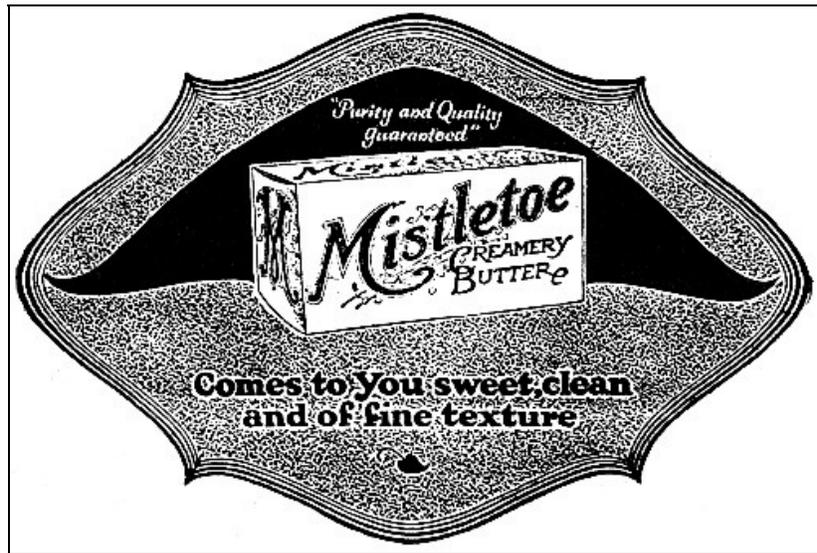


Chapter 11

Small Dairies and Creameries

1920-1940s



Bill Lockhart

2014

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Small Dairies and Creameries – 1920s-1940s

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[Much of this chapter had been adapted from Lockhart (2013a; 2013b)]

After the 1913/1914 bottle law faded, most El Paso dairies returned to the use of generic bottles, with the cardboard disk as the only identification of the dairy. Only one creamery and three dairies that opened during the 1920s used marked bottles, and the dairies almost certainly only used them as a result of the 1936 ordinance. Embossed bottles once again became common after ca. 1936, but that law, too, was eventually repealed or just ignored. By the 1940s, only a few dairies used marked bottles. By the mid-1950s, almost all El Paso dairies had adopted waxed-paper cartons. The era of the milk bottle was effectively dead.

Small Producers, 1920-1940

Mistletoe Creamery (1922-1932)

Mistletoe Creamery was first listed at El Paso in the New Mexico State Business Directory in 1922 and the Business Man's Directory (El Paso) for 1923, although it was not included in the El Paso city directory until 1925. An ad for Mistletoe Butter appeared in the August 12, 1922, edition of the *El Paso Times*, but it included no copy to add information (Figure 11-1). On May 29, 1927, Mistletoe took out a full-page ad in the *Times*, titled "Howdy El Paso." The copy may offer an explanation for the seeming discrepancy in timing, when it said that El Pasoans "of course, are familiar with Mistletoe Butter, as it has been marketed in El Paso for a number of years." Mistletoe also used the page to announce the building of a new plant in the city.

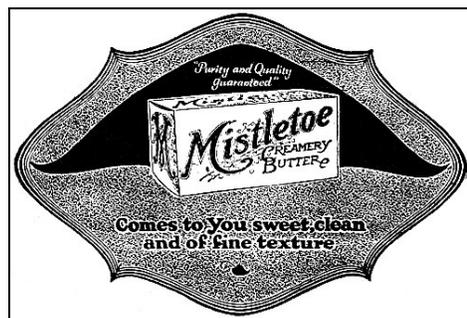


Figure 11-1 – Mistletoe Butter ad (*El Paso Times*)

The business was located at 322 Mills in 1923 but had expanded by 1925 to include an office at 507 W. Missouri along with the warehouse at the southeast corner of Virginia and Mills. P.L. Webster was the warehouse representative, and Halford J. Gray was the sales distributor at 3301 Porter. Beginning in 1926, the directories only listed Webster. A directory ad in 1928 noted that the business was incorporated and advised that Mistletoe made Extra Fancy Mistletoe Creamery Butter, Mistletoe Ice Cream, and Mistletoe Evaporated Milk, now at 2222 Texas St. M.W. Jure was the plant manager in 1929. By the next year, W.N. Fraley had captured the management position, advertising milk, butter and ice cream. Mistletoe was last listed in 1932 (EPCD 1925-1932).

Two articles about Mistletoe present something of a mystery. The *El Paso Herald-Post* (3/17/1932; 3/19/1932) described the groundbreaking ceremony for the new, \$80,000 Mistletoe plant to be built at 2216 Myrtle Ave. and included a photo of Mayor R.E. Sherman shoveling the first spadeful of dirt. The articles noted that the new building would replace both the old plant at 2222 Texas and the milk handling facility on Piedras. W.N. Fraley, the local manager, was joined by S.S. Lard, the Chairman of Mistletoe's Board of Directors from Ft. Worth. It seems very strange that Mistletoe was building a new plant at just the time when the firm disappeared from the historical record.

