFF” and to the left of the point at the bottom of the shield. The slogan “AMERICA’S PREMIUM QUALITY BEER” appeared in white letters in the thick gold band at the heel of the can (Figure 8b-5).

¹ It is possible that bases may have varied slightly; stamped letters changed.



Figure 8b-5 – Gold-star/gold-band can

The same markings appeared on the back and front of the can, along with a total of 34 gold, four-point stars in the white background. Between the two shields, near the top of the can was “The / Choicest / Product of the / Brewers’ / Art” in fancy cursive with a gold ® sign at the lower right (Figure 8b-6). On the right side of the seam (can held with top up) was “Brewed and Packaged by FALSTAFF BREWING CORP.,



Figure 8b-6 – The Choicest Product of the Brewers’ Art

EL PASO, TEXAS / also St. Louis • Omaha • New Orleans • San Jose • Fort Wayne • Galveston” (Figure 8b-7) To the left was “CONTENTS 12 FLUID OZS.” plus a tiny two-digit number, followed by a letter. These were apparently model codes. The same number appeared on both of my 12-ounce examples, but it is different on the 11-ounce variation. Of course, this is a minute sample.



Figure 8b-7 – Falstaff cities and seam – magnified code in insert

Variation A

Since BCCA (2001) did not distinguish according to tops, both this and Variation C fit the BCCA Falstaff #18 designation.

Size: 12-ounce – although Falstaff made 16-ounce cans in this style, none are known from El Paso.

Seam style: soldered seam with no visible notches (see Figure 8b-7). Martells (1976:44) dated these seams from 1935 to the 1950s.

Top: Flat Top (silver color), reinforced by an indented groove around the perimeter – printed “EASY-OPEN / ALUMINUM / Light-tap / Top” in red letters with a dotted line forming a triangle with the apex just below the “o” in “Top.” At the top curve of the can was “FB-1” in tiny red letters (Figure 8b-8).



Figure 8b-8 – Top of earliest gold-star/gold-band can

Manufacturer: unknown – tiny 42 A by seam

Base: Silver color; steel; reinforced with raised circle; stamped “C35Z” in black ink

Dates: This was almost certainly the earliest variation of the gold-star/gold-band cans; probable El Paso dates are 1960-1961. These cans were still in use at least as late as July 1961, when they appeared in display photos. Although the photos were in black-and-white, the labels are distinctly recognizable as the gold-star/gold-band variation (Falstaff 1961:[8-9]).

Variation B

Same as Variation A but with no markings on the top of the can. This can also fits Falstaff #18 in BCCA (2001).

Size: 12-ounce



Figure 8b-9 – Seam of 13-notch can

Top: Flat Top (steel, silver color), reinforced with raised circle; no markings

Seam style: Aside from the top, the only other difference was that the seam on my example had 13 interlaced notches, seven on one side of the seam, six on the other (Figure 8b-9).

Manufacturer: unknown – tiny 42 A by seam

Base: Silver color; steel; reinforced with raised circle; stamped “E33X” in black ink

Dates: This variation was probably used from 1961 to 1964

Variation C

This variation is almost identical with Variation B, except that the can is the 11-ounce size. Very slight changes include a much more yellow color in the shield, stars, and heel band; “CONTENTS 11 OZS.” along the left side of the seam; “CONTENTS 11 FL. OZS.” just above the shield; and the raising of a single star on both front and back to accommodate the capacity information above the shield (Figures 8b-10 & 8b-11). Beer Can Collectors of America designated this variation as Falstaff #18 (BCCA 2001).



Figure 8b-10 – 11-ounce gold-star/gold-band can – on right



Figure 8b-11 – Closeup of 11-ounce star rearrangement

Size: 11-ounce – As was the typical practice, the 11-ounce size was probably made for sale on the West Coast. Although Falstaff also made a 15-ounce can in this style (for West Coast sales), I have not heard of one from El Paso.

Top: Flat Top (steel, gold color), reinforced with

raised circle; no markings

Seam style: three notches – 1960s according to Martells (1976:44)



Figure 8b-12 – Tiny 98A beside seam

Manufacturer: unknown – tiny 98 A beside seam (Figure 8b-12)

Base: Silver color; steel; reinforced with raised circle; stamped “2CBW” in black ink

Dates: Martells dates the style at 1960, although these were probably sold concurrently with the 12-ounce cans from 1960 to 1964

Variation D

Although I have not seen this variation from El Paso, it may have existed. The only example I have was made at Omaha. Variation D is identical with Variation B, except for the top of the can. These cans were opened by one of the early pull-tab devices (Figures 8b-13), and the silver-colored, aluminum top was reinforced by an indented groove around the perimeter. Pull tabs were first offered in 1962 and were mostly replaced by 1965. The Falstaff cans were probably only used ca. 1964.



