

Chapter 9

Bottles from Ciudad Juárez



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2015

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This chapter is divided into two sections. The first, predictably, concerns the few drug store related containers I have found from Ciudad Juárez. This is not a representative selection; only a few of these have come into my possession over the past 20 years, and almost none have been offered on eBay. Unlike the sections on El Paso drug stores, I have included in this chapter the only non-copyrighted photo of a Juárez firm that I have found.

The second section is on the Juárez soda bottles. I have never found enough of these to warrant a book on the subject, and they never quite seemed to fit anywhere else. Although they do not fit well here either, this book is somewhat of a catch-all for stray bottles from the area – so here they stay.

Drug Store Bottles and Ephemera from Juárez, Mexico

As noted above, my collection of Juárez pharmacy bottles is woefully small. It consists of one embossed bottle, one embossed dose glass, and two bottles with paper labels. As has been my practice in the other chapters, I present the drug stores that used these in alphabetical order.

Botica Lerdo (ca. 1938-ca. 1941)

The only references I have found to Botica Lerdo were brief mentions in the *El Paso Herald* concerning baseball games from April 1938 to July 1941. Many El Paso drug stores (and other businesses) sponsored ball teams, and this practice apparently extended to the Mexican side of the border as well. These dates fit well with the 1939 date on the label of the only bottle I have seen. The drug store name translates approximately to the Lerdo Street Drug Store.

Bottles and Marks



Figure 9-1 – Base of Botica Lerdo bottle

The bottle, itself, was made in the United States by the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. in 1937. The model – the Owens Oval – was the top-of-the-line seller for the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. The bottle was half-round with one flat panel and two quarter-panels in cross-section, and the base was embossed “OWENS / 0. <0> 7” (Figure 9-1). The reverse side had the ounce symbol, followed by “vi” (indicating six ounces) embossed on the shoulder. The label was made from white paper with grey letters. Inside a grey outline, the label read “BOTICA {drawing of mortar & pestle in circle} LERDO / ESQ LERDO Y MEJIA [corner of Lerdo & Mejia] TELEFONO 105 / C. JUAREZ CHIH. MEX. / NUM. 22529. FECHA [date] 3-27-39 / Una Cucharadita cada / 2 horas.[one teaspoon every two hours] / Dr. Lozano / Responsable D. Majera M. ejeroe ela titula” [The responsible person (proprietor?) was D. Majera, practicing without a license.] (Figure 9-2). The date on the label shows that it was applied to the bottle on March 27, 1939.



Figure 9-2 – Botica Lerdo bottle & label

Farmacia Central (ca. 1910s-ca. 1940s)

The Portal to Texas History (2014) presented a photo of the old Juárez Post Office from the 1910-1920 period and noted that the Farmacia Central (Central Pharmacy) was just to the left of the post office as you face the building. A sign on the building identified the pharmacy as well as Hernandez y Samaniego, the proprietors. A similar photo from the same time period appeared in Rackocy (1980:234) and also showed the Botica de Guadalupe in the next block (Figure 9-3). The building was also shown in a photo copyrighted in 1948 (Portal to Texas History 2014). These few sources suggest that the Farmacia Central was open from the teens or 1920s until ca. 1950 or later.

Information on the Botica de Guadalupe is equally scarce. The *El Paso Herald* reported on June 26, 1920, that a shipment of whiskey from a Kentucky distillery was intercepted on its way to the Botica, although the drug store manager, Carlos Aguila, denied any knowledge of the transaction.