The early history was a bit easier to access, although the May 29, 1927, *El Paso Times* ad gave little historical information. It merely stated that "the Mistletoe organization is more than 25 years old, and has modern plants in a number of southern and southwestern cities." The firm began as the Nissley Creamery at Fort Worth, Texas, in 1901, and Nissley advertised Mistletoe Butter by at least 1916. In 1920, the firm reorganized as Mistletoe Creameries, Inc., and opened branches at Amarillo, Dallas, and Houston (Grobe 1922:320; Lee & Fieldman 1922:[2])

Mistletoe Creamery opened a branch at Des Moines, New Mexico, in 1921 and spread to El Paso the following year. By the time it ceased business in 1932, it had operated in 14 communities in New Mexico, at least six (Amarillo, Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston, and the San Antonio/Austin area) in Texas, and a few farther east. Mistletoe spread to Albuquerque in 1922, Clayton in 1924, a cream station at Mills in 1926, Clovis in 1927, and both Artesia and Portales in 1929. By 1928, however, both the original operation at Des Moines and the Albuquerque plant had closed (NMSBD 1921-1928).

A new plant was opened in Tucumcari in 1930 along with cream stations at Maxwell, Melrose, Moriarity, and Roy. Another plant opened in 1931 in Mosquero, the last year the Tucumcari branch was listed. A final latecomer was an operation in Springer in 1932. The 11 remaining plants and cream stations were last listed in 1932 (NMSBD 1930-1932).¹ The timing suggests that the Great Depression may have been at least partially responsible for the demise of the Mistletoe Creamery empire, which may have grown beyond its means.

While the Great Depression may have been the impetus for the closing of the entire Mistletoe group, the El Paso business had to have been feeling the squeeze from Price's Dairy. Recently reorganized as Desert Gold Dairies, Price's was growing and providing tough competition just as the economy was breaking down. Hawkins Dairy was also first listed as a creamery in 1931. With problems in other locations, Mistletoe could not withstand this two-pronged competition.

Bottle Variations

I have never heard of a Mistletoe Creamery bottle found in an El Paso context, but Smith (1989:54) illustrated quart and half-pint bottles made for the firm by the Three Rivers Glass Co. Most of the Mistletoe bottles, including one in the author's collection, lacked any form of local address (probably because of the numerous locations) but had "Mistletoe" embossed in a slight upward slant on the front and had the older style Dacro finish (Figure 11-2). The author's bottle was embossed "3 RIVERS ☆" with a "28" date code on the front heel.



Figure 11-2 – Mistletoe Creamery bottle

¹ Unfortunately, after 1932, the next NMSBD I have found is from 1936. It is possible that Mistletoe remained in business after that date, although I have found no sources for any post-1932 Mistletoe location.

Osaple Dairy (ca. 1923-ca. 1938)

The only listing I have found for the Osaple Dairy was in the July 1923 Business Men's Directory. The business was located on the County Road (later Alameda Ave.) in the Lower Valley, and that area was rarely listed in El Paso directories. However, the *El Paso Herald-Post* featured the dairy several times between September 2, 1931, and October 31, 1938 – usually in connection with traffic accidents or in lists of dairies.

The City of El Paso fined J.W. McAlester, the operator of Osaple Dairy, on March 13, 1937, for violating the 1936 milk bottle ordinance. McAlester used the defense that other dairies were using the same practice and that he was being made the “goat” in the case. See Chapter 1 for the full *El Paso Herald-Post* article.

Bottle Variation

McAlester was apparently moved by the fine to order embossed bottles. The only example I have ever seen was auctioned on eBay (at a price for too high for my bidding). The bottle was pint sized with “OSAPLE (arch) / DAIRY / RED 31R4 (horizontal) / EL PASO, TEX. (inverted arch)” embossed in a round plate under “ONE PINT / LIQUID” – both horizontal (Figure 11-3). Although the seller's description was a bit cryptic, the back heel had the Minnesota triangle (“7 / MINN in a triangle). Since “7” was the number given by the state to the Liberty Glass Co., one heel was likely embossed with the “L-G” logo. The base was embossed with a “37” (1937) date code.

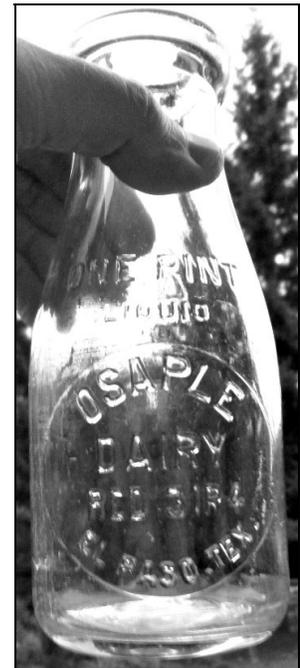


Figure 11-3 – Osaple Dairy bottle (eBay)

Veck's Dairy (1929-1942)

Although never listed in the El Paso city directories, Veck's Dairy, located on Gibson-Veck Rd. in El Paso's Upper Valley, was listed in the New Mexico State Business Directory in 1931. Born on August 26, 1875, Henry B. Veck was a dairyman at San Angelo, Texas, until he moved to Alamogordo in 1928. Although he continued to live in Alamogordo, he purchased a



Figure 11-4 – Plate on Veck’s Dairy bottle (eBay)

dairy in the El Paso Upper Valley in 1929 and commuted to work daily. The dairy farm consisted of 21 acres, partly in New Mexico (Ruby O’Leary interview, 1998).²

Veck proved to be a scrapper. On January 24, 1931, Veck accused West Moore, one of his employees, of stealing a “police dog pup.” The two engaged in a “fist fight,” and Moore withdrew. Moore “obtained a gun” and returned, but Veck “shot and probably fatally wounded” the younger man. The *Joplin Globe* (1/25/1931) stated that Veck fired “allegedly in self-defense.”

