

Chapter 8

They Bought a Cow: The History of Price's Dairy



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Chapter 7

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Although Price's Dairy grew to be El Paso's giant, it had a humble beginning. Like at least two other successful dairies, Price's began with a single cow. From that start, Price's had a tortuous history that led it through many mergers and expansions. Although its related enterprises grew, the family retained control of the dairy, itself, throughout the 20th century.

History

Desperately ill and with a family to feed, Mark Price, along with his wife, Mary, made a fateful decision in 1906. They bought a cow. On such seemingly simple decisions, entire lives are changed forever. From the cow, a dairy grew, and the Price family operated one of the most successful businesses in El Paso and one of the longest lasting.

The Early Days

Mary and Mark Price were married in 1890 and lived near Newark, Ohio, where at last two of their children were born. Four of their seven children lived to adulthood (childhood death was not unusual occurrence for the time period). The couple and their children followed Mary's brother, Dr. Robert Bruce Smith, to El Paso (Muñoz 2003:[13]; Pendergrast 1961:115).

Prior to their move into the city, itself, the family lived for a year at the C.O. Coffin Farm at Clint, Texas, about 20 miles southeast of El Paso. In 1906, after a move to 1616 Wyoming Ave. in El Paso, Price bought a single cow to provide milk for the family. Originally, Russell, the couple's oldest son, milked the cow, and Robert, the next-oldest, delivered milk in his little red express wagon (*El Paso Herald Post* 8/17/1933; *El Paso Times* 8/18/1933; 9/25/1961; Muñoz 2003:[13]; Pendergrast 1961:115).

Mrs. W.B. Day, one of Price's first customers, remembered when Bob pulled the "little red wagon with its load of clinking bottles" as the October 7-8, 1961, celebration of the dairy's

fifty-fifth anniversary drew near (*El Paso Times* 8/18/1933; 9/25/1961). In contrast to Day's memory, however, a Price's ad in the April 21, 1956, *El Paso Times* showed a drawing of Price pulling a large milk can on the little red wagon (Figure 8-1). Day may have recalled a slightly later period.

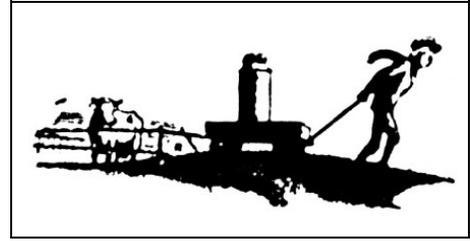


Figure 8-1 – The little red wagon – with a can (*El Paso Times* 4/21/1956)

A month later, the family purchased a second cow and began to sell milk to neighbors to supplement a diminishing income due to the failing health of husband and father, Mark. By the end of the year, the business had grown to eleven customers. A year later, Mark E. Price listed himself as a dairyman in the El Paso City Directory at the south side of Texas Street, one block west of Willow¹ (EPCD 1907; *El Paso Herald Post* 8/17/1933; *El Paso Times* 8/18/1933; Muñoz 2003:[13]; Pendergrast 1961:115).

The neighbors enjoyed the milk, and word soon spread, creating a demand for more. The Prices bought the Gem Dairy in 1908 to increase the herd to ten cattle and meet the demand for quality milk. Andrew Story and H.R. Jones had opened the Gem Dairy at Old Fort Bliss by 1904. Andrew Story remained listed as a dairyman in 1906, still with Jones at the Gem Dairy. By 1907, D.L. Peters managed the Gem Dairy, although Story and Jones may still have owned it. In 1908, Peters advertised “PURE MILK AND CREAM / FANCY DRIVING AND DRAFT HORSES / BOUGHT AND SOLD,” but the listings disappeared after 1908 (EPCD 1904-1908; Muñoz 2003:[13]; Pendergrast 1961:115).²

¹ The 1908 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map shows dwellings and empty lots in that area but names no types of business. This is likely the Price home with enough land for the single cow. The second cow probably crowded the resources of a town lot.

A George Price, apparently unrelated, also worked as a dairyman for the El Paso Dairy Co. (EPCD 1908)

² Muñoz (2003:[13]) claimed that the Prices purchased “the Story Dairy at Alameda and Piedras Streets in May 1907,” and both Pendergrast (1961:115) and the *Herald Post* (8/17/1933) agreed. However, no Story Dairy was listed in the city directories. It is likely that both authors' information came from Price family traditions and that memory had eroded the account just slightly. The “Story Dairy” was almost certainly the Gem Dairy owned by Andrew Story.

The Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of 1908 showed a rooming house on the southeast corner, a drug store and an unidentified building on the northeast corner with empty lots on both

Mary had four sons who lived to adulthood, Russell A., Robert B. (born September 14, 1893, in Newport, Ohio), Paul W., and David E. The older Price children had initially delivered milk in a little red wagon, but the increase in demand and production required that they advance to a horse-drawn wagon. Bob also supplemented the family income with a newspaper route for the *El Paso Daily Times* (EPCD 1908; Muñoz 2003:[13]).

Price's Dairy

Although Mark died in 1908, the family business flourished. That year, Mary leased land at Martinez and Alameda for the herd.³ At that time, the leased farm was “out in the country.” To place the location into perspective, “Texas St. was a country road into the city, and going into town from the farm in a buckboard was a day’s chore” (*El Paso Herald Post* 8/17/1933). She began listing the dairy under her own name (Mrs. Mary L. Price) in 1909 and formalized the name to Price’s Dairy in 1912, claiming herself as proprietor and listing a phone number (2049) for the first time. Bob was now working as a porter for W.A. Stevens. The following year, Bob was officially working as a dairyman for Price’s, and Russell was listed in the city directory as a student (EPCD 1908-1912; Muñoz 2003:[13]).

The daughter of a prominent West Virginia family, Mary Price was “college educated and refined . . . a remarkable, tenacious woman” (Muñoz 2003:[13]). Despite the prominent stereotype of the time that women were helpless and needy, Mary was part of a common El Paso tradition in which widows replaced husbands as successful heads of businesses. To name a few, Margaret Condon Sweeney (Woodlawn Bottling Co.), Milda Connolly Smith (Magnolia Coca-Cola Bottling Co.), Nell Corbett Gardner (Empire Products Corp.), and Sarah Mathis Randle (Seven-Up Bottling Co.), all took control after their husbands’ deaths and operated successful El Paso businesses (Aziz 2003; Lockhart 2010).

western corners. The dairy may have operated out of one of the empty lots.

³ Listed in the 1909 city directory as “n w corner Alameda, Boone aves,” but, by 1912, Mary changed the listing to Martinez and Alameda. As Boone and Martinez are just a block apart, connected by Alameda, both addresses almost certainly describe the same location.

Mary remarried in late 1916 or early 1917 to Horace Gage and reflected the change by listing herself as “Mary Price Gage, prop” of Price’s Dairy in the 1917 directory. As part of the celebration, Russell became manager of the creamery department. Gage may have been a newcomer to El Paso. He was first listed in the directory in 1917 as an elevator man for the El Paso Grain & Milling. Co. By 1916, he was the foreman for Price’s and remained both as Mary’s husband and an important part of the dairy until his death about 1925. The boys attended college (Russell, Bob, and Paul at the University of California, Berkeley, and David at the University of Arizona) during this period and returned to find a working dairy. Each elected to remain in the family business and work on the farm (EPCD 1915-1925; Muñoz 2003:[13]).

In 1917, the company began its first business delivery (Route No. 2) that included the Coney Island and Gem saloons. Each saloon maintained a standing daily order for 25 gallons of buttermilk. It seems the old-timers used buttermilk “for a soothing, cooling healing libation for a fevered stomach and aching head.” In other words, the bars bought the buttermilk for a hangover cure (*El Paso Times* 8/18/1933).

By 1918, the dairy’s address was listed as 4001 Alameda.⁴ El Paso was expanding, and the dairy location was now being engulfed by the city. The herd, now 90 strong, had to be moved to a new farm (the old Tooley farm, near the Borderland Inn) in El Paso’s Upper Valley, near Canutillo, Texas (EPCD 1918; *El Paso Herald Post* 8/17/1933; *El Paso Times* 8/18/1933). The production and distribution points for the dairy were now separated. As the city grew, so did the Price’s business. The little red wagon was long gone, and the two daily retail routes were served by horse-drawn wagon. However, Price’s delivered wholesale milk in “a stylish new Model ‘T’ Ford truck” (Pendergrast 1961:116).

Although Russel retained his position at the creamery, Bob joined the Army as an infantry Lieutenant in response to the call for soldiers as the U.S. entered World War I. Paul, still as student, at this point, remained home. By 1919, all three boys were in the Army – Russell as a Lieutenant and Bob promoted to Captain. When the boys returned from the war, “they found that the business had again outgrown itself.” They quickly reoriented themselves and found their places in the company (EPCD 1918-1919; *El Paso Times* 8/18/1933; Muñoz 2003:[13]).

⁴ This was a change in address not location.

Incorporation

Although the city directory listed Russell A. Price⁵ as the proprietor of the new distributing plant and pasteurization operation at 120 N. Piedras in 1918,⁶ it was probably only a step toward the incorporation that followed in 1919. Mary assumed the presidency, with her husband, Horace Gage, as vice president, and her son, Robert B. Price, as secretary and treasurer.⁷ The following year, the family again expanded the business with the acquisition of 250 acres in Vinton, Texas, with Paul as the new manager.⁸ Price's 1922 directory ad invited the public to "see our Dairy milking 100 'HEALTHY HOLSTEINS' 10 Miles on Upper Valley Road near Canutillo, Texas" and promised that milk would be "delivered to all parts of the city." Also in 1922, the family built a new building at 620 Piedras⁹ (EPCD 1919-1922; *El Paso Times* 8/18/1933; Muñoz 2003:[13]; Pendergrast 1961:116).

The company again reformed the power structure slightly in 1923, when Bob became the vice president and general manager, with Paul as secretary, treasurer, and farm manager. Gage, apparently ill, was only listed at the home address. He was last enumerated in the directories in 1924 and probably died either late that year or early in



Figure 8-2 – "400" chocolate milk ad (*El Paso Times* 5/22/1924)

⁵ Russell moved to Los Angeles at some point, probably around this time, but I have not been able to pinpoint it yet.

⁶ The *Herald Post* (8/17/1933) placed the move in 1916.

⁷ The year 1922 also saw the first use of the prefix "Main" with the phone number. Prior to that year, it was listed as 2049 and 2050.

⁸ The *Herald Post* (8/17/1933) placed the move to Vinton at 1922. Both the Vinton and North Loop dairy farms had become nationally known by 1932 and had "won many national production records for El Paso and for Texas" (*El Paso Times* 7/22/1932).

⁹ Again the *Herald Post* (8/17/1933) disagreed and noted 1921 as the year the new building was built.

1925 (EPCD 1923-1925). Bob's oldest son, Robert Price, Jr., was born the same year. Although unrelated, Price's advertised "400" chocolate milk that year (Figure 8-2).