Figure 8b-13 – Gold-star /gold-band can with first pull-tab top

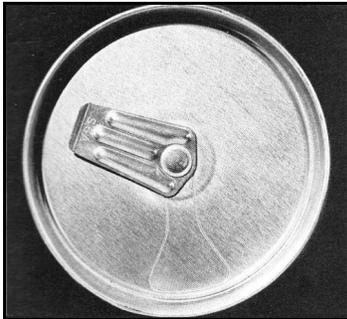


Figure 8b-14 – The initial “Fan Tab” design (Martells 1976:15)

My example also had the gold ® moved to a location below the lower bar on the *third* “F” in “FALSTAFF” on the shield. It also had the Stacked-C logo of the Continental Can Co. along the seam. These cans may have *only* been made for the Omaha plant. Martells (1976:15) noted that this was “the very first pull tab, designed and patented by Alcoa Aluminum in 1962.” Because of the shape, the “tab was given the nick name, “Fan Tab” by the can companies. This is a very plain design with many potentially sharp edges” (Figure 8b-14).

These sharp edges produced a condition known at the time as “pop-top thumb.” Almost everything about the design could (and frequently did) cause shallow – and sometimes deeper – cuts on the thumb. The author – a heavy beer drinker during the 1960s – experienced multiple cuts on both thumbs.

Variation E

Like Variation D, this can is identical with Variation B, except for the top of the can. These cans were opened by another of the early pull-tab devices (Figure 8b-15). Martells (1976:16) suggested that this was called the “U Tab” – used between 1963 and 1965 (Figure 8b-16). There are three notable improvements in this design, some also noted by Martells.



Figure 8b-15 – Gold-star/gold-band can with second pull-tab still in place (eBay)

First, the indented groove to reinforce the top has been augmented by “smile beads” – described by Martells (1976:15) as “a raised rib on either side of the drinking hole to reduce the lip pressure on the edge of the slot.”

Maxwell (1993:107-108), however, suggested that smile beads were introduced by both American and Continental Can in 1964 to reduce spillage. Second, the instructions “LIFT TAB & PULL” have been stamped in a “bent” shape to follow the contour of the tab and drinking hole – with “PAT PEND” parallel to the opposite side of the tab. Third, the tab has been greatly redesigned, with the sides bent farther under to reduce contact with sharp edges (the “U Tab” effect) and six embossed dots in the center of the tab to aid in grasping it.



Figure 8b-16 – Improved “Fan-Tab” design (Martells (1976:16)

Type 3 – Silver-Star/Blue-Band

As with the gold-star/gold-band cans, all three variations of the silver-star/blue-band cans are based on the same basic description.

Description: Falstaff shield now is brown in the lower half with alternating gold and yellow horizontal lines in the upper half. The shield now has a silver outline with “BEER” in the lower part of the shield and a crowned lion’s head in the curve of the shield. The band at the heel is blue, with “America’s Premium Quality Beer (italics)” in silver. There are now 28 4-pointed silver stars in the background. Two gold ® symbols are just after the final “F” in “FALSTAFF” on the shield and just below the point of the shield. Front and back shields and logos are the same (Figure 8b-17).²



Figure 8b-17 – Silver-star/blue-band can

² The photos in the figures are of the Variation B cans.



Figure 8b-18 – The Choicest Product of the Brewers’ Art – in blue

Like the gold-star counterpart, these cans have “The / Choicest / Product of the / Brewers’ / Art” in fancy cursive at the upper area between the front and back shield, but now the slogan is in blue cursive and the ® has disappeared (Figure 8b-18). The slogan “AMERICA’S PREMIUM QUALITY BEER” now appears in silver letters in a wide

blue band at the can’s heel. Immediately to the right of the seam, the can is now labeled “FALSTAFF BREWING CORP., EL PASO, TEXAS / St. Louis • Omaha • New Orleans • San Jose • Fort Wayne • Galveston • Cranston, R.I.” in blue letters. The area to the left of the seam has “CONTENTS 12 FLUID OZS.” also in blue (Figure 8b-19).