Veck’s two sons, James and William worked the dairy with him and continued to operate the dairy when the senior Veck died on July 19, 1934. The Vecks sold only raw milk; in fact, the need for pasteurization eventually drove them out of business. In 1942, the brothers sold the herd and dairy but kept two cows for their own milk supply (Ruby O’Leary interview. 1998).

Bottle Variation

I have seen three variations (half-pint, pint, and quart) of the same Veck bottle. Each was embossed “Veck’s / Dairy (both upwardly-slanted cursive) / El Paso (inverted arch)” in a round plate on the front body (Figure 11-4). All were made by the Liberty Glass Co., and each was decorated with 12 forward-slanted ribs encircling the shoulder/neck (Figure 11-5). The quart had a “37” date code, with “38” on the pint and “41” on the half-pint. These were almost certainly ordered to satisfy the 1936 ordinance.



Figure 11-5 – Veck’s Dairy bottle (eBay)

² Ruby O’Leary was the daughter of Henry B. Veck.

Lane's Dairy (1929-2003)

The 1955 Directory of El Paso Manufacturers (El Paso Chamber of Commerce 1955) listed Lane's Jersey Dairy as being in business since 1929, although the *El Paso Times* (6/4/1976) claimed that John F. Lane, Sr., founded the dairy in 1930. City directories listed the dairy at 310 N. Concepcion, with a sales office at 177 N. Glenwood Dr. In 1970, John, Jr., and his wife, Hilda, took over the operation of the dairy. Hilda recalled that they had "250 cows in the middle of the city" (Turner 1984).

By November 26, 1971, the Lanes moved the dairy to Roberts Ranch Road, near Clint, Texas. Hilda Lane recalled in 1984 that the new location was "26 miles from downtown El Paso, four miles northeast of the Clint cutoff" (Turner 1984), with an office at 1360 N. Lee Trevino Dr. By at least 1976, the Lanes incorporated the business with John as the president and Hilda as manager and treasurer. The dairy employed 20 people at that time and operated "a comprehensive dairy service – all the way from pasture and milking machine to distribution of the products" (*El Paso Times* 6/4/1976).

In 1984, Hilda Lane stated that Lane's was "the only dairy which offers tours to groups – Boy and Girl Scouts, senior citizens – whoever wishes. Some children don't know anything about agriculture. We've had them come in office, point to a picture of a cow, and say 'Horse?'" (Turner 1984). John Lane still operated the dairy in 1995, but his son, James Christopher "Chris" Lane, became president prior to 2003.

On November 3, 1992, Lane's Dairy registered Trademark No. 1,729,620, consisting of "Lane's (upwardly slanted cursive) DAIRY (horizontal)" with a cow snuggling against a plastic milk jug (Figure 11-5). The dairy claimed first use of the mark on October 12, 1983. The trademark was to be used on milk, flavored milk, fruit, and fruit drinks. The lettering – without the drawing – was used by at least the 1950s.

Chris Lane, by that time former president of Lane's Dairy, recalled in 2012 that Lane's Dairy farm went out of business

when the federal government came in . . . and bought out all the dairy farms due to a bovine TB [tuberculosis] outbreak. We never had it, but when they came in a lot of dairy farms in Clint and El Paso County went out. The next thing to go was our plant (Hinoso 2012).

Lane referred to 2003, when the federal government allotted up to \$59 million to buy out eight dairy farms in El Paso County and one in Hudspeth County (Hinoso 2012). According to the Environmental Working Group (2012), Lane's received a total of \$111,085 in federal subsidies.

Bottle Variation



Figure 11-6 – Lane's Dairy trademark

underlining the other words and FOR HEALTH enclosed within the tail / MILK” in a round plate on the front body (Figure 11-7). The front heel had an embossed triangle with “7” near the apex and “MINN” along the base line. The heel also contained the “L-G” logo, used by the Liberty Glass Co., with a “58” date code on the base.

The triangular mark is the “seal” logo for the State of Minnesota. It indicated that the bottle was guaranteed by Liberty Glass to contain a full quart by volume, and the glass house had posted bond with that state. The “7” was the number assigned to Liberty Glass (Figure 11-8). The MINN triangle had become just a generic feature on many milk bottles by the 1950s and does not imply any connection between any individual bottle and Minnesota.

I have not discovered any bottles marked with the Lane name that were made earlier than 1958. However, I have also not seen any Lane's bottles with the El Paso designation. These can easily be mistaken for bottles from another location.