The purchase of the El Paso Dairy Co. (at 7345 North Loop Rd. in El Paso's Lower Valley) from the ailing James A. "Uncle Jimmy" Smith¹⁰ in 1927 further added to the company's holdings. Smith's business, "a large producer and distributor" added "ten wholesale and retail routes supplied by their own herds numbering 400 head" to the growing Price holdings (Pendergrast 1961:117). Albert H. Killingsworth took over the operation of the farm under the direction of Bob Price. Although listed separately as the El Paso Dairy¹¹, the farm was a part of the growing Price's empire. As a further expansion, the family bought an additional 500 head of dairy cattle (EPCD 1927-1928; Pendergrast 1961:117). A 1928 city directory ad provided a glimpse of what Price's had become:

Price's Milk and other dairy products are of superior quality. Price's Dairy produces and distributes CERTIFIED MILK. It maintains the largest herds of pure bred and high grade dairy cattle in the El Paso valley - the only Federal [*sic*] Accredited Herd in El Paso County. If It's Price's It's Pure!

Midwest Dairies, Inc.

Mary retired in 1928, leaving Bob as the president of Price's. That year's city directory ad noted "wholesale and retail milk and cream, breeders pure Holstein-Friesian and Guernsey cattle," and David Price, who began full-time work with the company a year earlier, had become assistant manager. His promotion was a prelude to a consolidation of Price family holdings with Desert Gold Dairies, Velvet Ice Cream Co., and the J.R.B. Ice Cream Co. to form Midwest Dairies, Inc. in May. H. Berch was president of the new corporation with Bob Price as vice president and David Price as secretary (EPCD 1929-1931; *El Paso Times* 7/22/1932; 8/18/1933).

¹⁰ Smith, a pioneer dairyman and El Paso politician, is discussed thoroughly in Chapter 5.

¹¹ A second El Paso Dairy opened in late 1936 or early 1937. This was operated by Isaac Chacon at San Juan. Chacon's business was listed until 1942.

The directory noted that Midwest was the “holding and operating company for Desert Gold, Price’s and Velvet Ice Cream.” Bob also became the president of Desert Gold Dairy, Inc., headquartered at 310 S. Virginia (also the address for Price’s Dairy Co. and the original address of Desert Gold). The very busy Bob was the general manager with David as sales manager. The *Times* noted that the owners of the four founder firms believed “that a new, and larger company could render a superior dairy service by consolidating the four separate operations into one.” Midwest employed 174 people with a payroll of \$250,000 annually (EPCD 1929-1931; *El Paso Times* 7/22/1932; 8/18/1933).

Desert Gold Dairies

Desert Gold Dairies, Inc. had developed from the Rio Grande Valley Dairy Association, incorporated in 1916 as a cooperative of local dairy farmers. After considerable expansion, the association renamed the business as Desert Gold Dairies, Inc. in 1926. Price’s bought the plant ca. 1930 under the Midwest umbrella with Robert B. Price as president of Desert Gold and David as sales manager. They renamed the operation Price’s Desert Gold in 1931 (EPCD 1916-1931; *Las Cruces Citizen* 6/10/1922). See Chapter 9 for more information about RGVDA.

The *El Paso Times*, in 1933 (8/18/1933), asserted that “Desert Gold Dairies was founded in 1913.” This may refer to one of two creameries in existence at that time. The most likely contender was the El Paso Creamery Co. The other, the Rio Grande Creamery Co. remained in business until 1917 with different principals and a separate address from the Rio Grande Valley Dairy Association, so the El Paso Creamery Co. was probably the ancestral company.

Velvet Ice Cream

Although not listed in city directories until 1916, Velvet Ice Cream was actually founded by Willim B. Miller and William A. Rank in 1914. Rank, a Kansas City printer, and Miller, a railroader, discussed going into the ice cream business in 1913. Miller suggested that El Paso needed an ice cream factory, so Rank moved to El Paso and set up the business at 715 E. Missouri, where it remained until the 1930 merger that created Midwest Dairies. Miller continued to work for the railroad for another three months to supply capital for the fledgling operation (*El Paso Times* “50 Years of Progress, May 1923; 8/18/1933).

They began selling “Frozen Dainties,” a frozen confection that was vended from push carts and stores for a nickel. In the beginning, they took turns working the office and delivering the frozen dainties (and later ice cream) and traded off turning the hand crank of their old-fashioned ice cream maker. The partners “figured that they could grow by making and selling good ice cream. They did. And they did” (*El Paso Times* “50 Years of Progress, May 1923; 8/18/1933).

Vincent Halloran described Miller and Rank as “two partners who had one shoestring between them and a lot of courage, and a whale of a lot of persistence, and who kept on plugging. [They] had an old-fashioned idea that the way to be successful ice cream manufacturers was to make good ice cream.” By 1923, the company produced 1,200 gallons of ice cream per day. Rank claimed two main reasons for the partners’ success. First, the company use whipping cream for 40% of the ice cream’s basic composition. Second, throughout the manufacturing process until the ice cream was sold to the customer, it never touched metal. This accounted for the smoothness implied by the “velvet” name. In 1929, the partners joined with the Price family and others to form Midwest Dairies (*El Paso Times* “50 Years of Progress, May 1923; 8/18/1933).

The Frozen Dainties of the first two decades of the century came to be called Milk Nickels by the 1930s. Milk Nickle, Inc., owner of the patent for the product, licensed Velvet Ice Cream to the franchise for the entire state of New Mexico and western Texas. The company sold Milk Nickels as far away as Bisbee, Arizona, in the west, Santa Fe, New Mexico, to the north, and Big Spring, Texas, in the east. In the preceding 15 months, the company had sold “more Milk Nickels in proportion to available population than any other licensee in the United States (*El Paso Herald Post* 8/17/1933). J. R. Butler further described their success in 1933:

Ten thousand a day is a fair average, although we have his [*sic*] 15,000 a day, and kept it up for a week. Our peak production in one days [*sic*] was 21,000. These figures, of course, are for the summer season. Winter production is far below such figures. During the first seven months we were in production we made and sold more than 3,000,000 Milk Nickels (*El Paso Times* 8/18/1933).

Rank told a reporter, “I look back with many satisfactions on my 20 years in the ice cream business in El Paso because I believe I have brought a lot of happiness to a lot of people” (*El Paso Herald Post* 8/17/1933).

J.R.B. Ice Cream Co.

The *El Paso Times* (8/18/1933) described the J.R.B. Ice Cream Co. as “serving the Southwest in plants in Deming and El Paso for nearly a quarter of a century” in 1933. James R. Butler, who became sales manager for Midwest (*El Paso Times* 7/22/1932), founded the J.R.B. Ice Cream Co. at Deming in 1917. He began “in a little one-room plant, freezing with an old-fashioned brine freezer and hardening the ice cream with ice and salt.” Since 40,000 troops were stationed in nearby Camp Cody at the time because of the Pacho Villa raid the previous year in nearby Columbus, Butler had his hands full keeping the soldiers supplied with ice cream – especially on the weekends (*El Paso Herald Post* 8/17/1933).

Butler recalled the time: “We would make ice cream for a week all day and all night at the peak of our capacity and store thousands of gallons of it to see a veritable mountain of it melt away on Saturday and Sunday and then Sunday night we would start freezing all over again for the next week end.” He noted that the camp cooks arrived with “broad-backed kitchen police” who transported the ice cream back to Camp Cody “with trucks, wagons, caissons and timbers, wheelbarrows, baggage trucks and even brought burros to the plant to carry it away on their backs, one packer on each side.” Mess sergeants used to fight each other over who was allotted how much ice cream, and the Military Police had to act as traffic cops to “straighten out the tangle of traffic at the shipping platform” every Saturday morning (*El Paso Herald Post* 8/17/1933).



Food for the Family

BUTLER'S
Heathized Ice Cream

--- A Food and Not a Fad

Mother dotes on it; father relishes it and your children are wild about it. As a Summer dish it is unbeatable.

BUTLER'S Ice Cream is known for its unusual richness, its purity and its firm, smooth wholesomeness, flavored by the best materials, so piquant and so zestful.

And remember when you order Ice Cream for the home, for meals or for any affair—be sure and order by name—B-U-T-L-E-R'S. Discrimination is necessary if you wish the BEST.

SUNDAY SPECIAL!
FRESH PEACH FRESH STRAWBERRY
NESSELRODE PUDDING

Figure 8-3 – Butler’s Ice Cream ad (*El Paso Times* 6/24/1925)

By 1922, Butler opened a branch at El Paso called Butler's Ice & Ice Cream Factory at 2222 Texas (Figure 8-3).¹² He incorporated the following year, but it was obviously still a family affair with Butler, himself, as president and Mrs. Hindon Butler (his wife?) as secretary. He dropped the incorporation in 1926, renamed the business JRB Ice Cream, moved to 112 Piedras, and took on D.R. Shupe as a partner. They again changed the name to the JRB Ice Cream Co. in 1927. In 1930, the company became a division of Midwest Creameries at 715 E. Missouri (*El Paso Herald Post* 8/17/1933).

The name was dropped in 1930, and Butler became the sales manager for Velvet Ice Cream. He moved up to production supervisor of Price's Desert Gold Dairies in 1934 and continued to fill that capacity until 1938, when he added vice president to his title. He switched to treasurer in 1940 and was only listed as a director in 1944. Although he was probably mostly retired by this time, he dropped the directorate in 1948 and moved into full retirement (EPCD 1930-1944).

Price's Desert Gold Dairies

By 1931, Bob was the president of Midwest, and he announced a two-cent-per-quart reduction in retail milk price (to 11¢ per quart) in October along with the merging of names to Price's Desert Gold Dairies. Although the companies had joined together in 1929, the names had remained separate. Mistletoe Creameries, Hawkins Dairy, and the Elephant Butte Dairy League all felt compelled to join in the price reduction, although "one asserted there is no justification for the cut" (*El Paso Herald Post* 10/25/1931).

Despite the onset of the Great Depression, Midwest and Price's prospered. The group took advantage of the slump to buy up cattle from dairies unable to survive the tough times. On August 19, 1933, the family even opened up a new Midwest Dairy plant in El Paso at 600 N. Piedras (corner of Piedras and Oro Streets) and abandoned the three smaller buildings further up the street. The new plant was "of Spanish architecture and of fireproof tile and stucco construction." The new building was made of "light tan brick with cast stone ornamentation. The structure was designed by architect, Guy L. Frazer, who planned it to fit around the dairy

¹² I have not discovered whether Butler retained his Deming branch after he opened at El Paso. Butler's was a large operation; his first address was listed as 2222-24-26 Texas.

equipment. Although the front of the building was two stories in height, the rear was a single floor (EPCD 1935; *El Paso Herald Post* 8/17/1933; *El Paso Times* 7/22/1932; 8/18/1933; 8/2/1964).

When milk was brought to the plant, it was weighed and poured into stainless steel pipes that transported it into glass-lined, refrigerated, 1,000-gallon tanks. The milk then entered the pasteurization process and was re-cooled to 35 degrees. It was then moved to a vacuum filler, the only one of its kind in use in the Southwest at that time. After sucking off the foam to insure a complete distribution, the bottles were filled at the rate of 100 per minute (*El Paso Herald Post* 8/17/1933).

