

Chapter 1

Overview of the Drug Stores in El Paso, Texas



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Although Native American herbs and Spanish mission medicines were a type of pharmacopia, actual pharmacies and drug stores began to appear during colonial Texas when doctors would make up large quantities of medicines and sell them from their offices or homes. Eventually, business increased and druggists began business apart from physicians. The first permanent body of druggists, the Texas Pharmaceutical Association, was organized in Dallas in 1879. A decade later, the Texas government passed the Texas Pharmacy Law which was followed in 1907 with the first State Board of Pharmacy and the Texas Health Law. In 1929, the present Texas Pharmacy Law was passed requiring that “an applicant for pharmacy registration in Texas be a graduate of a recognized college of pharmacy” (Hall 2002).

El Paso probably followed the Texas trend. Prior to the early newspapers (1881), little was written about drugs. It is likely that doctors who practiced in the small community created some compounds and kept some medicines on hand. It is possible that a small druggist was open prior to the arrival of the railroads.

Two occurrences had a tremendous impact on the 19th century history of El Paso. The first of these was the removal of the county seat from San Elizario, a predominantly Hispanic community, to El Paso, an Anglo settlement. This transfer almost certainly occurred because of the El Paso “Salt War” of 1877 that became a sort of race riot, where some White, non-Hispanic businessmen were killed by a group composed of Mexicans and Mexican Americans (Sonnichsen 1961) for a history of the Salt War). The important point here is that El Paso gained the seat of the county government, complete with the accompanying businesses and population. There was greater need for a drug store.

Soon thereafter, the railroads began arriving at El Paso, beginning with the Southern Pacific – coming from the west – on May 19, 1881, and the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe line dropping down from the north on June 2 of the same year. Later that year, on December 16, the eastern connection of the Southern Pacific arrived, forming the complete east-west link. The

Mexican Central Railway began construction south from Ciudad Juárez on November 7, 1881, and was completed to Mexico City on March 8, 1884, forming a long north-south nexus (Metz 1993:76, 79, 90; Sonnichsen 1968:214, 231; Timmons 1990:166). As I have detailed elsewhere (Lockhart 1996; 2001), the railroads brought glass items to town – including bottles. Prior to this period, the vast majority of containers at El Paso had been ceramic. This new influx, of course, included pharmacy glassware.

Aside from continual modernization as technology and science improved, most of the drug stores remained the same – small units owned and operated by a single druggist and his employees. A slight change in the trend occurred in 1916, when A.E. Ryan opened the Owl Drug – ushering in the era of the chain drug store. Four years later, Kelly & Pollard opened the first wholesale druggist supply store in El Paso. From that point, the city generally followed the national trends, turning more and more toward chain drug stores, with pockets of smaller stores remaining.

Below is a brief chronology of El Paso drug stores and druggists from the 1885-1898 city directories. This chronology stops at 1898; some of these stores continued into the 20th century, and many are dealt with in the following chapters. Note the increasing Chinese participation in 1896 – that almost completely died out in the early 20th century. It is very likely that some of these Chinese businesses continued and were left out of later directories.

1885-1900+	Rio Grande Pharmacy
1885-1900+	W.A. Irwin & Co.
1885-1900+	Palace Drug Store (A.K. Albers & Co.)
1886-1886	F.H. Barradaile
1886	Enos & Brown
1888-1892	Frank P. Brown
1888	Albert L. Nichols
1892-1900+	Peoples Drug Store (Ward & Feisst)
1892-1900+	Fred Schaefer & Co.
1895-1900+	Kelly & Pollard
1895-1900+	S.C. White (Potter & White in 1900)
1895-1900+	H. Feisst

1895-1900+ M.H. Webb
1896-? Quong Hi Ching Co. – Chinese drugs
1896-? Mar Lim – Chinese drugs
1896-1898+ Suey Sung Tong – Chinese drugs
1896-? Yang Wo Tong & Co. – Chinese drugs
1896-? Ying Ding Hong – Chinese drugs
1898-? Mah Chun Ming – Chinese drugs
1898-? Young Yuen Tong – Chinese drugs

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