The existing bottle was embossed “USE / Lanes Jersey (cursive with tail of the “Y”



Figure 11-7 – Lane's Dairy quart

Both Toulouse (1971:321) and Giarde (1980:67) agreed that Liberty Glass stopped using the L-G mark in 1954. Bottle Research Group research, however, discovered that the logo continued in use – concurrently with the newer LG – until at least 1958 (Lockhart 2004a). Most dairies also stopped using round bottles (in favor of the lighter, more space-efficient square quarts or waxed-paper cartons) around 1947. Lane’s, however, continued the round glass style, and this was apparently the last round glass bottle in quart size – made by a press-and-blow machine – used in El Paso.



Figure 11-8 – Minnesota triangle



Figure 11-9 – Lane’s half-gallon bottle (eBay)

Two round half-gallon bottles were offered on eBay auctions. These had “Lane’s (upwardly slanted cursive) / DAIRY” in blue pyroglaze on front and back shoulders – in the same font and upward slant as found on the embossed bottle. Each bottle had a red or orange handle molded around the neck (Figure 11-9), and both had the “LG”

logo of Liberty Glass and a “65” date code. This indicates that Lane’s continued to use round glass bottles until at least 1965. This may have been the last glass bottle, however.

Lane’s also adopted plastic milk containers. A half-gallon container was square in cross-section with an orange handle molded around the neck. The bottle was embossed “USE ONLY FOR FOOD” on the front shoulder and “HALF GALLON ” in the upper body. The main body announced in red letters: “Lane’s (red, upwardly-slanted cursive) / DAIRY (horizontal) / RETURN / DEPOSIT / BOTTLE / Rinse & Return” (Figure 11-10). The reverse body had the same embossing and painted lettering but with



Figure 11-10 – Lane’s plastic half-gallon

no “HALF GALLON.” The base was embossed “MOBAY / 1 / {six dots in two columns} 79 / MERLON.” Both “MOBAY” and “MERLON” were probably plastic designations or manufacturers, but the “79” was a date code for 1979.

Woodhouse Dairy (1931-1942)

J.G. Woodhouse was first listed in the 1931 city directory. By 1934, the Woodhouse Dairy was included, with O.E. Woodhouse as the principal, at the Collingsworth Addition, and the same listing remained until the 1942 edition. A 1947 obituary (*El Paso Herald-Post* 7/28/1947), however, stated that Evans O. Woodhouse was the former owner of Woodhouse Dairy. Both J.G. and O.E. were his sons, who apparently actually ran the operation.

Bottle Variation

I have only seen a single example of a bottle from the Woodhouse Dairy. This one had “Woodhouse / Dairy” etched on the front body (Figure 11-11). The generic bottle was made by the Thatcher Mfg. Co. and had a date code of “39” in the ejection scar on the base. This container was obviously a product of the 1936 milk bottle identification ordinance. John Gross, a long-term estate dealer in El Paso, informed me that Woodhouse sometimes etched his company name on top of the embossing of other companies (personal communication, May 12, 1996).

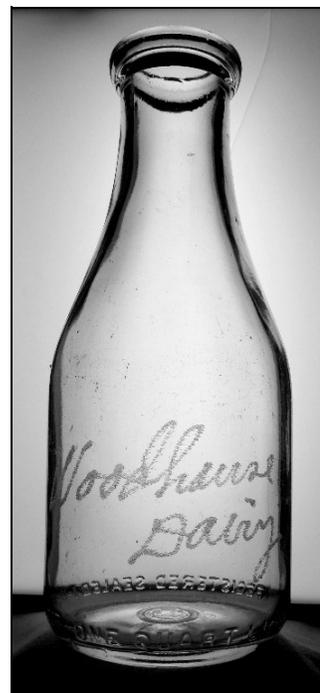


Figure 11-11 – Woodhouse bottle

Elephant Butte Dairy League (1931-1933)

The Elephant Butte Dairy League was formed as a Texas corporation at some point during early 1931 with a capital of \$60,000. F.A. Reedy was the League president, with Edwin B. Link as general manager, and George F. Davis, formerly with the Albuquerque Cooperative Dairy, as dairy superintendent. The firm began the distribution of milk from its new plant at 301 S. Campbell on July 1 of that year (*El Paso Herald-Post* 2/1/1931; 5/6/1931).

On April 13, the League announced that it was buying the Link & Co. plant for \$75,000. Link was in the produce business in the 1920s and was associated for a few years with the Empire Bottling Works (Lockhart 2010). By August, the League reorganized the League, raising the capital to \$100,000 in order to form a fruit and vegetable division. Although the name was officially changed to the Elephant Butte Dairy and Produce Co., the dairy segment operated under its original name. The reorganization divided the business into three divisions, two in the Upper Valley and one in the Lower Valley. (*El Paso Herald-Post* 4/13/1931; 7/1/1931; 8/26/1931).

By May 5, 1932, F.R. Merrill was the Dairy League manager. He complained that “certain distributing organizations” – a veiled jab at Price’s Dairies – were cutting prices because they did “not want a farmers cooperative to exist.” Price’s countered that there was an overproduction of milk in the El Paso area that resulted in the lowering of prices. A Price’s representative noted that Price’s “enjoyed a period of growth” ten years ago (1922), when a “farmers cooperative plant” existed (*El Paso Herald-Post* 5/5/1932). This referred to the Rio Grande Valley Dairy Assn., in business from 1916 to 1930 – finally purchased by Price’s.