The ice cream division could be described in a single word: cold! At 30 degrees below zero, the freezing room was noted as “probably the coldest spot in the southwest.” Along with the usual ice cream treats, the plant took special orders. The largest order was from the Chamber of Commerce – 812 ice cream airplanes. Other activities of the plant included the manufacture of butter and cottage cheese (*El Paso Herald Post* 8/17/1933).

The rest of the operation was housed in the main building, but the stables and repair shops were located across the street. Although odd by 21st-century standards, horse-drawn delivery vehicles were still the norm in 1933. Both the automobile and the wagon, however, were common sights on El Paso streets (*El Paso Herald Post* 8/17/1933).

Bob Price bragged about the corporation’s success in 1932:

The company has encouraged better milk production by the small farmer and has maintained for many years a substantial stable market for his milk. The price for milk to the valley farmer, although too low for production cost, is still substantially higher than for any other major city in Texas or the southwest, being actually twice as high as the net prevailing price in some localities. The many thousands of dollars paid monthly by Price’s Desert Gold Dairy to the valley producers have been a steady, stabilizing influence throughout the difficult period of the present world-wide depression in all agricultural prices (*El Paso Times* 7/22/1932).

Price also noted that teamwork was essential. He told a reporter that “it would not have been possible for any one or two of these former individual companies to have constructed or equipped so complete a plant with its many advantages to the consuming public in El Paso.” Price also discussed timing. He stated that the companies merged and built together at that point because “building costs are lower” and “a large portion of the cost has been for labor, which has quite naturally relieved the unemployment situation in El Paso” (*El Paso Herald Post* 8/17/1933). Price was of course describing the early days of the Great Depression.

The company employed 167 people at the Midwest plant and its New Mexico holdings (see below) as well as an additional 80 on Price’s farms to tend approximately 1,000 head of cattle. Price’s Dairy, alone, employed 40 routemen and foremen and equipped each routeman with his own desk in the plant. The company used a total of about one hundred trucks and horse-drawn wagons. All employees wore white (milk-colored) uniforms. Midwest spent \$250,000 for milk in 1932 along with \$750,000 on maintenance. In the bottling section of the plant, a washing machine “soaks, brushes, sterilizes, rinses and chills 100 bottles a minute. Before being sent into the filling room, each bottle is washed 28 minutes.” Machines then filled each bottle and capped it also “at the rate of 100 per minute” (*El Paso Herald Post* 8/17/1933; *El Paso Times* 8/18/1933).

In addition to all money spent on milk, Price’s had bought ten railroad carloads of milk bottles in 1932. Each carload contained 18,000 bottles, so the company purchased a total of 180,000 milk bottles in a single year. Statisticians estimated bottle life at 20 round trips which means that Price’s sent milk bottles back and forth to customers 3,600,000 times during the year (*El Paso Times* 8/17/1933). All retail sales operated from Price’s Piedras Street plant, while wholesaling flourished from the old Desert Gold plant at 300 S. Virginia Street (*El Paso Herald Post* 7/22/1932).

New Mexico Expansion

The family bought ranches near Portales, New Mexico,¹³ and a Newman, Texas. These places were used to provide dairy replacements and help supply rapidly-appearing New Mexico

¹³ The Price’s Portales Ranch was first listed in the El Paso city directories in 1942.

plants (Muñoz 2003:[13]). Midwest Dairies, Inc. opened “two country receiving plants” in Hatch and Las Cruces (230 S. Alameda) in 1930. The plants were stations where

valley producers may deliver their milk twice daily as it is milked to a plant equipped to protect it with adequate refrigeration and continue that protection by means of the big thermos truck all the way from the farm to the city. More than \$60,000 was invested in the two country plants (*El Paso Times* 8/18/1933).

Although the new plants were established primarily to feed the El Paso market, they soon became distribution centers for butter and ice cream in New Mexico. The Las Cruces plant also began dispensing fluid milk to its area (*El Paso Times* 8/18/1933).

The thermos truck was a major innovation for the time. It hauled milk from both the Hatch and Las Cruces “cooling stations” to the main plant at El Paso. The truck closely resembled an oil or gasoline truck with “a tank holding thousands of gallons of milk that is built on the principle of a thermos bottle” (*El Paso Herald Post* 5/20/1930). Although refrigerated trucks were coming in the not-too-distant future, the thermos truck filled a very important developmental gap.

In 1929 (probably late in the year), Midwest also acquired one of the creameries in Portales, New Mexico, probably the Judevine Creamery Co., one of three in the town. The Portales plant was “primarily a creamery for the manufacture of butter, but distributes butter and ice cream throughout its territory.” By 1940, Price’s Creameries was listed at 213 NW Main, and the company built a new cottage cheese processing plant, the only one of its kind in the Southwest, in 1958 (*El Paso Times* 7/22/1932; 8/18/1933; 5/25/1958).

Midwest also opened a branch in Roswell (209 W. 2nd) by 1932. It served as “a wholesale distributing point for ice cream and butter in the Pecos Valley.” Price’s built a new plant at Roswell in 1950. Sometime between 1933 and 1935, the family opened a Midwest plant at Carlsbad with W.P. McKinney as manager. The plant advertised ice cream and butter. A.C. Bindell was manager by 1940 at 513 N. Canal (*El Paso Times* 7/22/1932; 5/25/1958; NMSBD 1929-1940-41). A 1942 ad listed the branches (Figure 8-4).

Back in El Paso

The queen of Price's herd, a cow named Beth de Kol Segis, became nationally famous. Typically, a cow is past her prime about five-and-a-half years of age, but Beth did not begin her famous production streak until she was six. At that point, she set a six-year production record of 137,597.4 pounds of milk and 6006.6 pounds of butter. Her top year was 1927 when she set the Texas record for a single year's milk production (*El Paso Times* 8/18/1933).

Price's was as concerned about health as it was about amount. Theo Reeder, the bacteriologist and laboratory technician for Midwest, declared that "it is a point of honor with us to give our milk a complete bacteriological test every day in the interest of public health (*El Paso Times* 8/18/1933). Reeder also noted that Price's Desert Gold established the "first complete bacteriological laboratory operated by any dairy in the southwest" in 1922. Reeder was known to her coworkers as the "Queen of the Lab" (*El Paso Herald Post* 8/17/1933).

Price's also began to push "soft-curd milk" in the early 1930s. Milk of this type was thought to be easier for babies to digest. According to the *Times* (8/18/1933), "more than 500 cows were tested to find the few who could produce this milk. They were segregated for the production of Certified Holstein Milk." Price's continued to carry the product until the early 1950s.

Although Price's had at least one "big thermos truck" in the early 1930s, most (if not all) home delivery routes were serviced by horse-drawn wagon. David Price discussed the importance of the horse in 1933:

A new man, and an old horse, will get a milk route delivered far faster than an old man and a new horse. The horse knows the route as well or better than his master. Because the horse has an infallible memory, he renders an invaluable

The advertisement is titled "Dairy Products" and "BUYER'S GUIDE". It features a central illustration of a truck with a checkered pattern, labeled "27 WAYS" and "Price's DAIRY PRODUCTS". Below the truck, the text reads "SERVING THE SOUTHWEST from the Southwest's finest, most modern plants main office EL PASO M-2050 600 N. Piedras St." and lists several locations: ROSWELL, CARLSBAD, ARTESIA, HOBBS, PORTALES, LAS CRUCES, HOT SPRINGS, and SILVER CITY. The ad also lists various products such as "Velvet ICE CREAM", "PASTEURIZED MILK", "BUTTERMILK - GOAT'S MILK", "COTTAGE CHEESE", "SPECIAL BABY MILK", "CERT. HOLSTEIN MILK", "FRESH FARM EGGS", "BIRKLEY'S ORANGEADE", "DARK-RICH CHOC. MILK", "DESERT GOLD AND", and "GOLD SEAL BUTTER". The "BIRDS-EYE" logo is also present. At the bottom, it states "PHONE M-2050" and "LARGEST IN THE SOUTHWEST".

Figure 8-4 – Price's Creameries ad (El Paso City Directory 1942)

assistance to the milkman. The milkman might forget a stop, but the horse never. A good milkman recognizes his dependence on his horse, and they become faithful partners in the common enterprise—getting the milk there on time (*El Paso Times* 8/18/1933).

The Price family contributed the capital to establish the Price-Black Farms, Inc., at Arrey, New Mexico, in 1934 with George P. Black as manager. The dairy was started with 50 head of mixed-breed cattle and covered 900 acres. By 1941, the farm at Arrey was maintained mostly to produce feed. However, Black kept 140 dairy cattle on the place and milked about 100 Jerseys and Guernseys daily. The farm employed 35 people at that time. Eventually, Black culled the herd and introduced registered Guernsey bulls, until the herd was entirely composed of Guernseys (EPCD 1935; *El Paso Herald Post* 8/13/1941; *El Paso Times* 7/22/1932; 8/18/1933; 8/2/1964; Muñoz 2003:[13]; Pendergrast 1961:117). The firm was still advertising as both Price’s and Midwest Dairies (Figure 8-5).

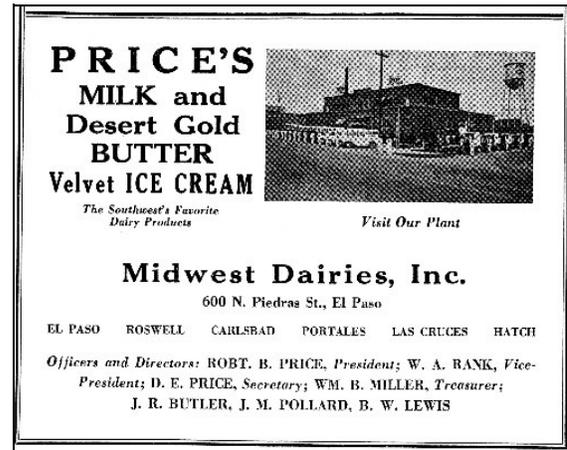


Figure 8-5 – Prices/Midwest Dairy ad (*El Paso City Directory* 1934)

Price’s Creameries

Even Mary’s death at the age of 71 on August 8, 1937, failed to slow the expansion. Midwest plants at Hot Springs (now Truth or Consequences) and Hobbs (323 E. Main) were added during the year of her death.¹⁴ By 1940, the family reorganized again and abandoned the Midwest name. The new corporation, Price’s Creameries, Inc., was headed by Bob Price, with W.A. Rank as vice president and assistant manager, David E Price as secretary, and J.R. Butler as treasurer. Their ad called them “distributors Price’s milk, mfrs Velvet Ice Cream and Desert Gold Butter” (EPCD 1940-1941; Muñoz 2003:[13]).

¹⁴ Price’s built a new plant in Hobbs in 1951 (*El Paso Times* 5/25/1958).

After discussing the importance of prompt delivery of milk, David Price provided a glimpse of Price's dairy operation in 1939:

Price's dairy has invested large sums of money in plants, in fast trucks, in refrigerating equipment, in laboratories and scientific machinery for the prompt sanitary handling of this precious fluid, just to win [the] race against time and temperature and safeguard your health. . . . In the handling of milk – and by that I mean the process of collecting and transporting it, refrigerating it in transit, and bottling and distribution – as fast as science devised new and better methods, they are adopted by us (*El Paso Times* 3/9/1939).