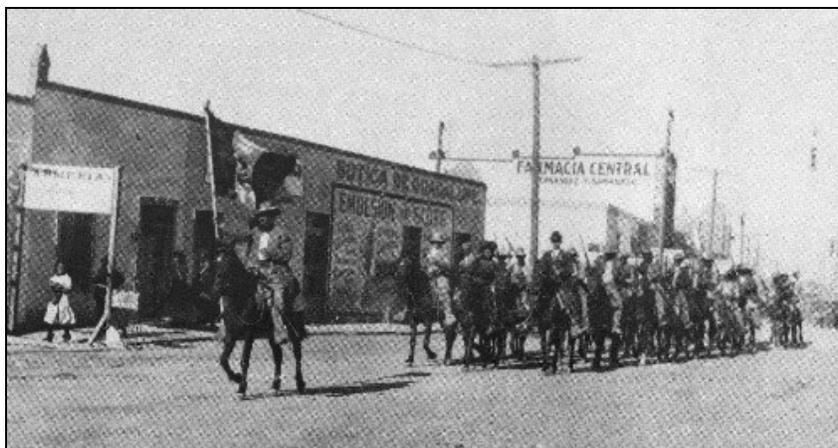


Figure 9-3 – Farmacia Central – ca. 1920s (Rackocy 1980:234)

Bottles and Marks

This was the only embossed pharmacy bottle I have found from Ciudad Juárez. The bottle was mouth blown and had a reinforced pharmaceutical finish. The bottle held five ounces of liquid and had no manufacturer's mark. The side was embossed "FARMACIA CENTRAL / C. JUAREZ / CHIH. MEX." to be read with the finish held to the left (Figure 9-4). The bottle style suggests a use prior to the 1920s.



Figure 9-4 – Farmacia Central bottle

Farmacia Rio Grande (ca. 1970s-1990s?)

This may be a branch of the Rio Grande Pharmacy of El Paso (see Chapter 5) that closed on this side of the border in 1977 – although the U.S. firm was operated by the McDowel family. The responsible (responsible person, probably proprietor, of the Juárez store was E.A. Vasquez. The firm apparently is still in business today at Ave. 16 de Septiembre 657 Ote [657 W. 16 de Septiembre Ave.].

Bottles and Marks



Figure 9-5 – Kork-n-Seal finish

This was a tall bottle (27.3 cm. in height) with a Kork-n-Seal finish (Figures 9-5 & 9-6). Finishes of this type were sealed by a crown-style cap with a wire toggle to affect the closure (See Lockhart 2012:217 for a full description and photos). These could be reused repeatedly. Despite the bottle’s size, it had a small green label with white lettering and a white central rectangle. The upper green area had “Farmacia (cursive) / RIO GRANDE / PRIMERA CLASE • TEL 2-15-86” all on the left, with R on a mortar & pestle drawing in a circle to the right. The white central area had “N^o” and “Dr.” printed in green ink and “AROMA DE / VAINILLA” typed in red. The lower green area said “AUGUSTIN MELGAR 104 CD.

JUAREZ. CHIH. / RESPONSABLE Q.F. E.A. VASQUEZ / S.S.A. 2414 I.P.N. CED 42235” in white ink (Figure 9-7). The last two lines may be translated as “The responsible person (for the drugstore) with his pharmaceutical licence (qumica formacéutica or Q.F.) from the I.P.N. (Instituto Polytecnico Nacional) was E.A. Vasquez. The license (cedula or CED.) was 42235.” “S.S.A. 2414” may be a social security number.” The base was embossed “1819 / 73 / {NF in a hexagon}” (Figure 9-8). The logo was used by the Nueva Fábrica Nacional de Vidrio, S.A. at Tuititlan during the 1970s.

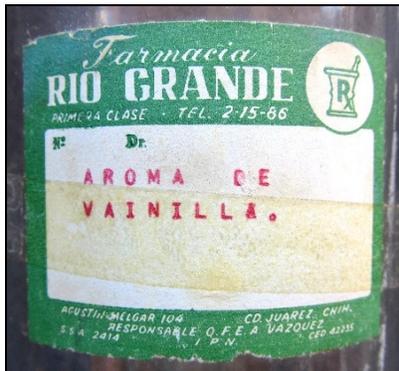


Figure 9-7 – Farmacia Rio Grande label

JUAREZ. CHIH. / RESPONSABLE Q.F. E.A. VASQUEZ / S.S.A. 2414

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Figure 9-6 – Farmacia Rio Grande bottle