Later in May, the Dairy League charged that the “price war is ruining producers.” Merrill requested that the Federal Farm Board investigate the problem. He blamed “privately owned distributing plants.” Price’s Dairy claimed that their “company has not taken the initiative in bringing prices to their present low level. We have simply followed the market down as other dairies have sought relief from the continuing surplus of milk by lowering prices.” Price’s noted that the low prices were a result of competition and the production of more milk than the city could consume (*El Paso Herald-Post* 5/11/1932).

On June 1, 1933, the El Paso Dairy League announced that it was in the dissolution process. In a move reminiscent of the Rio Grande Valley Dairy Assn. purchase of 1930, the League announced that it had sold “its routes, good will and a portion of its assets to Price’s Desert Gold Dairy.” The 25 producers who had aligned themselves with the League were also transferring their allegiance to Price’s as were many of the employees. The plant at Campbell and First Streets was dismantled (*El Paso Herald-Post* 6/1/1933).

Bottle Variation

Because the Elephant Butte Dairy League was in business for such a short time (1931-1933), its bottles are rare today. An eBay auction offered a half-pint round milk bottle embossed in a round plate on the front with “DAIRY LEAGUE (arch) / PHONE M 95 (horizontal) / EL PASO (inverted arch)” – the only example I have ever seen (Figure 11-12). The front shoulder was embossed “ONE HALF PINT / LIQUID (horizontal),” and the front heel roll was marked “32 3RIVERS ★ 7.” The ejection scar is also incised with “32” – a certain date code. There was no other “League” listed in the El Paso city directories, so the bottle must have belonged to Elephant Butte.



Figure 11-12 – Dairy League bottle (eBay)

Leary Dairy (ca. 1931-ca. 1937)

I have found very little information on the Leary Dairy. The dairy advertised in the *Herald-Post* from at least April 26, 1932, to at least March 30, 1937. Operated by Dr. J.A. Hill, a former El Paso city veterinarian, and his wife, the dairy was located in the Lower Valley. The dairy offered Jersey-Guernsey milk.

Hill was apparently a very violent man. He was brought to court on assault charges (associated with fights at his dairy) several times in 1931 and 1932, including at least one alleged shooting, in which he was charged with intent to murder. He was tried in 1939 for the slaying of Lorenzo Apodaca in the Lower Valley but was acquitted of the charges (*El Paso Herald-Post* 9/5/1939). The dairy probably ceased operations due to the bottle ordinance of 1936, although it may have been because of Hill’s pugilistic tendencies.

Bottle Variations

I have only discovered a single bottle used by the Leary Dairy, and this was likely the only one the firm ever had marked. The bottle was embossed “LEARY DAIRY (arch) / MAIN 6594 (horizontal) / EL PASO (inverted arch)” in a round plate on the front body (Figure 11-13).

The heel was embossed with the “L-G” logo of the Liberty Glass Co. and had a date code of “36” on the base. The base also had an



Figure 11-14 – Leary bottle base

interesting “brand” that consisted of a large “H” with a downwardly slanted bar to form an “L” with the right side of the “H” – almost certainly, the “H” indicated Hill, and “L” meant Leary (Figure 11-14).

The neck of the bottle was embossed with a segmented ring (four spaced-out horizontal ribs) for better gripping.



Figure 11-13 – Leary Dairy bottle

Heidelberg Dairy (ca. 1934-ca. 1940)

J.I. Heidleberg opened the Heidelberg Dairy on Collingsworth Rd. by at least January 4, 1934, the first time the dairy appeared on a list in the *Herald-Post*. Although the dairy moved away from the Collingsworth Addition by late 1936, it remained in the newspaper’s dairy listing until at least March 17, 1939. However, the Heidelberg name, etched on a bottle with a 1940 date code shows that the dairy remained open for at least another year.

Bottle Variation

Heidelberg apparently never ordered an embossed milk bottle. Instead, the dairy etched its name onto the shoulder in crude letters. The only example I have seen was etched on a generic bottle made by the Liberty Glass Co. (Figure 11-15). The bottle had a “40” (1940) date code on the base. Whomever etched the bottle was very imprecise. Not only is the calligraphy poor in quality, the name crosses one of the seams (Figure 11-16).



Figure 11-15 – Heidelberg Dairy bottle

Stedham's Dairy (ca. 1932-1943)

Although Daniel R. Stedham came to El Paso in 1879, the first reference to the Stedman name with a dairy that I have found was an article in the *El Paso Herald-Post*, where John R. Stedman (a son?) spoke out against a proposed dairy tax on July 5, 1932. Dan Stedham apparently operated the dairy until his death on September 13, 1943 (*El Paso Herald-Post* 9/14/1943). His heirs apparently sold the dairy to Harry Silva. Silva had entered the dairy business between 1934 and 1937.