Figure 8b-19 – Falstaff cities and seam

Variation A

Size: 12-ounce

Top: Flat Top

Seam style and manufacturer: unknown – thus far, I have not seen this style can from El Paso, although Rick Chavez stated that it exists, and the can style is shown in BCCA (2001).

Dates: Martells dated this style at 1964 (from the Galveston plant), although the El Paso plant probably only ordered these cans once – likely in 1963. These were the last of the flat-top cans, and they are scarce to rare. The presence of this can style also suggests that the pull-tab gold-star/gold-band variations described above were probably *not* used at El Paso.

Variation B

Description: Although at least two examples of this can have been offered on eBay, I have never personally examined one. The eBay photos show that this can is identical with Variation A except for the top (Figure 8b-20).

Martells (1976:15) suggested that this was called the “D Tab” – used between 1963 and 1965 (Figure 8b-21). These cans were probably used at the El Paso plant in 1964 and 1965.

Although these tops retained the groove reinforcing, smile beads, and “fan” shape for the opening, they incorporated three other features.

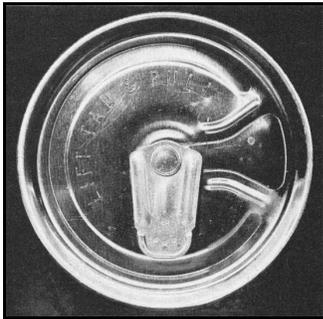


Figure 8b-21 – Further improved “Fan-Tab” design (Martells (1976:15))

First, the top reinforcing has been augmented by a raised central area. Second, the instructions “LIFT TAB & PULL” – added to the Variation E of Type 2 described above – are now in an arch, stamped onto the raised area. Third, the tab has been further modified. The three ribs are shorter than on the last gold-star/gold band tops, and there are two breaks in the bent edges that create the “D Tab” look noted by Martells. Finally, the number of embossed dots was decreased to three – all within the “D” at the end of the tab.

Variation C

Description: This can is also identical with Variation A except for the top.

Size: 12-ounce – although Falstaff made 16-ounce cans in this style, none are known from El Paso.

Top: Lift Ring (silver color) – As you can see from Figure 8b-22, various reinforcing contours have been stamped into the top design. The left “plateau” is stamped “PULL OPEN” – with “LIFT RING”



Figure 8b-20 – Silver-star/blue-band can with pull-tab opener



Figure 8b-22 – Top of silver-star/blue-band can, showing contours for ring pull

and a tiny “31L” on its right counterpart. Small “smile beads” adorn each side of the now-teardrop-shaped opening.

Martells (1976:16-17) illustrated two can tops, both of which almost fit the one on the actual Falstaff can. He described the first one as “American Can Company’s earliest ring top design. The finger hole in this tab proved to be too small for the average finger.” The design was initiated in 1965. The second, he noted as “American’s original version of their present day design [i.e., 1976 design] 1966 (Figure 8b-23).

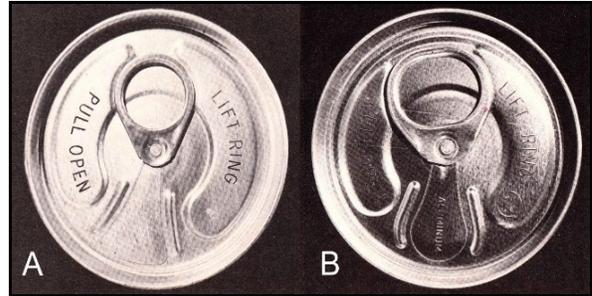


Figure 8b-23 – American Can’s design changes: A – 1965; B – 1966 (Martells 1976:16-17)

A comparison of the actual Falstaff can top (see Figure 22) with the Martells photos (see Figure 23) shows that the Falstaff can is an intermediate stage. The Falstaff can has the impression for the small ring, yet the tear strip had shifted from the fan shape to the teardrop design. Unfortunately, neither Martells nor any other source I have found specified exact dates when the variations in tops were introduced. However, the Falstaff design had to have been implemented in between the other two; ergo, it was originally made between 1965 and 1966 – probably later in 1965.



Figure 8b-24 – Silver-colored base with “D49X” code

Seam style: 13 interlaced notches – 1960s according to Martells (1976:44)

Base: Silver color; steel; reinforced raised circle; stamped “D49X” in black ink (Figure 8b-24)

Manufacturer: American Can Co. (very small KEGLINED in an oval near seam); O42 very near seam (Figure 8b-25). Martells

(1976:36) dated the small KEGLINED symbol from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s.