By 1941, Price's had three farms in the El Paso area along with three ranches that served important needs for the company. Price's El Paso Dairy at North Loop Rd. was managed by A.H. Killingsworth with H.J. Penn as its superintendent. Forty-five employees milked a herd of 700 cows each day, the largest single production unit in Texas. Two-thirds of the herd were Holstein cattle with the remainder a mix of Guernseys and Jerseys. In addition, Price's Grade A Pasteurized goat's milk was supplied by a herd of about 100 Toggenberg goats¹⁵ (*El Paso Herald Post* 8/13/1941 –Figure 8-6).



Figure 8-6 – Price's goat milk ad (*Alamogordo News* 2/27/1949)

Located at Vinton in El Paso's Upper Valley, Price's Farms was run and managed by Paul Price. Approximately 250 acres produced much of the feed used by the Price's herds. In addition, 350 Holsteins and Guernseys were pastured there with 200 of them milked daily. Thirty-five employees tended the herd, farmed the fields, and cared for the 10,000 White Leghorn hens used to produce eggs for Price's (*El Paso Herald Post* 8/13/1941).

¹⁵ Pendergrast (1961:116) stated that “ironically, [Bob Price's] daughter was allergic to cow's milk, so a herd of goats was purchased. This marked the beginning of Price's important Certified Unit.” Thus far, I have been unable to discover the year of the goat purchase, but Bob and Lorez were married in 1922, and Barbara was their oldest child. She was probably born within a year or two, so the goat herd was probably purchased about 1924 or so.

The three ranches were used primarily for breeding new dairy stock along with some beef cattle and sheep. J. Raleighcamp managed the six-section ranch at Newman, just north of El Paso on the west side of the Franklin Mountains. Paul Price was in charge of the ranch at Berino, New Mexico, consisting of 100 sections of land. The final spread, Price's Portales Ranch, was run by John Russell Price, Jr., a third generation of Prices in the business. Of the 20 sections of land encompassing the ranch, 500 acres were cultivated for raising feed (*El Paso Herald Post* 8/13/1941).

Price's Creameries, Inc. continued a growth spurt in the 1940s beginning with the opening of a plant at Artesia (with G.C. White, Jr. as manger, "dist of dairy products") by 1940, Silver City by 1942, and Deming (118 W. Pine) by 1944 (EPCD 1940-1944; NMSBD 1940-41-1946-47). Price's also branched out in Texas, opening a sales branch at Alpine in 1948¹⁶ (*El Paso Times* 5/25/1958). Along with the territorial expansion, Price's also became a distributor for Birds Eye frosted foods in late 1942 or early 1943. Along with their old standby, Velvet Ice Cream, and the new Birds Eye frozen foods, Prices offered pasteurized milk, buttermilk, goat's milk, cottage cheese, special baby milk, certified Holstein milk, fresh farm eggs, Bireley's Orangeade, Dari-Rich Chocolate Milk, Desert Gold Butter, and Gold Seal Butter (Figure 8-7). At the same time, David Price¹⁷ moved up to vice president and assistant manager (EPCD 1942).

During World War II, dairies were very strongly in support of U.S. involvement (Figure 8-8). Price's advertising during the period reflected the growing support for the war effort. One ad boasted:



Figure 8-7 – Desert Gold Butter ad (*El Paso Times* 6/28/1943)

¹⁶ Pendergrast (1961:118) claimed the Alpine distributing plant opened in 1950.

¹⁷ About 1945, David married a woman named Winifred. His first wife, Evelyn, initially appeared as David's wife in the 1937 directory. He apparently divorced Evelyn about 1942, as she is listed in 1943 as a stenographer for American Smelting & Refining Co.

Here's Your Answer, Hitler[.] Fighting men and women, civilians and service people alike, stand ready to axe the Axis. No little of this fighting spirit comes from the health that is characteristic of Americans. Keep healthy . . . drink more milk, and to get the best ask for Price's Protected Milk at your grocer's (sic) or phone Main 2050 for every-other day delivery (*El Paso Times* 7/27/1942).

Dairy products, like many of the other items we now take for granted, were rationed. An ad for Desert Gold Butter in the *El Paso Times* (6/28/1943) warned, "Please Bring Your Ration Book! . . . Buy Bonds! . . . Save Valuable Time by Having Your Stamps Ready!" Sanitation was also important. During the same period, the company noted that "Price's spick-and-spanliness is the care and time taken to see that each bottle is perfectly clean . . . 26 minutes of washing for each bottle in Price's efficient washing machine. This is another of Price's 27 Protections" (*El Paso Times* 7/27/1942).



Figure 8-8 – Wartime bottle return ad (*El Paso Times* 11/7/1943)

Creameries of America and Beatrice Foods

Although most things remained the same during the 1940s, both Killingsworth and his wife, Olindia, disappeared from the directories in 1944. Price's remodeled the buildings on the property, creating the world's largest milking barn¹⁸ about this time (Figure 8-9 & 8-10). The Midwest name was retired, and Price's dropped the special baby milk, eggs, chocolate milk, and Gold Seal Butter from its ads. In 1948, Price's phone number changed from Main 2050 to 5-2711 (EPCD 1947-1948; *El Paso Times* 3/15/1975). At some point, Price's may have become part of Creameries of America (Gazel 1990:17).¹⁹

¹⁸ The newspaper may have exaggerated. Pendergrast (1961:117) said the barn was "considered one of the largest in the nation."

It is also interesting to note that the photo in Figure 8-9 was originally used in the Price's/Midwest Dairy ad in the 1934 El Paso city directory.

¹⁹ In his book on Beatrice Foods, Gazel discussed the acquisition of Creameries of America. He noted Price's during the discussion but acted as if it was part of the Creameries merger. Pendergrast (1961:117) cited the *Go-Getter*, a newsletter published by Price's in the

Creameries of America (including Price’s Creameries) merged with Beatrice Foods, and Bob served as vice president until his retirement in 1963. The merger, begun in 1952, was not complete until 1954 and included all of Price’s interests, including Valley Gold Dairy in Albuquerque.²⁰ The creameries, however, continued to be listed under the Price’s name in the El Paso city directories (Gazel 1990:18; Muñoz 2003:[13]).



Figure 8-9 – Price’s Dairy 1945 (*Milk Dealer* 1945:cover)

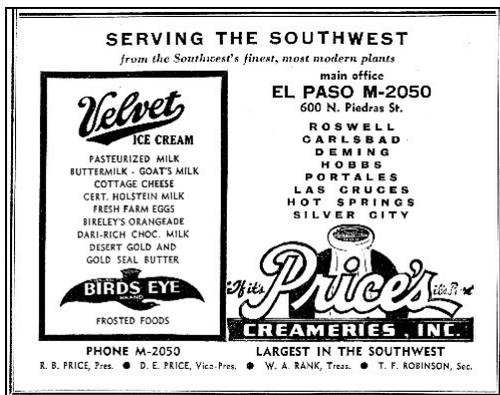


Figure 8-10 – Price’s Creameries 1944 ad (El Paso City Directory 1944)

Price’s ads and listings reflected the changes. The Price’s directory ad described the company as “Distributors Price’s Milk[,] Manufacturers Price’s Velvet and American Hostess Ice Cream [,] Minute Maid Orange Juice[, and] Honor Proud Cream.” The numerous products of the 1940s, including Birds Eye frosted foods, were gone. The company added Honor Brand Frozen Foods, Mrs. Chessar’s Chickens, Forty Fathom Sea Foods, and Hills Horse Meat in 1953 as well as Simple Simon Pies the following year (EPCD 1952-1954).

Beatrice originated as the firm of Haskell & Bosworth in Beatrice, Nebraska, a company dealing in poultry, eggs, and butter. The partners incorporated in 1898 as the Beatrice Creamery Co. By 1905, the new corporation, under the leadership of George Everett Haskell, was already

1950s in confirmation that Price’s was “a subsidiary of Creameries of America, Inc. but did not include a date.

²⁰ Muñoz (2003:[13]) and Pendergrast (1961:118) both note the date as 1953 as did the Price’s ad in the May 25, 1958 *El Paso Times*. The *Times* ad also noted a name change at that point to Price’s Meadow Gold.

expanding, buying the Continental Creamery Co. of Topeka, Kansas. The already large corporation was growing as rapidly as possible during the early 1950s to take advantage of the increasing consumption of ice cream, milk, and other dairy products (Gazel 1990:1-3, 19).

On October 16, 1956, just three years after the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) had verbally agreed to the merger between Beatrice and Creameries of America, the FTC brought a complaint against Beatrice, along with separate charges against National Dairy and Borden. Beatrice received the divestiture order on December 10, 1965, but filed an appeal (Gazel 1990:156-158).

During the appeal process, Beatrice offered the FTC a consent plan, whereby the corporation would divest selected plants including the Roswell and El Paso units of Price's Creameries and the Valley Gold Dairy in Albuquerque. The agreement stipulated that the divested Beatrice holdings would be for sale only to a single purchaser. The FTC accepted the modified consent offered by Beatrice on June 7, 1967 (Gazel 1990:156-158). Sea Containers Corp. acquired the Price's interest in Beatrice Foods in 1971, when the courts ordered the corporation to divest (Muñoz 2003:[13]).

Price's Creameries

By their 50th anniversary (1956), Price's had "expanded to four large dairy farms . . . milking over 2,200 cows." The main headquarters was Price's El Paso Dairy Farm on North Loop. Among the modern improvements, the farm contained "the Southwest's only completely automatic push-button dairy feed mill" to insure a scientifically-balanced portion of feed to the cattle (*El Paso Times* 4/31/1956).

The all-steel milking barn covered an area of 21,000 square feet, the largest on the North American continent. The barn contained the Southwest's first enclosed milking unit that passed the milk from cow to customer without it ever being touched by human hands. Price's was also El Paso's largest distributor of frozen foods at 4.5 million pounds annually. The company carried such brands as Four Fishermen, Stolkey's Honor Brand, Simple Simon, and Minute Maid. Bob Jr. was now operating the El Paso farm, and Paul Jr. was the assistant manager at Vinton (*El Paso Times* 4/31/1956).

Dudley (actually John Dudley Price, son of Bob Price, Jr.), directed Valley Gold Dairies at Albuquerque, a subsidiary of Price's Creameries, and changed the name to Price's Valley Gold in 1969 (Muñoz 2003:[13]). He was "associated with Valley Gold Dairies of Albuquerque" by 1956 (*El Paso Times* 4/21/1956).

By September 1961, Price's served 37 counties in West Texas and New Mexico and maintained a herd of 130 goats, a mixed group of French Alpine and Toggenburg breeds (*El Paso Times* 9/25/1961; Pendergrast 1961:117). Price's milked more than 3,500 cows, and delivered their dairy products in "gleaming white, refrigerated trucks." The Price-Black farm had become entirely Guernsey with about half of the 2,400 head registered. In order to be registered, "each cow must trace its ancestry through sire and dam back a thousand years to the Isle of Guernsey." The large number made the herd one of the biggest Guernsey herds in the United States and the largest producer of Golden Guernsey milk in the Southwest (Pendergrast 1961:117-118).