Figure 9-8 – Farmacia base

L.L. Samaniego y Cia (1899-1906)

At some point prior to July 9, 1899, Dr. L.L. Samaniego, Felix Martinez, and Dr. M. Samaniego were in the drug store business together in Juárez. L.L. Samaniego bought out the interests of the other two on that date. It was an unfortunate choice. The *El Paso Herald* (7/9/1899) reported the details:

The roof of the front portion of Dr. Samaniego's drug store at Juarez fell this morning with a tremendous crash, filling the interior with dirt and rubbish and totally destroying of quantity of drugs, medicines and toilet articles. Fortunately there was no one in the store at the time of the catastrophe except a Mexican porter who was sleeping on the back porch. He usually slept in the front room, but by some strange chance he removed to the rear and when the crash came he was out of danger. He was awakened from a profound slumber by a loud noise at the front of the building, caused by the slamming of the front door, which was standing open and was violently shut by the wind. The jar caused by the slamming door made the front wall give way and the door and a portion of the wall fell outward, landing in the street. The next instant the supports of the heavy roof tore loose and the whole thing came down.

The *Herald* (7/9/1899) noted that the loss was estimated at less than \$500 but was fully covered by insurance. The building was apparently quite old, and the collapse was blamed on the age of the structure.

Apparently, Samaniego rebuilt, only to be plagued by more problems. On June 19, 1906, the *Herald* reported that a fire had broken out in the back of Samaniego's drug store and had consumed the entire building as well as badly damaging the store next door and one across the street. Juárez volunteer firemen were assisted by the El Paso Fire Dept. and eventually controlled the blaze. It may have been shortly after this that Samaniego partnered with Hernandez to form Farmacia Central (see above for a discussion about that firm).

Bottles and Marks



Figure 9-9 – L.L. Samaniego dose glass

I have only discovered one drug store item – a dose glass – from Samaniego. It was made from colorless glass and embossed “L.L. SAMANIEGO Y CIA (arch) / {mortar & pestal design} / LLS&CIA monogram / BOTICA MEXICANA (inverted arch) / CIUDAD JUAREZ, CHIH. MEX. (Inverted arch)” on the front and “CUCHARADA / 1/2 CUCHARADA / CUCHARADITA”

(cucharada = tablespoon; cucharadita = teaspoon) on the back (Figure 9-9). The base was embossed “W.T.&CO. (arch) / Q (horizontal in center)” (Figure 9-10). Since Whitall Tatum & Co. incorporated in 1901 and dropped the ampersand from the name (Lockhart et al. 2006), this dose glass was almost certainly made for the opening of the new store in 1899 – just before the building collapsed.



Figure 9-10 – Base of dose glass

Soda Bottles and Paraphernalia from Juárez, Mexico

My collection of Juárez soda bottles and what collectors call “go-withs” is quite small, consisting only of three bottles, one token, and two trays. Fortunately, the number of items was slightly augmented by two bottles from the Willie Terrazas collection and one tray from Mike Morrison. My information, while less meager, is still painfully small. I have only found significant data on two bottlers, although physical evidence and one photograph suggests that there were two others.

Embotelladora de la Frontera

In 1936, Tomás Fernández Blanco opened Embotelladora de la Frontera, the first bottling plant in Ciudad Juárez. The firm obtained the Coca-Cola franchise and began bottling Coca-Cola products (Tripod 2014). A biography of Blanco, however, suggested that the beginning

was a bit more complex. Blanco organized the Compañía Mercantil de Inversiones, S.A., in 1927, and the firm became the Industria Cruz Blanca, S.A., in 1936, when Coca-Cola bottling began. The business was replaced by Embotelladora de la Frontera in 1939 (Anonymous 2014). The biography is supported by a bottle of Cruz Blanca from Embotelladora de la Frontera.