Figure 8b-25 – Tiny “Keglined” and O42 logos

Dates: Martells (1976:67) dated this style at 1967; probable El Paso dates -- 1965-1966

Variation D

Description: This can is identical with Variation C, except that “The Choicest Product of the Brewers’ Art” has replaced “America’s Premium Quality Beer” (still in italics) in the blue band on the heel (Figure 8b-26).

Size: 12-ounce

Top: Lift Ring (gold color) – same as Variation B, except “44L” on right “plateau.”

Seam style: 13 interlaced notches – 1960s according to Martells (1976:44)

Base: Gold color; steel; reinforced with raised circle; stamped “A43Y” in black ink (Figure 8b-27)

Manufacturer: American Can Co. (very small KEGLINED in an oval near seam); O42 very near seam (in silver area). Martells (1976:36) dated the small KEGLINED symbol from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s. [Note: these are exactly the same markings as Variation C]

Dates: Martells did not list this style; the probable El Paso use dates were 1966-1967.

Type 4 – Falstaff Draft

Variation A

Description: The Falstaff shield is identical with Type 4 cans, but it has moved into the upper half of the can body. Below the shield is an upwardly slanted, silver-outlined blue band with “DRAFT” (white) in center. Below the blue band and to the right is a complex oval seal (Figure 8b-28). Seven four-pointed silver stars shine in the background above the blue band on the left



Figure 8b-26 – “America’s Premium Quality Beer” and The Choicest Product of the Brewers’ Art on heels



Figure 8b-27 – Gold-colored base with “A43Y” code

face of the can, with three stars below. The right face has one less star in the upper section.



Figure 8b-29 – Draft can seal

The seal builds around an inner, white oval with “Golden / Tap” in upwardly slanted, stylized letters to the left and a drawing of a keg and tapper to the right. An outer ring is silver with red, blue, and gold segments, each containing a word. Beginning at the bottom and continuing clockwise, the words are “AMERICA’S // PREMIUM // QUALITY // FALSTAFF // DRAFT //

BEER” (Figure 8b-29). The same configuration appears on both faces of the can.



Figure 8b-28 – Falstaff Draft can

“The / Choicest / Product of the / Brewers’ / Art” remained in fancy blue cursive near the top of the can between the two faces. The plant and size information, however, formerly along the seam, was relocated to the opposite side of the can – between the two faces and below the “Choicest Product” cloud. The lines now read “FALSTAFF BREWING CORP., EL PASO, TEXAS CONTENTS 12 FLUID OZS. / St. Louis • Omaha • New Orleans • San Jose • Fort Wayne • Galveston • Cranston, R.I.” in blue letters (Figure 8b-30).



Figure 8b-30 – Falstaff cites and can capacity

Size: 12-ounce

Top: Lift Ring (gold color) – same as Type 3, Variations C & D, except for the 25L stamped in the right “plateau.” Note that Falstaff continued to use this top design, even though American Can offered the wider ring style at some point in 1966.

Seam style: 13 interlaced notches – 1960s according to Martells (1976:44)

Base: Gold color; steel; reinforced with raised circle; stamped “D35Y” in black ink

Manufacturer: American Can Co. (very small stylized “A” below the seal and to the right); O42 very near seam (in silver area – Figure 8b-31). Martells (1976:33) dated the small “A” along with “other symbols (soldered seam)” dated from the mid-1960s.

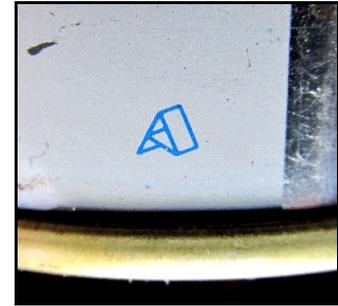


Figure 8b-31 – Tiny A for American Can Co.

Dates: This was the last can used by Falstaff’s Plant No. 9 at El Paso, almost certainly only in 1967. Although the plant did not officially close until January 1968, it is unlikely that any cans were actually filled in that month/year.