In 1964, the *Times* provided a cameo shot of the Price-Black Farms. Incorporated in 1934 with 50 head of cattle, the 900-acre spread had grown to 2,800 head, 1,200 of them milking stock. The cows were milked "twice a day, 272 an hour on the average, by machines in the milking barn." The workers kept the barn full of cattle 18 hours a day with cleaning operations the other six hours. The extra cattle produced replacement stock, making the farm virtually self-sufficient. The farm produced 4,200 gallons of milk that was delivered to El Paso every other day (*El Paso Times* 8/2/1964).

George P. Black, the original manager, still operated the farm in 1964 with the help of his son, Kenneth (Ken), the assistant manager. In addition to cattle, the men grew cotton on 270 acres and harvested five-to-six crops a year of barley, alfalfa, and silage for cattle feed. Irrigation came from five wells plus allotments of water from the Elephant Butte Dam reservoir. As a sideline, the farm raised 2,400 pigs (*El Paso Times* 8/2/1964). At the New Mexico State Fair, Price-Black cattle won 17 out of 19 first-place awards as well as seconds in some of the same categories (*El Paso Times* 10/2/1964). Ken Black described the emphasis on cleanliness:

Our stalls are hosed down every few hours, night and day, and the manure channeled to a lagoon to be used for irrigation of crops. Each cow is washed with

water under pressure and given a second cleansing with antiseptic before milking. Cows are clipped every 60 days for sanitary purposes (*El Paso Times* 8/2/1964).

The last listing for Price-Black Farms was in 1968 (EPCD 1968).

Deaths in the Family

Bob, Sr., died in his office in the El Paso National Bank Building on May 6, 1967, from an apparent heart attack. He was 73 years old (*El Paso Herald Post* 5/8/1967). In a 1935 interview (*El Paso Herald Post* 3/15/1935), Bob, an undefeated wrestling champion during college, said, "I hunt and fish some; I also like golf and football." His interest in watching football probably remained from his college days when he played the game. He was described as "quiet, his business activities vigorous." Price claimed he was "not inclined toward literature," although he was active in business. He was interviewed just after he had been elected president of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce (*El Paso Herald Post* 4/28/1931).

He was a Mason, a Shriner, and a member of the Lions Club, the El Paso Club, Coronado Country Club, and the El Paso Country Club. During his life, he had been the president of the Texas Milk Dealers Assn., the Certified Milk Producers Assn., director of Texas Technological College and El Paso National Bank, a trustee for Providence Memorial Hospital, and president of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce. He was honored posthumously by the Dairy Shrine Club in Madison, Wisconsin (*El Paso Times* 3/12/1935; *El Paso Herald Post* 5/8/1967; 10/1/1967).

Bob had married the former Lorez McRae in 1922, and the couple produced three children: Barbara, Robert, Jr., and Dudley. She once said that when they were on their honeymoon, "Bob was called out to the dairy farm to supervise the birth of a calf." Price, himself, said, "Dairying is a very stable industry but also confining. Cows work seven days a week and the people taking care of them have to do so, too." His attitude about parenting was fairly simple. He believed he should be a good example. He said, "It's important to try to spend some time with your children, talking seriously with them and listening to their problems" (*El Paso Herald Post* 6/19/1965).

Bob's son, Robert B. Price, Jr., became chairman of the El Paso business, while Dudley continued to manage Valley Gold. Bob Jr. grew up in the business. His father bragged that

Bob worked out at our farm in the lower valley during the summers and seemed very interested in it even when he was only a small boy. When he was in high school, he came to me one day and said, "I believe I'd like to run the North Loop farm some day. Do you think I could?" I told him if he fitted himself for it, and really wanted to, he probably could (*El Paso Herald Post* 6/19/1965).

He was named Outstanding Soil Supervisor for superb conservation practices at the 646-acre Newman farm. The farm was "devoted to the growing of alfalfa for hay, and green chop feed and pasture crops for young dairy heifers and ensilage crop of corn and hybrid sorghum which are put into a trench silo. . . . This area provides feed and pasture for some 500 head of dairy heifers annually" as well as alfalfa for Price's El Paso Dairy (*El Paso Herald Post* 1/18/1962).

Bob Jr. died of an apparent heart attack on September 26, 1974,²¹ at the age of 48, still working at the company business. In many ways, Bob followed in his father's footsteps. He was a member of the boards of directors for three establishments aside from Price's Creameries: Radford School for Girls, First State Bank, and the American Dairy Assn. of Texas. In addition, he had been president of the Certified Milk Producers Assn. of America, a Rotarian, a director of the El Paso Club, and held memberships in the Christian Science Church, El Paso Chamber of Commerce, Horizon Country Club, and the Del Norte Club. He had been chairman of the board of the El Paso-Hudspeth Conservation District, chairman of the Salvation Army Advisory Board, and chairman of the El Paso area A & M College Ex-Student Club (*El Paso Herald Post* 9/28/1974; *El Paso Times* 9/29/1963; 9/24/1974; 9/28/1974).

If this were not enough, the busy Price was a member of the National Council of the John Birch Society, and active committeeman of the American National Cattleman's Assn., and a member of the editorial staff of the American Opinion Magazine. Bob earned his BA in dairy husbandry from Texas A&M University in 1948, and received his MA, also in dairy husbandry from the University of Wisconsin in 1949. He was married to the former Georgiana Hammett,

²¹ Muñoz (2003:[13]) placed the date at September 8.

and the couple produced four children, including Robert Price III (*El Paso Herald Post* 9/28/1974; *El Paso Times* 9/29/1963; 9/24/1974; 9/28/1974).

By at least 1975, Dudley became president of Price's. I have not been able to discover whether Dudley also retained his position in Albuquerque or relinquished it to another. At some point (before 1975), Price's expanded to serve parts of Arizona.

History repeats itself. Just as in 1920 when El Paso grew to engulf the Price's herds at Alameda, the city had spread into the Lower Valley and now "made it no long [*sic*] practical to operate a dairy farm in the center of Greater El Paso" according to Dudley Price. Price further stated, "It is to the benefit of Greater El Paso and its prosperous and healthy growth that our milking operations only are being relocated to a more suitable area," although the processing plant on Piedras continued in operation. The company, at this time, housed nearly 4,000 cattle at Price's El Paso Dairy at North Loop, 2,100 of these in the milking herd. The corporation owned six other dairy properties, mostly in New Mexico and planned to distribute the herds among them (*El Paso Times* 3/15/1975).

The family sold the distributorship to Dean Foods in 1978 but continued to operate Price's Dairies, Inc., the last vestige of the formerly vast Price's holdings. Barbara Price Curlin served as Chairman of the Board in 2003, with her husband, Jack, as president, and Tom Curlin, their son, as CEO. Dudley Price sold Price's Valley Gold Farms in 1998 (Muñoz 2003:[13]).

Containers and Marks

[Much of this section was originally published in Lockhart (2012)]

The story of Price's bottles is as interesting as the firm's history. Descriptions of early milk sales include the clinking of bottles, and bottles had certainly become El Paso's norm by at least 1906, when the Price family bought its first cow. Like most small dairies, however, Price's bottles were almost certainly unmarked – except for the cap, and that likely only began after the name became Price's Dairy in 1912. I have found no evidence that Price's adopted a marked bottle during the El Paso ordinance of 1913-1914, even though the firm was fined for ignoring the ordinance.

Price's apparently adopted its first embossed bottle in 1930, when the Price family purchased Desert Gold Dairies. As noted in the history section, the dairy bought ten railroad carloads of milk bottles in 1932, probably all embossed with the Price's name. From this point on, the firm carefully marked all of its containers, except promotional items (e.g., tumblers or bowls filled with cottage cheese). Price's bottled its products in glass for the next 20 years.

Home delivery was still in place in 1942, when Price's offered "every-other day delivery" (*El Paso Times* 7/27/1942). Although Price's ads supported the war effort, Price's bottles did not. Many dairies, including Valley Gold Dairies in Albuquerque, owned by Price's and managed by Dudley Price, included war slogans on pyroglazed bottles. Price's El Paso bottles remained embossed throughout the period.

In 1948, Price's phone number changed from Main 2050 to 5-2711 (EPCD 1948). This would have created a problem with all the bottles marked with the old phone number – but Price's had joined the El Paso Milk Bottle Assn. and had adopted the Association's square bottle in 1947. Even though the firm returned to its own glass bottles (square ones, this time) in 1950, the era of paper had clearly arrived and the final bottles were short-lived.

Price's began using waxed-paper containers in 1950, although the company still retained the old glass ones. In May, the firm announced, "Formerly Guernsey-Jersey, Prices' (sic) Gold Star Milk is available to El Pasoans today in the new Pure-Pak paper container. This is the same superior milk – extra rich and delicious – under a brand new name. In glass bottles it's still called Guernsey-Jersey. Enjoy this better milk often. Gold Star in Pure-Pak – Guernsey-Jersey in glass" (*El Paso Times* 5/21/1950).

Price's was still delivering milk to residential customers as late as 1961, when Mrs. W.D. Day, one of the Price family's first customers, was still receiving a "great variety of dairy products now delivered to her door by Price's routeman, Luis Sanchez." Although I have not found the exact date, the period of home delivery was almost over. Another era was ending, and dairy product users would have to travel to the store to buy milk. The first four major bottle styles used by Price's Dairy were all made on press-and-blow machines. The bases of all of them had ejection or valve scars, the most notable feature of this machine type. See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the machines.

Type 1 – Dacro Finish, Old Style



Figure 8-11 – Old-style Dacro finish

By at least 1930, Price’s adopted a milk bottle topped with the older style Dacro finish (a large crown finish –Figure 8-11). This style only had the word “Prices” (cursive with no apostrophe) in a plate on the front (Figure 8-12). The earliest example I have is a quart embossed “3E0” in the ejection scar. A half-pint bottle had “3L1” in the same location (Figure 8-13). Another quart had “S” on the side of the base, with “37” in the ejection scar.



Figure 8-13 – 1931 date code on base

The heel of each bottle was embossed “MTC” (Figure 8-14), the logo used by the Thather Mfg. Co. from 1923 to ca. 1951. The “E” on the earliest bottle indicated the plant at Elmira, New York, while “L” was the code for Lockport, also in New York. The “S” indicated the plant at Streator, Illinois, while the numerical codes were dates for 1930, 1931, and 1937, respectively (Lockhart et al. 2007). These bottles were in adopted by 1930 and continued in use until at least 1937 – although they were probably discontinued that year. Price’s had adopted bottles with cap-seat or “common sense” finish by at least 1935, so the dairy had a transition period of at least two years, when both styles were available.