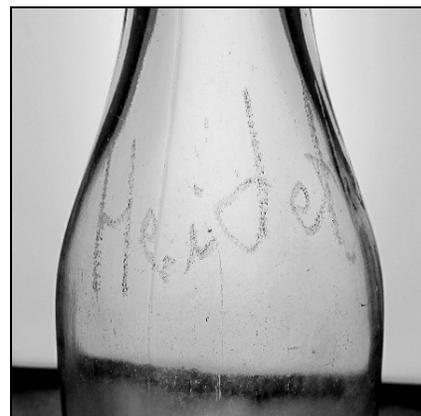


Figure 11-16 – Etching across seam

Bottle Variation

The only example of a Stedham's Dairy bottle that I have found did *not* have an El Paso place name on it. The front plate – embossed “STEDHAM'S DAIRY (inverted arch) / PHONE RED 72J1 (arch)” – was unusual in that the center was bare, with all the information in a circle around the edge (Figure 11-17). The phone number exactly matches the number of El Paso's Stedham's Dairy in want ads in the *El Paso Herald-Post* from 1936 to 1940.

This individual bottle – along with many other El Paso pint-sized milk bottles – was used for testing river water by the United States Geological Survey (USGS), beginning in 1940. USGS used bottles from El Paso and other venues. The group used hydrofluoric acid – sometimes known as “Activated Jack Frost” – to create a frosted appearance on the back side of the bottle to record data directly onto the glass. The bottles were also etched with plus or minus numbers on the necks to show comparative bottle weights (Lockhart 2004b). A “+4” is visible on the back neck of the bottle in Figure 11-17.

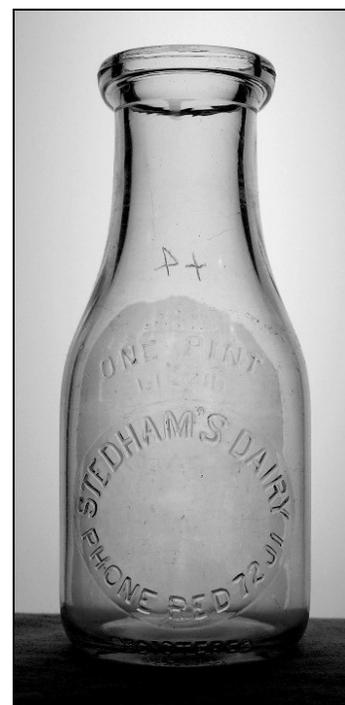


Figure 11-17 – Steadham's Dairy bottle

La Selva Dairy (1938-ca. 1943)

The La Selva Dairy was first listed in the city directory in 1938, with J.T. Gonzalez as the proprietor. The dairy was located at the intersection of Frutas and San Juan. Since the dairy did not appear on a very comprehensive list in the *El Paso Herald-Post* on September 27, 1937, La Selva probably did not begin until the following year. The final listing was 1943. La selva is Spanish for the jungle or the forest.

Bottle Variation

The only La Selva Dairy bottle I have found had two embossed rings around the neck and “LA SELVA DAIRY (arch) / J.T. GONZALEZ (horizontal with slight arch in center) / RED 77-J-2 (inverted arch)” on the front body – *not* in a plate (Figure 11-18). The bottle was made by the Thatcher Mfg. Co. in 1941. Note on Figure 11-18 that this example was also used by USGS (see above).

Lone Star Dairy (ca. 1942-1943)

The only Lone Star Dairy listed in the city directory was in 1892 – with Frank Burke as the proprietor. The dairy was located at E. El Paso Dr. The bottles from 1942 and 1943, however, showed J. Alba as the proprietor. The dairy may have been short lived. I have been unable to find anything about the Lone Star Dairy or J. Alba in newspaper or online searches.

Bottle Variation

Although I have seen several examples of both the pint and quart versions of the Lone Star Dairy bottles, each pint had a “42” (1942) date code, and each quart was dated “43” (1943). The bottles

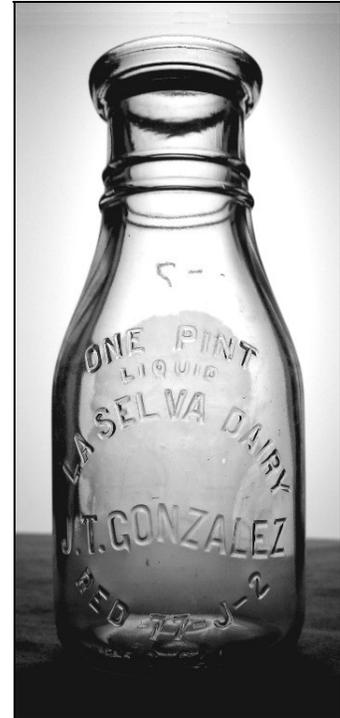


Figure 11-18 – La Selva Dairy bottle



Figure 11-19 – Lone Star Dairy bottle

were embossed “LONE STAR DAIRY (arch) / J. ALBA (arch) / PROP. (horizontal) / RT. 2 BOX 331 (horizontal) / EL PASO, TEXAS (inverted arch)” in round plates on the front and were made by the Thatcher Mfg. Co. (Figure 11-19). The bottles were apparently only made in 1942 and 1943.

Martha’s Dairy (ca. 1947-1948)

Martha’s Dairy was only listed in the city directories in 1947 and 1948 with Jesus G. Ontiveros as proprietor at 319 N. Concepcion in both years. Both internet and newspaper searches failed to add any information.

Bottle Variation

A single bottle from Martha’s Dairy was offered on eBay. The bottle was embossed “MARTHA’S (slight upward slant) / DAIRY (horizontal; offset to right) / PHONE MAIN 3808 W (horizontal) / EL PASO, TEXAS (inverted arch)” in a round plate on the front body (Figure 11-20). The auction gave several details about the heel and base but listed no manufacturer’s mark or date code. The bottle should therefore be dated ca. 1947-1948 – the only listings I could find.