Table 8b-1 – Chronology of Falstaff Beer Cans Used in El Paso

Type	Var	Description	Top*	Size	Dates
1	A	Sir Falstaff	FT	12	1956-1960
2	A	Gold-star/gold-band	FT – Easy Open Aluminum	12	1960-1961
	B	Gold-star/gold-band	FT – no printing	12	1961-1964
	C	Gold-star/gold-band	FT – no printing	11**	1960-1964
	D	Gold-star/gold-band	PT – first style †	12	1962-1963
	E	Gold-star/gold-band	PT – U-Tab †	12	1963-1964
3	A	Silver-star/blue-band	FT – no printing	12	1963
	B	Silver-star/blue-band	PT – D-Tab	12	1964-1965
	C	Silver-star/blue-band America’s Premium . .	RP – small ring	12	1965-1966
	D	Silver-star/blue-band Choicest Product . . .	RP – small ring	12	1966-1967
4	A	Falstaff Draft	RP – small ring	12	1967

* FT = Flat Top; PT = Pull Tab, the style used by Falstaff

** 11-oz. only sold in New Mexico and California

† These were probably not used at the El Paso plant

Codes

Falstaff appears to have used two styles of codes stamped roughly in the center of can bases (bottoms), and these always were in black ink in my sample. The earliest style appears on two cans in my sample – a one-digit number, followed by three capital letters. A Sir Falstaff can (Type 1, Variation A) was marked “2AET”; with “2CBW” on an 11-ounce gold-star/gold-band can (Type 2, Variation C).³

The second system of a capital letter (one of the first five in the alphabet in my sample), a two-digit number, and another letter (one of the last three in my sample). The Easy-Open gold-star/gold-band can (Type 2, Variation A) was marked “C35Z”; with “B42Z” stamped on an eBay example. The other 12-ounce gold-star/gold-band can (Type 2, Variation B) was stamped “E33X.” A silver-star/blue-band can (Type 3, Variation C) was stamped “A43Y” with “D49X” on a later example (Type 3, Variation D). The Falstaff Draft can was stamped “D35Y.” Currently, these codes remain a complete mystery to me.

Bottles

According to El Paso newspapers, only non-returnable containers and kegs were filled at the former-Mitchell plant, even though both returnable and non-returnable bottles were probably used during Falstaff’s entire tenure in the city. It is clear, however, as mentioned above, that cans were the major production item. The few data available make it virtually certain that only three types of labels were used by Falstaff Plant No. 9, and those reflected the can labels described above (Table 8b-2). Also, I have only discovered four bottle types that were used (Table 8b-3).

Labels

Each of the El Paso Falstaff beer bottle labels that I have seen has its counterpart on the Falstaff beer cans.

³ A Sir Falstaff can used at St. Louis – offered on eBay – was stamped “2AHT5”; a gold-star/gold-band can (also eBay) from San Jose only had the three-character code: A2X. It is obvious that the codes varied significantly from plant to plant.

Sir Falstaff Label

Borrowing a line from Rick Chavez, I call the first label the “Sir Falstaff” (Figure 8b-32). Chavez named the corresponding beer can the Sir Falstaff because of a likeness of the jolly drunk on the back of the beer can (Figure 8b-33). Although the caricature of the saluting inebriate is missing, the label shares the major attributes of the one on the can. The label consists of a gold-bordered parallelogram, centered around a gold-bordered Falstaff shield, flanked on both sides by a single head of grain. Below the shield – to the right of the point – is the word “BEER” with “The Choicest Product of the Brewers’ Art” in cursive below it.



Figure 8b-32 – 12- oz. Sir Falstaff paper label (Rick Chavez collection)



Figure 8b-33 – Drawing of Falstaff (Falstaff [1958]:23)

The right border has “PREMIUM QUALITY BEER” in red letters, with “Brewed and Bottled by FALSTAFF BREWING CORP., El Paso, Texas / ALSO ST. LOUIS • OMAHA • NEW ORLEANS • SAN JOSE • FORT WAYNE • GALVESTON” in much smaller black letters on the left border. The tiny union logo is in the lower left corner of the label with “Contents 12 fluid ozs.” in the upper right. A tiny ® appears in gold (*very* difficult to see – even under magnifications) to the left of the point at the bottom of the shield and below the tail of the “A” in “Art” at bottom right.

Although I have an example of the label and an additional label on a non-returnable bottle, I have not examined a neck label. Pictures of neck labels that accompany this type of body label on eBay show a typical upwardly slanted band (almost certainly a parallelogram) with the Falstaff shield in the center and “PREMIUM / QUALITY” to the right. The two lines to the left are illegible.