By at least 1930, Price’s adopted a milk bottle topped with the older style Dacro finish (a large crown finish –Figure 8-11). This style only had the word “Prices” (cursive with no apostrophe) in a plate on the front (Figure 8-12). The



Figure 8-12 – Price’s Type 1 bottle

The heel of each bottle was embossed “MTC” (Figure 8-14), the logo used by the Thather Mfg. Co. from 1923 to ca. 1951. The “E” on the earliest bottle indicated the plant at Elmira, New York, while “L” was the code for Lockport, also in New York. The “S” indicated the plant at Streator, Illinois, while the numerical codes were dates for 1930, 1931, and 1937, respectively

(Lockhart et al. 2007). These bottles were in adopted by 1930 and continued in use until at



Figure 8-14 – Thatcher heelcode

Type 2 – Embossed Bands, Cap-Seat Finish

In 1935, Price’s introduced a slightly different bottle with a cap-seat or “common sense” finish. The bottle was embossed “Price’s” in cursive with an underlining tail sweeping back from the “s” above the work “MILK” – all between two broad embossed

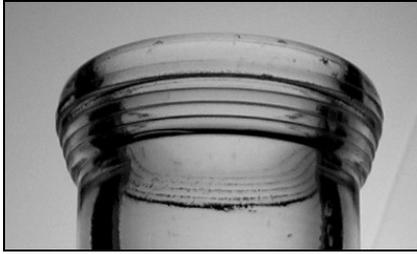


Figure 8-16 – Stepped finish

bands that encircled the bottle just below the shoulder and just above the heel (Figure 8-15). The lower section of the finish roll was stepped but had no vertical supports (Figure 8-16 – compare with Figure 8-22). I have only seen one of these

bottles, embossed “SEALED 53 L-G 54” on the front heel, “ONE QUART LIQUID” on the back heel, and “PATENT APPLIED FOR / P (large) 35” on the base. The logo was used by the Liberty Glass Co. from 1934 to 1957, and the “35” was a date code for 1935 (Lockhart 2004).



Figure 8-15 – Price’s Type 2 bottle

Type 3 – Price’s *DAIRY CO.* – vertical ribs on shoulder

Probably in 1936, Price’s adopted a bottle that is now ubiquitous in El Paso antique stores and on eBay. The front of each bottle was embossed “Price’s (still with the underlining tail) / *DAIRY / CO.*” with “PHONE MAIN 2050 / EL PASO, TEXAS / WASH AND RETURN” on the reverse (Figure 8-17).

Variation A

The one that was likely the earliest in this series had no date code or manufacturer’s logo. This early bottle had a “syrup” finish – somewhat fatter than the typical cap-seat ring (Figure 8-18).



Figure 8-17 – Price’s Type 3 bottle

Variation B

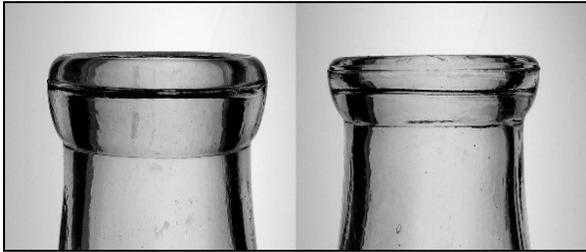


Figure 8-18 – Syrup and regular cap-seat finishes



Figure 8-20 – Base of common bottle

Variation C



Figure 8-21 – L-G heelmark

1945. These were made by the Liberty Glass Co. and had the “L-G” heelmark (Figure 8-21). Although the embossed labeling was identical with the Owens-

By 1937, the dairy had ordered

the more common cap-seat bottle, still with the same embossing on front and back (Figure 8-19). Each bottle base was embossed with a large “P” – indicating Price’s, of course (Figure 8-20). These bottles were made by the Owens-Illinois Glass Co., Plant No. 18 (Columbus, Ohio) until at least 1943.



Figure 8-19 – Most common Price’s bottle

A slight variation was introduced by 1941 and remained in use until at least



Figure 8-22 – Stepped finish with supports

Illinois bottles, this variation had a unique cap-seat finish, with “steps” descending on the lower side of the roll interspersed with ten vertical supports (Figure 8-22 – compare with Figure 8-16). Along with the large “P,” the base was embossed with “PATENTED No 2076124” (Figure 8-23).



Figure 8-23 – Variation C base

The steps were designed by James E. Greenwood, who applied for a patent on December 31, 1935, and received Patent No. 2,076,124 for a “Milk Bottle” on April 3, 1937.

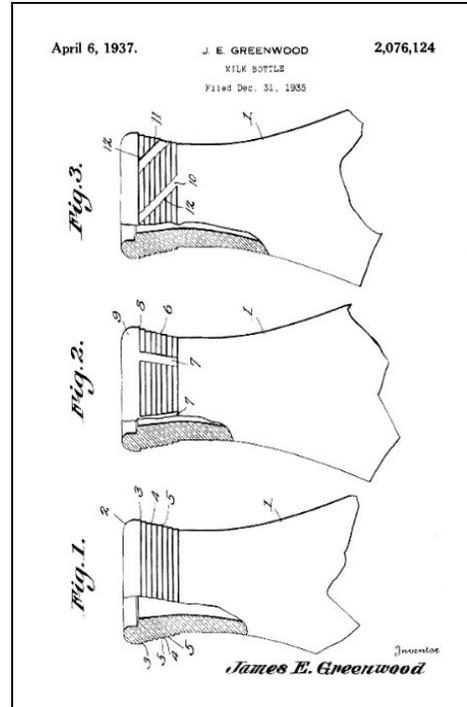


Figure 8-24 – Greenwood 1937 patent

Rather than the bottle, itself, Greenwood’s invention was actually a stepped series of horizontal ridges at the lower part of the large ring of the typical Common Sense finish. Greenwood assigned the patent to the Liberty Glass Co. (Figure 8-24). This finish was obviously intended to compete with the Holdfast finish, used at the time by the Atlantic Glass Co.

Variation D

The final variation of these most common Price’s bottles again had the same embossing but had a multicap finish (Figure 8-25). These bottles were also made at Owens-Illinois Plant No. 18 and had the “1” date code for 1941. Price’s ordered three variations of the Type 3 bottle style during 1941 – the “typical” finish, the stepped finish, and the multicap finish. The stepped variation may be adopted for use in other venues; it had “REG. CAL” (Registered California) embossed at the heel.

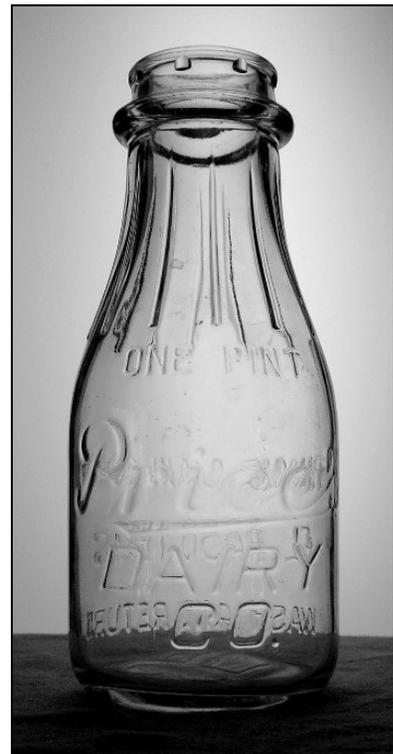


Figure 8-25 – Variation D – multicap finish

The use of the multicap finish during the same year may have been a trial order.

The multicap finish was the brainchild of Harry L. White and John Arthur Keenan. The pair applied for a patent for a “Nondrip Milk Bottle” on January 27, 1940. White and Keenan received Patent No. 2,214,004 on September 10 of the same year. They described the finish as “a pouring lip consisting of a frusto-conical portion . . . having near the top thereof a series of lugs.” Below this was the “bumper roll” which constituted the “nondrip” segment of the finish (Figure 8-26). Although the White and Keenan patent included a cap-seat in the throat, it is absent on the Price’s bottle.

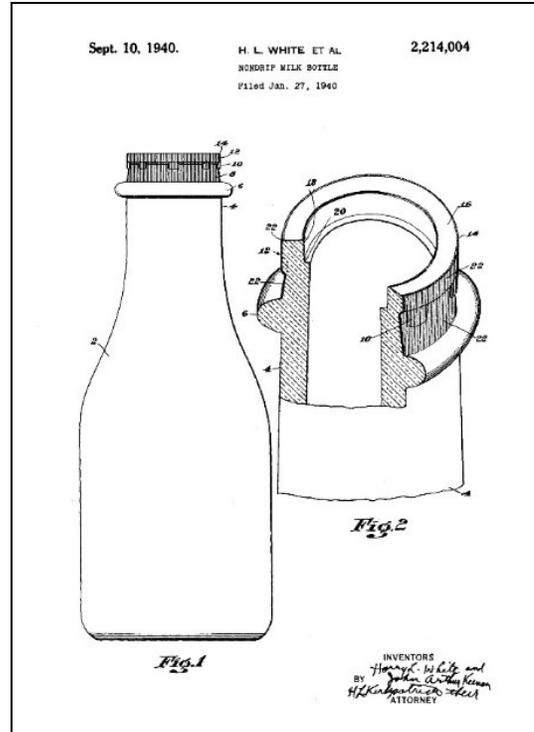


Figure 8-26 – White & Keenan 1940 patent

Type 4 – Dacro Finish, New Style



Figure 8-27 – Newer Dacro finish

The final Price’s bottle that was made by the press-and-blow system was probably also experimental in nature. Similar to the multicap, the finish on this bottle was the later Dacro finish with the “bumper roll” below it instead of the large reinforcing ring of the earlier Dacro style (Figure 8-



Figure 8-28 – Price’s Dacro cap

27). Price’s probably used Dacro caps for each of these finishes (Figure 8-28). Still made by Owens-Illinois (at Plant No. 18), with a date code for 1944, the bottle had virtually the same information as its predecessor in a plate on the front (Figure 8-29). The bottles were probably only ordered once.

Cottage Cheese



Figure 8-30 – Price’s Cottage Cheese jar



Figure 8-31 – L.G. heelmark

Glass from 1924 to ca. 1934 (Figure 8-31).

Tumblers, Glasses, and Bowls

By at least January 20, 1949, Price’s began advertising cottage cheese packed in “attractively decorated 9 oz. glasses” (Figure 8-32). These had a leaf pattern and were topped by a tin lid (*Alamogordo News* 1/20/1949). It is unclear how long the promotion lasted, but a little over a year later, on February 21, 1950, the *Herald Post* offered “Price’s Creamed Cottage Cheese now packed in Jewel Tone Plastic Bowls.” These bowls were apparently unmarked, and I have no idea whether or not the promotion was successful. However, this apparently led to packing cottage cheese in glass containers.

Price’s also sold cottage cheese in wide-mouth jars with what was essentially a cap-seat finish. The jars were made on press-and-blow machines by the Liberty Glass Co. Each was embossed “Price’s (cursive) with underlining tail sweeping back from the “s” / DAIRY / CO. (all horizontal) / PHONE MAIN 2050” in a plate (Figure 8-30). These jars were replaced by bowls and tumblers in the 1950s. The heel of the jar was embossed “L.G.” – a logo used by Liberty



Figure 8-29 – Type 4 bottle



Figure 8-32 – First Price’s tumbler ad (*Alamogordo News* 1-20-1949)

On August 1, 1950, Price's advertised

Beautiful, glowing glasses in rich, forest green, decorated with clever, sure to be talked about, Gay Nineties figures. These lovely glasses are yours for the asking at your favorite dealer's or from your neighborhood Price's routeman. They're filled with 12 ounces of Price's delicious, creamed Cottage Cheese – capped with safe, snap-on metal lids (*El Paso Herald Post* 8/1/1950).