Figure 11-20 – Martha’s Dairy bottle

Federal Prison Industries, Inc., La Tuna, Texas (1941-1976)

The federal prison at La Tuna, Texas, opened on April 29, 1932. Although the dairy program was instituted in 1938, the barn was not actually built until 1941, and a lack of federal funding delayed bringing in a herd of cattle until later that year (*El Paso Herald-Post* 10/13/1938; Medina 2012). By February 1942, the prison dairy was “selling milk . . . to the Fort Bliss military reservation at the rate of a thousand pounds of milk per day” (*El Paso Herald-Post* 2/16/1942). The dairy limited its sales to Fort Bliss and William Beaumont Army Medical Center. According to Ray Hooker, former supervisor of the La Tuna dairy (personal communication, 4/8/1996), the prison dairy adopted plastic containers in 1956, effectively

creating a date range for all glass containers from La Tuna between 1942 and 1956. Dairy production continued until 1976.

Bottle Variation

The prison's earliest bottles – apparently only ordered in the half-pint size – were made by the Lamb Glass Co. Aside from the “L52” heelmark, there was no indication of a date for the containers. Each was embossed “FEDERAL PRISON / INDUSTRIES, (both arched) / INC. (horizontal) / LA TUNA, TEXAS (inverted arch)” in a round plate on the front body (Figure 11-21). These bottles were probably used from the initiation of milk sales to Fort Bliss in late 1941 or early 1942 to ca. 1949, when the dairy changed both glass houses and plate style.

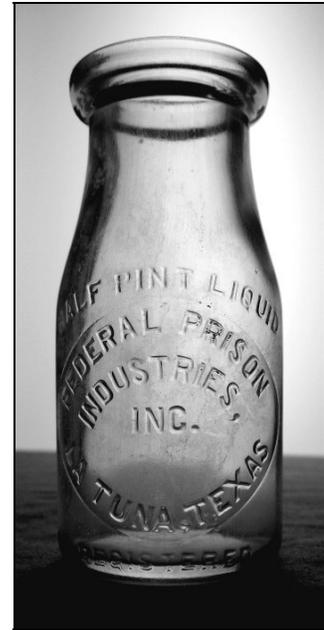


Figure 11-21 – First La Tuna bottle



Figure 11-22 – Base of Thatcher bottle

The second and final style – in both half-pint and quart sizes – was used from ca. 1949 (the earliest date code I have found) until the adoption of plastic containers in 1956. The initial bottles may have been ordered from the Thatcher Mfg. Co. (Figure 11-22) or the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. – examples of each have 1949 date codes. The bottles were embossed “FEDERAL PRISON / INDUSTRIES, INC. (horizontal) / LA TUNA, TEXAS (arch)” in a round plate

on the front body (Figure 11-23). The most notable difference between these and the earlier bottles was the arch in the initial containers and horizontal lettering in the later ones.

Aside from the initial Thatcher order, all bottles I have seen were made by Owens-Illinois. These had date codes ranging from 1949 to 1956. Apparently, the plastic bottles were adopted late in 1956. The dairy probably used up the existing supply of glass

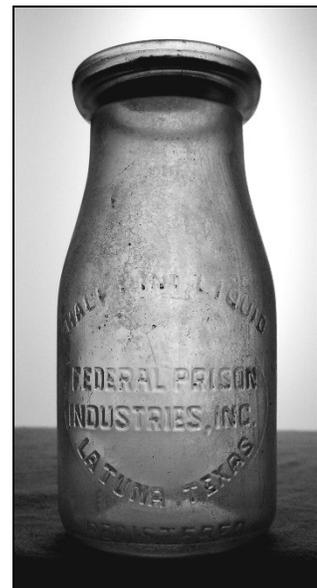


Figure 11-23 – Second La Tuna bottle

containers before relying completely on plastics. The rare quart bottles I have found were made by Owens-Illinois, and the only date code I have seen was for 1951.

Dairy Paraphernalia

Diary Cans

In addition to bottles, La Tuna used metal cans for transporting milk to Fort Bliss and the William Beaumont Medical Center. One can offered on eBay was a silver-colored, eight-gallon can, sealed with an umbrella cover. The cover had matching holes in the cover and mouth to allow the cover to be locked into place for shipping. The two handles were made of thick wire, and the heel had a drain spout for bottom emptying. The side of the can was embossed “FEDERAL PRISON INDUSTRIES INC. / LA TUNA, TEXAS” (Figure 11-24). A slight variation was painted copper color (probably long after its dairy use) and had handles made from flat bars of steel that were curved for comfort (Figure 11-25).



Figure 11-24 – La Tuna milk can (eBay)

Millican’s Dairy (ca. 1947-ca 1961)

Millican’s Dairy on North Loop Rd. at Ysleta showed up in dairy lists in the *El Paso Herald-Post* from September 1, 1948, to January 14, 1961. The earliest listing noted that Millican’s was “catching up with last summers raise” – from 21 to 22 cents per quart (*El Paso Herald-Post* 9/17/1948). This indicates that Millican’s was probably in business at least a year earlier – 1947.