An almost identical label was made for the quart size, although the volume information in the upper right corner was changed to “Contents one quart” – and the label was slightly larger

d(Figure 8b-34). I have never seen a labeled quart bottle from El Paso, although the bottle was likely the “tavern” style. Like the Sir Falstaff cans discussed above, the paper labels were likely used during the 1956-ca. 1960 period.

Gold-Star/Gold-Band Label

The second label was also parallelogram-shaped, with gold bands at top and bottom. This label, too, was centered around a gold-bordered Falstaff shield, but the



Figure 8b-35 – Falstaff gold-star shield in 1961 (*Falstaff Way* 1961)

heads of grain had disappeared (Figure 8b-35). The background was decorated with 15 four-pointed gold stars and the word “BEER” – now followed by ® was placed immediately below the shield, to the left of the point. White letters proclaimed “AMERICA’S PREMIUM QUALITY BEER” in the bottom gold band. Much smaller letters along the right edge informed the drinkers that the contents were “Brewed and Bottled by FALSTAFF BREWING CORP., El Paso, Texas / ALSO GALVESTON • ST. LOUIS • NEW ORLEANS • OMAHA • FORT WAYNE • SAN JOSE.” Nestled into the lower right corner, just above the bottom gold band was a tiny Circle-P or Circle-L (or possibly other letters). The volume – CONTENTS 12 FL. OZS. – was along the left side, with the tiny union logo in the lower left corner (Figure 8b-36).

The accompanying neck label was a much smaller parallelogram, also with gold bands at top and bottom. In the center, red cursive proclaimed: “The Choicest / Product of the / Brewers’ Art” flanked on both sides by two, four-pointed gold stars (Figure 8b-37). Based on dating of cans, the gold-star/gold-band labels were probably used between ca. 1960 and ca. 1964.

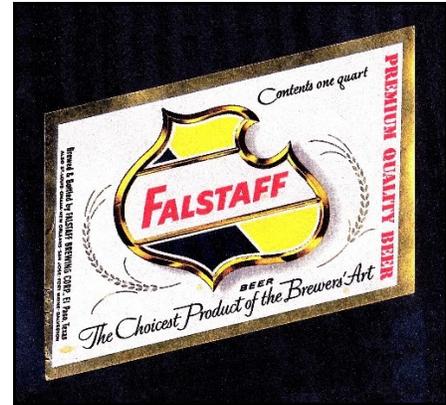


Figure 8b-34 – Quart Sir Falstaff paper label (Rick Chavez collection)

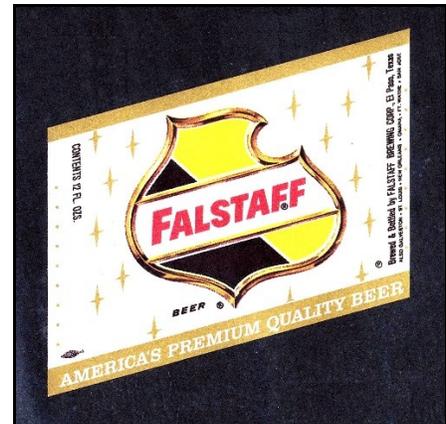


Figure 8b-36 – Regular 12-oz. gold-star/gold-bar label (Rick Chavez collection)



Figure 8b-37 – Gold-star/gold band neck label

Although I have found no quart labels of this type, a display photo of a bottle appeared in the *Falstaff Way* in July 1961 (Falstaff 1961:[20]). The photo clearly depicted the gold-star/gold-band label, even though the photos were in black-and-white (Figure 8b-38). The bottle was the non-returnable “tavern” style described in the Harry Mitchell chapters.



Figure 8b-38 – Non-returnable quart bottle with gold-star label (*Falstaff Way* 1961)



Figure 8b-39 – Comparison of regular and small 12-oz. labels

An identical gold-star/gold-band label was used on the smaller-sized “Handy” non-returnable bottles – also called the “glass can” by Falstaff (see below). Although the Handy bottle held the same 12-ounces of liquid, the bottle was almost shaped like a can (see below) and had much thinner glass walls. The overall effect was a much smaller package – with a correspondingly smaller label. The regular label measured 2 9/16" x 3 5/8" – while the smaller label was only 2 1/8" x 3 3/16" (Figure 8b-39).