A customer who was successful in collecting eight of the lids could redeem them at the Price's Salesroom for a set of four matching plates, bowls, cups, and saucers – all made of glass by the Anchor Hocking Glass Co. – for the nominal sum of \$1.89 (Figure 8-33).



Figure 8-34 – Cottage cheese lids

The lids were tin-covered rolled steel. They were embossed “CREAMED COTTAGE CHEESE (arch) / MFG’D BY (slight arch) / PRICE’S / CREAMERIES / INC. (all horizontal) / EL PASO, TEX. ROSWELL, N.M. / 9 OZ. NET (both



Figure 8-35 – Tumblers from the Gay Nineties set

Join Your Home

Sparkling Conversation Pieces...

Beautiful, glowing glasses, in rich, forestgreen, decorated with clever, sure to be talked about, Gay Nineties figures. These lovely glasses are yours for the asking at your favorite dealer's or from your neighborhood Price's routeman. They're filled with 12 ounces of Price's delicious, creamed Cottage Cheese – capped with safe, snap-on metal lids.

* As an EXTRA premium, Price's offer this amazing prize: Save 8 metal lids from your Cottage Cheese glasses and bring them, with \$1.89, to PRICE'S SALESROOM, 408 N. VALLE BLVD., EL PASO, TEX. You'll receive a sixteen-piece set of forest green glassware, to match your glasses.

Price's

COTTAGE CHEESE

This fresh, creamed cheese-food is a refreshing treat in your summer menu. It's light, it's tasty and it's a perfect substitute for meat. Always ask for PRICE'S COTTAGE CHEESE for better, richer flavor – top quality and purity.

* This beautiful sixteen-piece set of Anchor Hocking glassware in your glassware is your own! Save 8 metal lids from your Cottage Cheese glasses. Get your set of sixteen pieces at PRICE'S SALESROOM, 408 N. VALLE BLVD., EL PASO, TEX.

Figure 8-33 – Ads for the Gay Nineties set (*El Paso Herald Post* 8/1/1950)

inverted arches). The lids came in three variations, with “13 OZ. NET” or “16 OZ. NET” replacing the nine-ounce designation (Figure 8-34).

The Gay Nineties set consisted of four tumblers, each 5" tall, 2 1/2" in diameter at the rim and 3 3/4" in diameter at the widest point (Figure 8-35). Although one ad said that the items were made by the Anchor Hocking Glass Co., none of the vessels had a manufacturer's mark. All had white Applied Color Lettering (ACL) designs, including "The Hansom" (Hansom cabs – horse-drawn); "Gas Buggy" (a turn-of-the-century car); "A Bundle of Joy" (a bicycle built for two); and "Open Sleigh" (a horse-drawn sleigh). The set was also available in nine-ounce tumblers.



Figure 8-37 – Glasses from the Square Dance set

The set consisted of "Do Si Do" (two dancers); "Partners All" (a square dance caller); "Hoe Down" (three musicians); and "Swing Her High, Swing Her Low" (two dancers).

On May 28, 1952, the dairy tried a different approach – "genuine Fire-King jade green Ovenware bowls" (Figure 8-38). These were filled with "Creamy American Hostess

By November 27, Price's was advertising the same glasses with no ACL designs (Figure 8-36). From February 20 to at least May 23, 1951, Price's promoted a Square Dance set of taller, tapered glasses. These were also forest green in color with white ACL. The glasses were 6 1/2" tall, 2 13/16" in diameter at the rim, and 2 3/8" in diameter at



Figure 8-36 – Ad for the Square Dance set (*El Paso Herald Post* 2/20/1951)



Figure 8-38 – Ad for Fire-King bowls (*El Paso Herald Post* 5/28/1952)

Cottage Cheese.” Although made of glass, these were similar to the plastic bowls that began the give-away container trend. The bowls were covered with lids that appeared to be metal with a lithographed background for “American Hostess Cottage Cheese” (Figure 8-39)



Figure 7-39 – Fire-King bowl (eBay)



Figure 8-40 – Ad for Country Sketches tumblers (*El Paso Herald Post* 1/21/1953)

By November 27, 1952, Price’s advertised the rounded glasses again – this time showing a glass with the “Ancient Mission” design. This set was made in nine-ounce tumblers that were 5" tall, 2 3/16" in diameter at the rim, and 2 13/16" in diameter at the widest point.

Ancient Mission was one of the designs in the Country Sketches set, advertised until January 21, 1953 (Figure 8-40).



Figure 8-41 – Tumblers from the Country Sketches set

There were eight tumblers in this final set had southwestern designs, including “Desert Yucca,” “Elephant Butte Lake,” “Cattle Branding,” “The Roundup,” “Indian Tribal Dance,” “Southwestern Rodeo,” and “Carlsbad Caverns” (Figure 8-41). The trend was apparently played out by this time. I have not found the tumblers in later ads.

El Paso Milk Bottle Association

Like most of the other El Paso Dairies, Price’s joined the El Paso Milk Bottle Assn. and began using the square bottles with orange pyroglaze (the Thatcher Mfg. Co. equivalent to ACL)

in 1947 (Figure 8-42). The Association only lasted another year, offering its members six pyroglaze design choices on bottles embossed “E.P.M.B.A.” on their bases. See Chapter 6 – Hawkins Dairy – for the full story of the Association.

Type 5 – Price’s Dairy Square Bottles

With the demise of the El Paso Milk Bottle Assoc., Price’s adopted its own square glass bottles. Each of these bottles was square



Figure 8-43 – Price’s first square bottle

in cross-section with orange ACL labels. On the front, each bottle had “IF IT’S / Price’s (cursive) / IT’S PURE” – with at least two different labels on the back. The back of the 1948 bottle had the uninspired message: “PLEASE / RETURN / BOTTLES / DAILY” in underlined letters above a drawing of man carrying giant milk bottle (Figure 8-43). The bases of these bottles had an ejection scar and were embossed “9 <0> 48 / 9 / Duraglas (cursive) /X.”

The 1949-1951 bottles replaced the back slogan with a solid orange, vertical rectangle that stated “WHAT BEVERAGE / SATISFIES THIRST / AND IMPROVES / HEALTH?” stenciled above a stenciled drawing of a female school teacher with what appeared to be a pointer in her hand. Below her was a slightly up-tilted horizontal rectangle stenciled into the back ground with “THE



Figure 7-42 – First E.P.M.B.A. bottle



Figure 8-44 – Reverse of Price’s second square bottle

ANSWER: / MILK / THE FOOD-DRINK” (Figure 8-44). All of the bottles were made by the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. See Table 1 for a chronology of Price’s containers.

Table 8-1 – Chronology of Price’s Dairy Bottles

Characteristics	Manufacturer	Date Range
Generic bottles	unknown	1908?-ca. 1930
Type 1 – Price’s (plate) Dacro (crown)		
Price’s in plate; Dacro (crown) finish	Thatcher Mfg. Co.	ca. 1930-1937
Type 2 – Price’s / MILK; embossed bands on body; phone on reverse		
Price’s / MILK; embossed bands on body; phone on reverse; cap-seat, banded finish	Liberty Glass Co.	1935
Type 3 – Price’s / DAIRY / CO.; vertical ribs on shoulder & neck; phone reverse		
Syrup finish; no date code	unknown	ca. 1936
Typical cap-seat finish	Owens-Illinois	ca. 1937-1943
Stepped finish	Liberty Glass Co.	ca. 1941-1945
Multicap finish	Owens-Illinois	ca. 1941
Type 4 – PHONE MAIN 2050 / Price’s / DAIRY / CO. / EL PASO, TEXAS – Dacro		
Dacro finish – new style	Owens-Illinois	ca. 1944
Type 5 – Square (Pyroglaze)		
“IF IT’S / Price’s (script) / IT'S PURE”	Owens-Illinois	1948-1950
Creamers		
Red Pyroglaze - Price’s / PURE CREAM (round)	Owens-Illinois	1949
Red Pyroglaze - Price’s / PURE CREAM (square)	unknown	ca. 1950s
Cottage Cheese Containers		
Price’s / DAIRY / CO.; wide-mouth jar	Liberty Glass Co.	1931
American Hostess bowl (green)	Fire King	1952
Tumblers (green) – several sets	Anchor Hocking	1950s

Price's Creamers

Price's joined a trend during the 1940s and 1950s. During that period, restaurants served cream or milk to their customers in one- or two-ounce glass containers that resembled tiny milk bottles. Called creamers, these had a miniature cap-seat finish and were sealed with tiny cardboard disks. Typically, dairies furnished the creamers – pyroglazed with the dairy name – to the restaurants free of charge as promotional items.

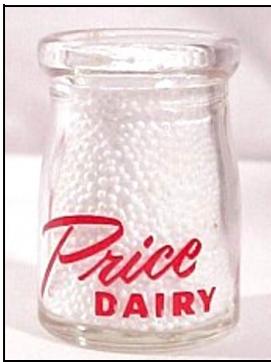


Figure 8-46 – Possible Price's creamer (eBay)

Price's used at least two varieties of creamers, possibly four or more. Like virtually every dairy that offered creamers, Price's began with round ones. The Lynn Loomis collection displayed a one-ounce round creamer with "Price's" (upwardly slanted cursive) in an oval with "PURE CREAM" – all in red pyroglaze (Figure 8-45). Two other round creamers – offered on eBay – were purported to be from Price's at El Paso. One had "Price (cursive) / DAIRY" in red pyroglaze (Figure 8-46). The lack of "s" on "Price" makes the identification questionable. All examples I have recorded use "Price's." The second one had "Price's" with "CREAM" stenciled into the underlining tail on one side and a drawing of a cow on the other – all in orange pyroglaze. The font, however, was uncharacteristic of the El Paso Price's.²²

At some point, the dairy offered a square creamer, although I have only seen three of these. The front was labeled "Price's (upwardly slanted in a horizontal oval) / PURE / CREAM" – all in red pyroglaze (Figure 8-47). This was the same pattern as the first creamer described above (see Figure 8-45).

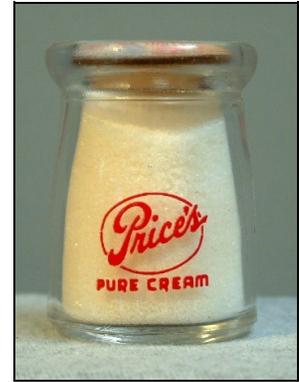


Figure 8-45 – Round Price's creamer (Lynn Loomis collection)

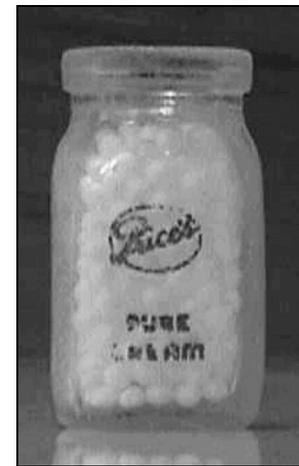


Figure 8-47 – Price's square creamer

²² The only photo on eBay was far too out of focus to reproduce.