Figure 11-25 – La Tuna milk can

In a surprising moment of serendipity, I received a telephone call from Robert Maese in El Paso. He had found the same cache of broken bottles and had collected a few pieces to send

to me! These included one pyroglazed side fragment, two finishes, and three base fragments. In another serendipitous event, the pyroglazed fragment that Maese selected was from the part of the milk bottle below the section I had recorded 20 years earlier. The bottom part of the label was a banner enclosing “MILlicAN’S DAIRY / YSLETA, TEXAS” (Figure 11-26).

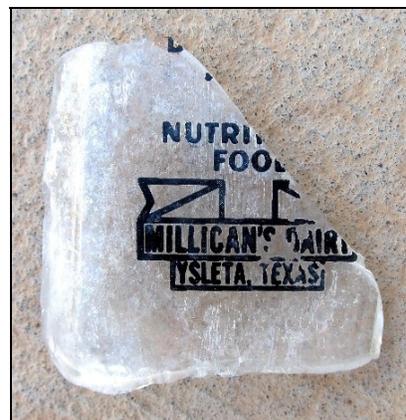


Figure 11-26 – Millican’s Dairy Fragment (Robert Maese)

The bottles were square in cross-section with the econopour finishes that were typical of the period in El Paso. The heels were embossed with the <0> logo of the Owens-Illinois Glass Co., and one base was embossed “9 51 / Duraglas (cursive).” The other base was the same except for a “53” date code. These were apparently made during the middle years of the dairy and may be typical of bottles used during the entire life of the firm. It is also possible that this dump represented the final disposal of glass bottles because the dairy had adopted waxed-paper cartons.

Bottle Variations

In the early 1990s, I was exploring a trash dump in Socorro, Texas, and found a pile of colorless, broken glass milk bottles with black ACL. Unfortunately, at the time, I was not looking for El Paso milk bottles and only recorded the ACL on one fragment: “Millican’s Dairy / Ysleta, Texas / A DELICIOUS DRINK / A NUTRITIOUS FOOD.” The bottle was likely made by a press-and-blow machine.

Frijolistas (1960s?)

Although it has nothing to do with any dairy, an eBay auction offered a “milk” bottle that had held beans (Figure 11-27). The front of the bottle had “Frijolistas” in slightly upwardly slanted white pyroglaze, with a red pyroglaze drawing of a bean

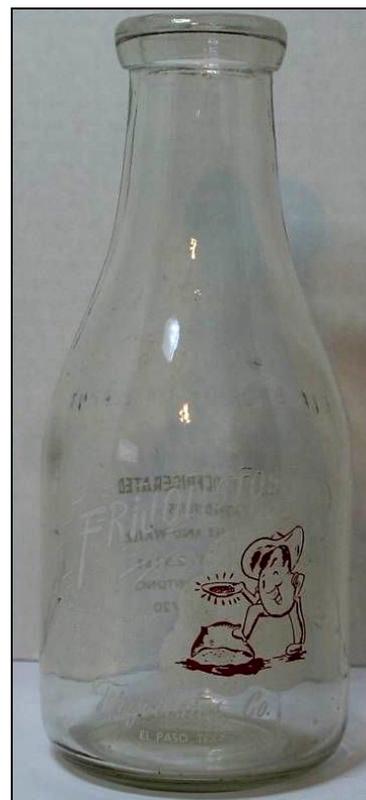


Figure 11-27 – Frijolistas bottle (eBay)



Figure 11-28 – Front of Frijolistas bottle (eBay)

photo.

The back neck was embossed with the VM-in-a-circle logo of Vidriera Monterrey, one of Mexico’s best and most prolific glass container manufacturers – above “UN LITRO” with another illegible line below it. The back had “KEEP IT REFRIGERATED / INGREDIENTS / BEANS, SALT & WATER / NET WEIGHT: 2.5 LBS. / 1213 E. SAN ANTONIO / PHONE 3-2720” in white pyroglaze (Figure 11-29).



Figure 11-29 – Back of Frijolistas bottle (eBay)

Between March 27, 1965 and June 4, 1966, the *El Paso Herald-Post* used the term “Frijolistas” in conjunction with the word “tortillas” – either corn or flour. I have discovered nothing to indicate the Frijolistas Co. or any meaning attached to the word. Frijole means beans – especially pinto beans and “listo” means ready. Whether this combination is what “frijolistas” actually means, I do not know.

Discussion and Conclusions

Like the earlier 1913-ca. 1920 period, the use of embossed and etched milk bottles by El Paso dairies during the 1936 to mid-1940s period owed its existence to the city ordinance of 1936. Most of the small dairies of that time apparently only ordered marked bottles once. As soon as the ordinance was suspended, these dairies returned to the use of generic containers.

An exception was Lane's Dairy, a latecomer, using round embossed then pyroglazed bottles from at least 1958 to at least 1961. By the 1970s, Lane's, too, had adopted plastic bottles. Another exception was the La Tuna Federal Prison Industries, using embossed glass bottles from ca. 1942 to 1956. La Tuna exclusively served Fort Bliss, almost always in half-pint glass milk bottles. But these two extensions were the last. The era of the glass milk bottle in El Paso was over.

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