Silver-Star/Blue-Band Label

Although the final label had a similar layout to the gold-star/gold-band described above, there were several important changes. The stars were now silver, and there were only 13 of them. Although the top band remained gold, the bottom one was now blue and said “America’s Premium Quality Beer.” The shield had a silver border, a crowned lion’s head in the curve, and word “Beer” inside the shield at the lower center. The right border said only “FALSTAFF BREWING CORP., EL PASO, TEXAS” above nine dots. The tiny union logo in the lower left corner was mirrored by a Circle-L⁴ in the right one (Figure 8b-40).

⁴ One label had a tiny “K” with no circle in this position. These tiny usually-circled letters did not appear on the Sir Falstaff labels, and I have no idea what they indicated.



Figure 8b-40 – 12-oz. silver-star/blue-bar label (Rick Chavez collection)

The neck label changed in shape to mimic the old foil neck wrapping, but this one only extended half-way around the neck, rising only to the base of the finish. The lower edge, however, was upwardly slanted. At the bottom was a blue band with a white band above it. A red “FALSTAFF” occupied the center of the white band. The remaining area was gold with “The /



Figure 8b-41 – Silver-star/blue-bar neck label

/ Art” in fancy red cursive – with a very tiny ® to the right of the last word (Figure 8b-41). The silver-star/blue-band labels were probably used from ca. 1965 to ca. 1967.

Returnable Bottles

The El Paso Falstaff plant filled the typical, amber, export beer bottles used during the period. I have not discovered a single example of a returnable bottle with a Sir Falstaff label. It is possible that no returnables were made during the Sir Falstaff period – as confirmed by newspaper articles.



Figure 8b-43 – Base of bottle with gold-star/gold bar label

I have only found one example of a gold-star/gold-band label on a 12-ounce returnable bottle, with a base embossed “L-X / {Box-N logo} 17 / 56” (Figures 8b-42 & 8b-43). The Obear-Nester Glass Co. – in operation from 1894-1978 – used the Box-N logo from 1915 until the plant closed in 1978. This bottle was produced in 1956. Although the bottle was made during the year Falstaff opened the El Paso plant, it



Figure 8b-42 – Returnable bottle with gold-star/gold bar label

ghad probably been through the return cycle more than once by the time the gold-star/gold band labels were affixed to it. The base shows distinct use wear. The *Falstaff Way* (1961:[21]) illustrated an example of one of the cardboard cases for these bottles (Figure 8b-44).



Figure 8b-44 – Cardboard case for gold-star bottles (*Falstaff Way* 1961)

Table 8b-2 – Differences in Label Characteristics

<p>Sir Falstaff Label Border: gold on all four sides Background: shield flanked by heads of grain Beer: capital letters; right of pont at shield bottom Slogan: The Choicest Product of the Brewers' Art Shield Background: solid gold ®: gold; to left of bottom point on shield and below the "A" in "Art"</p>
<p>Gold-Star/Gold-Bar Label Border: gold bars at top and bottom Background: 15 gold stars Beer: capital letters; left of pont at shield bottom Slogan: America's Premium Quality Beer Shield Background: solid gold ®: black; to left of bottom point on shield and between the final "Fs" in "FALSTAFF"</p>
<p>Silver-Star/Blue-Bar Label Border: gold bar at top; blue bar at bottom Background: 13 silver stars/lion's head in curl of shield Beer: mixed-case letters; inside lower part of shield Slogan: America's Premium Quality Beer Shield Background: gold bars (12 above "FALSTAFF"; 8 below) ®: gold; to left of bottom point on shield and after the third "F" in "FALSTAFF"</p>



Figure 8b-45 – Returnable bottle with silver-star/blue-bar neck label

A second 12-ounce returnable bottle has the silver-star/blue-band label (Figure 8b-45). The base of this one was embossed with the number “23” below a Keystone-L logo (Figure 8b-46). The Lincoln Glass Bottle Co., Lincoln, Illinois – an affiliate of the Knox Glass Bottle Co. combine – used the Keystone-L logo from 1942 to 1952, when the plant was sold to the Obear-Nester Glass Co.



Figure 8b-46 – Base of bottle with silver-star/blue-bar neck label

Since the silver-star/blue-band label was probably not used prior to ca. 1965, this bottle had likely seen quite a bit of re-use. This is supported by horizontal wear marks on the shoulder, central body, and heel – typically caused by bottle refilling machinery and transportation.

Unfortunately, Knox did not use date codes until later.