Waxed Paper Cartons

Waxed paper cartons became practical during the late 1930s, when John R. Van Wormer had patented a practical, useful waxed-paper carton that posed a serious threat to the glass industry monopoly (see Chapter 3). The use of waxed-paper cartons increased from 30.3% of milk containers in 1949 to 77.3% in 1965, while glass bottle use declined by 63% during the same period (Haas 1970:72).



Figure 8-49 – Ad for pitcher spout container (*Alamogordo News* 4/23/1953)

On March 25, 1950, both Price’s Dairy and Farmer’s Dairy bid to supply Bliss Field with

quart-sized milk cartons (*El Paso Herald-Post* March 28, 1950; September 5, 1950). Price’s advertised Gold Star Milk, “available to El Pasoans today in the new Pure-Pak [waxed paper] container” on May 2 of that year (Figure 8-48). On April 23, 1953, Price’s Dairy announced “the new pitcher spout container” and bragged that there would be no spilling, no dripping, and no waste (Figure 8-49). The ad included a drawing of the Pure-Pak waxed-paper milk carton and noted that the new container was “easy-to-use” and “sanitary” (*Alamogordo News* April 23, 1953).



Figure 8-48 – Ad for waxed-paper carton (*El Paso Times* 5/2/1950)

Dairy Paraphernalia Associated with Bottles and Milk Delivery

[Parts of this section were published in Lockhart 2013.]

El Paso dairy paraphernalia fall into five main categories: cans, crates, picks and accessories, order signals, and all other items. Although crates were the property of the dairy industry, they – like bottles – were often (illegally) used by consumers. Receiving boxes were also owned by the dairies, but these were kept on the property of the customers. Order signals

often went with the receiving boxes, but picks and openers were usually given away to customers. Even though milk cans were almost exclusively used by the dairies (as opposed to customers), I have included them in this discussion.

Milk Cans

I have seen about four of these, although I only recorded one. All were silver-colored, eight-gallon cans, sealed with umbrella covers. The covers had hardware to allow them 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 can was embossed “PRICE’S CREAMERIES INC” around the upper center. These were likely used by small dairies that sold their entire production runs to Price’s Creameries (Figure 8-50). A slight variation had flattened handles for easier carrying.



Figure 7-50 – Price’s Creameries can

Milk Crates

All of the El Paso Dairies certainly used milk crates. Initially, these were made of wood or of wood and steel. These, in turn, were replaced



Figure 8-51 – Wooden Price’s 1947 crate

by crates made from thick, steel wire, until plastic completely dominated the market for waxed-paper containers and later for plastic bottles. Because of their size, few collectors have accumulated these crates, although the plastic ones are highly sought by individuals for storage.

I have discovered three crates used by Price’s Dairy. The oldest was made of wood with steel reinforced corner braces – including raised “ears” to facilitate stacking the crates. These ears identify the case as being made to Woolsey’s 1922 patent (see Chapter 3). The sides were both branded “PRICE’S CRYSTAL INC. / EL PASO, TEX. 47” (Figure 8-51), showing that the crate

was made in 1947. Small holes in the side boards indicate that the crate originally had wire separators to keep round bottles from striking each other during delivery.



Figure 8-53 – Price’s plastic crate

During World War II, many substances were rationed or even removed from the civilian market. Steel was only available in very limited formats, and dairy crates were *not* one of the exceptions. Thus, the wartime crates during the ca. 1943-1945 period were simple wooden boxes. One such was offered on eBay, with “PRICE’S” in black stenciled letters on the end boards (Figure 52).



Figure 8-52 – Price’s “wartime” wooden crate (eBay)

Price’s also used at least two types of plastic crates (and probably a dozen or more variations). Both were light blue in color and square in cross-section to hold square waxed-paper or plastic quart bottles. One was labeled “PRICE’S / EL PASO, TEXAS” on two opposing sides in white letters (Figure 8-53). The other was labeled



Figure 8-54 – Price’s plastic 1977 crate

“PRICE’S / 12 - 77” – indicating a manufacture in December 1977 – also in white (Figure 8-54). Although very slight, there are design changes between the two crates. Like almost all the plastic cases, both were made to the Rehrig 1967 patent.

Order Signals

Since these were made of thin cardboard, only a few have survived. The two in my collection are from Price’s Dairy and Meadow Gold, the brand created by a Price’s merger. Both of these had a central “stem” that fit into a milk bottle throat, with a larger “shield” above

to stop the order signal from dropping into the bottle. Both “stems” informed the user that “Every family can reduce its food expenses and improve the health of every member by increasing the use of dairy products. — Milk is your best and most economical food. — Visit the Southwest’s Finest Dairy.”



Figure 7-55 – Price’s order signal

The older “shield” was for “PRICE’S MILK / MAIN 2050 / Protected 27 ways.” At the bottom of the “stem” was “PAT. PEND. JARMAN CO / ALLIANCE, O.” The signal consisted of nine cardboard rectangles riveted to the center of the “shield” – so that they could be turned to stick up or be concealed behind the stem. They offered such products as “1 Qt. / MILK / EXTRA” or “1 DOZEN / EGGS / EXTRA.” The “EXTRA” meant that these were in addition to the regular daily order (Figure 8-55). These could only have been used during the 1922-1948 period when the MAIN 2050 phone number was in use.

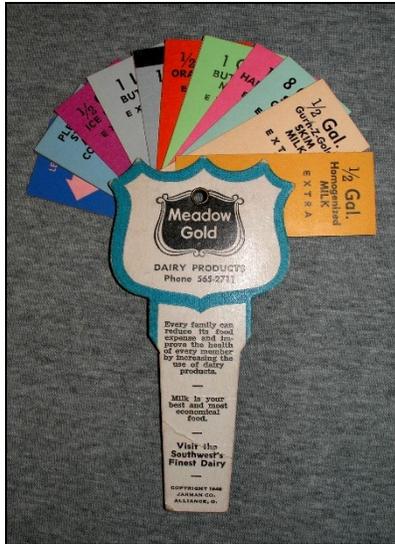


Figure 8-56 – Meadow Gold order signal

The Meadow Gold order signal was identical, except that the “shield” was shaped like the shield-style police badge with “Meadow / Gold” on a black background above “DAIRY PRODUCTS / Phone 565-2717.” As noted, the “stem” had the same information, but the signal had 11 rectangles denoting various products (Figure 8-56). By the phone number, this one was used after 1948, probably in the 1950s. There were certainly others.

Picks and Openers

Because picks were generally used to remove the disk closures in the early days of milk bottles, only a few El Paso dairies offered them. By at least 1917, tabs were available to aid in the removal of the disks, and there were numerous patents for types of tabs during the 1920s. These tabs eliminated the need for picks.

El Paso picks came in two styles: guitar and combination, but Price's Dairy only offered picks (see Chapter 5 for descriptions and discussion of both types). The Price's pick was made in the guitar style and was embossed "PRICE'S MILK PERFECTLY PASTEURIZED" around one side of the guitar end and "PLEASE RETURN BOTTLES PROMPTLY" around the other side (Figure 8-57). The stem was embossed "PAT / APD FOR" on both sides, but one was reversed (in mirror image). Both sides of the blade were stamped "PATAPDFOR."

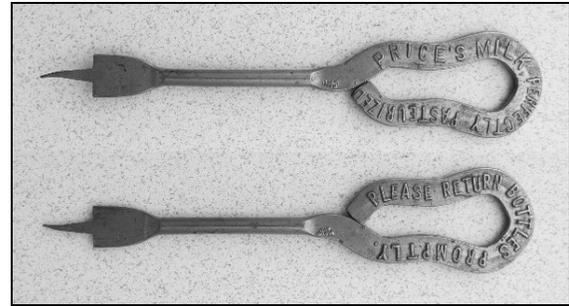


Figure 8-57 – Price's cap pick

The earliest mention of pasteurization that I have found in the Price's literature was 1918. The El Paso Dairy Co. (see Chapter 5) pasteurized some of its milk before 1912, "Uncle Jimmy" Smith was responsible for a law change in 1913 that confirmed the use of pasteurized milk in the city. Although Price's could have used pasteurization earlier, the picks may have commemorated the new pasteurization plant opened in 1918.

Tag

Price's Creameries used a milk-bottle shaped cardboard tag as an advertising aid. The tag hung around the neck of a quart bottle by a string (Figure 8-58). The top of the "bottle" had a drawing of a milkman carrying a delivery basket made of thick wire above "If It's Price's It's Pure (cursive – in quotation marks) / Creameries, Inc. / DISTRIBUTORS / PRICE'S PROTECTED / DAIRY PRODUCTS / VELVET ICE CREAM / TELEPHONE / MAIN 2050 (all horizontal)." As noted above, the phone number places the use of the tag between 1922 and 1948.



Figure 8-58 – Price's advertising tag

Hoods

By the time the dairies adopted the square milk bottle, most of them used hoods as a cover – often in conjunction with the older-style disk closures. I have only found two from El Paso dairies – one used by Price’s Dairy.

Meadow Gold

Meadow Gold used Aluminum Hoods, made by the Aluminum Seal Co. of Chicago. These hoods were crimped over the econopour finishes to hold the hood in place. They were usually not used in conjunction with disks. The Meadow Gold hoods were silver in color with the Meadow Gold emblem as well as “PRICE’S CREAMERIES, EL PASO, TEXAS” on the tops and “PRICE’S HOMO” (homogenized) around the skirts (Figure 8-59).

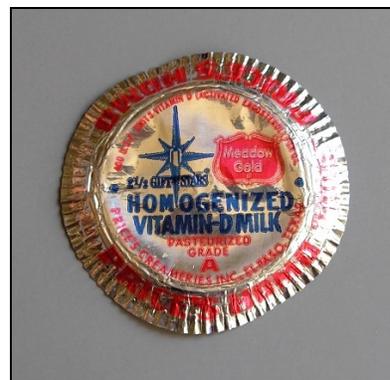


Figure 8-59 – Meadow Gold hood

Discussion and Conclusions

There is no question that Price’s was El Paso’s most successful long-term dairy. Although family run throughout its existence, the business grew huge. Like the other she (he, they)-bought-a-cow narratives, this was practically a rags to riches story. Mary Price went from a lady selling milk to the neighbors to make ends meet to becoming the president of a highly successful corporation.

There is literally no way of telling when Price’s began using milk bottles instead of ladling the milk out of cans. Although one original customer recalled hearing the clinking of milk bottles when Bob Price pulled his little red wagon, the drawing used by the company, itself, showed a large milk can in the wagon. It is likely that the firm began using generic glass bottles no later than 1908, when the Price family purchased the Gem Dairy.

As the dairy evolved, so did the bottles. During two decades, from ca. 1930 to 1947, Price’s experimented with changes in design and finishes on its milk bottles. The firm joined

the El Paso Milk Bottle Association and – with most of the other El Paso dairies – adopted the pyroglazed square bottles offered by the Association. The experiment was a failure, and Price’s adopted its own pyroglazed square milk bottle in 1948. By 1950, however, the firm joined the national trend by adopting waxed-paper cartons. Price’s never returned to glass; the era of the glass bottle was at an end.

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