Non-Returnable Bottles

The final 12-ounce non-returnable bottle used by the Mitchell brewery was the Modified Tavern or Tall One-Way style (see Chapter 7e and Figure 7e-14). Not surprisingly, the first style used by Falstaff was the identical bottle – some of which may have even been unused bottles from Mitchell. The bottles were embossed “NO DEPOSIT ★ NO RETURN NOT TO BE REFILLED” around the shoulder, and probably all wore the Sir Falstaff labels (Figure 8b-47).



Figure 8b-47 – Non-returnable Tavern bottle with gold-star/gold bar label

The base of the only example I have seen was embossed “GB-7 / 15 {I in an oval} 7 / 5 / Duraglas (cursive)” and was fully stippled (Figure 8b-48). Plant No. 15 of the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. was located at Waco, Texas. The bottle was made in 1957 and may have been one of the first batch actually ordered by Falstaff in El Paso. Tavern bottles of this type were in use from at least 1953 until probably some point during the early 1960s.



Figure 8b-48 – Base of non-returnable bottle with gold-star/gold bar label

At this point, I have never examined a Falstaff quart bottle with an El Paso label (although the labels certainly exist), although the 1961 ad discussed above (see Figure 8g-38) indicates that they were the tavern style non-returnable quarts – certainly the trend in the U.S. quart beer containers. Quart bottles wore the Sir Falstaff Quart label (probably only used between 1956 and ca. 1960) and the gold-star labels beginning in 1961 – probably only used for a few years.

Probably the last style of 12-ounce non-returnable bottle used by the El Paso Falstaff plant was the last industry standardized non-returnable beer bottle: the Handy Bottle. These bottles more closely resembled a beer can (in both size and shape) and had a simplified, single-ring finish. The Handy Bottle was introduced in 1959 and continued in popularity until ca. 1965. Although the bottle remained in glass house catalogs, the trend – beginning in 1965 – was for specialized non-returnable bottles. The industry dropped standardization in favor of variety.



Figure 8b-49 – Non-returnable Tavern bottle with silver-star/blue-bar neck label

The Falstaff bottle was typical, with “NO DEPOSIT ★ NO RETURN NOT TO BE REFILLED” embossed around the shoulder and stippling at the shoulder, heel, and base (Figure 8b-49). The finish, as noted above, was a simplified, single-ring “crown” finish. Because these bottles were only used once, the large reinforcing ring on the finish was eliminated. The bottles wore a smaller version of the gold-star/gold-band paper label.

Handy bottles were probably used by the El Paso plant from 1960 to at least 1964 – possibly later. These were called the “Glass Can” in display photos from 1961 (*Falstaff Way* 1961:[8-9] – Figure 8b-50). I have not seen these bottles with the silver-star/blue-band labels, although some may have been made. If so, these would date to the last two years of Falstaff’s tenure in the city.



Figure 8b-50 – Advertising display with “glass can” – Handy Bottle (*Falstaff Way* 1961)



Figure 8b-51 – Base of non-returnable bottle with silver-star/blue-bar neck label

The base of my example is stippled, leaving a circular blank area in the center. At the top of the un-stippled section is embossed “W-9 {1 in an oval} 3” in an arch, with “2_” in an inverted arch at the bottom (Figure 8b-51).

Although the “9” probably indicates the Owens-Illinois Plant No. 9 at Sreator, Illinois, I have no idea what the “W” means. The “3” is a code for 1963, and the “2_” is a mold code.

Table 8b-3 – Bottle/Label Chronology

Bottle Type*	Capacity	Label Type	Date Range
Tavern (NR)	12-ounce	Sir Falstaff	1956-1960
Tall One-Way (NR)	Quart	Sir Falstaff	1956-1960
Export (R)	12-ounce	Gold-Star/Gold-Bar	1960-1964
Tall One-Way (NR)	Quart	Gold-Star/Gold-Bar	1960-1962?
Handy (NR)	12-ounce	Gold-Star/Gold-Bar	1960-1964
Export (R)	12-ounce	Silver-Star/Blue-Bar	1964-1967

* NR = non-returnable; R = returnable

Discussion and Conclusion

Although this section was only aimed at Falstaff cans and bottles filled at the El Paso plant, much of the information above – especially about the gold-star and silver-star cans and paper labels – can probably be generalized to Falstaff containers from other plants as well. I attempted to go into deep detail in order for the information to be useful to archaeologists, although collectors and any other interested parties can also make use of the close look. Even though Plant No. 9 was only open for a single decade, it left a rich legacy in cans and bottles.

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