The Cruz Blanca bottle shows that the plant was located at 519 S. Avenida Ferrocarril in 1948. According to the *El Paso Herald-Post*, the plant was closed by a strike on May 3, 1950, although the strike was eventually settled. A tip tray commemorated the inauguration of the new Coca-Cola plant in 1966. The drawing showed the location to be at the outskirts of the city. See a photo of the tray below.

On May 30, 1973, Embotelladora de la Frontera absorbed the Pepsi-Cola bottler, Embotelladora de Juárez, owned by Pedro Gamez. According to *El Continental* (1/1/1958), Embotelladora de Juárez moved from the intersection of Costa Rica and Ave. 16 de Septiembre to a new plant, although the paper did not state the location. The new plant, built at a cost of one million pesos, consisted of large, two-story warehouses, workshops, boiler, water softening facility, and offices (Universidad Anónima de Ciudad Juárez 2014a). I have found no other information on the Pepsi plant. Embotelladora de la Frontera, however, remains in business in 2014, with the office at 9755 Oscar Flores Sanchez, and the plant at 5940 Paseo Triunfo de la Republica.

Bottles and Paraphernalia

Surprisingly, I have never run across a six-ounce, hobble-skirt Coca-Cola bottle from Juárez, although they certainly exist. My entire collection from Embotelladora de la Frontera consists of one bottle, two trays, and one token.

Cruz Blanca

The only bottle I have found had a white and red ACL label. On the front, a red-outlined, round-cornered, red vertical rectangle formed a background for a broad, white cross with “SODA / CRUZ-BLANCA / FINA” stenciled into it. “EMBOTELLADORA DE LA FRONTERA S.A.” (white ACL) extended from the left arm, over the top to the right arm of the

cross with “C. JUAREZ, CHIH.” (white ACL) at the bottom of the cross. [trans. White Cross Fine Soda - Bottler of the Frontier, Inc. - Juarez (City), Chihuahua]. The back had white ACL lettering: “ESTA BOTELLA ESTA / ESTERILIZADA [This Bottle is Sterilized] / EMBOTELLADA POR / EMBOTELLADORA / DE LA FRONTERA S.A. [Bottled by Bottler of the Frontier, Inc.] / AV FERROCARRIL 519 SUR / CIUDAD JUAREZ, CHIH. MEXICO / TEL 236 Y 673” (Figure 9-11). The heel was embossed “612-2 L-G” with “48” on the base, indicating that the bottle was made in 1948 by the Liberty Glass Co., Sapulpa, Oklahoma.



Figure 9-11 – Cruz Blanca bottle

Trays

At least two small tip trays from the firm have survived. One of these was probably made ca. 1961 to commemorate the introduction of Fanta that year by the Coca-Cola Co. The rectangular tray had a blue border with a white center. A clown with an orange for a head embraced a drawing of the original-style Fanta bottle in the upper left corner, with “TOME FANTA” (Drink Fanta) between his legs and “un gran refresco . . . para una gran sed” (a big drink . . . for a big thirst). Tiny letters identified the manufacturer of the tray, but I did not record that 20 years ago and cannot read it on the photograph (Figure 9-12).

The other tray, also rectangular, was dated 1966 and certainly commemorated the opening of the new Coca-Cola plant. A blue-green border surrounded a drawing of the new location, showing a large complex building with two smaller structures – one of which was certainly the office – along with a large parking lot, a sign at the front, and a background showing empty field,



Figure 9-12 – Fanta tray (Mike Morrison collection)

leading to desert, with mountains in the distance (Figure 9-13). The bottom was labeled “RECUERDO DE LA INAUGURACION DE LA PLANTE DE / CIUDAD JUAREZ” (In memory of the inauguration of the plant at Ciudad Juárez).

Token

I have found a single token from the plant. The front was embossed “FICHA / PARA / Coca-Cola (cursive) / MARCA REG.” (token for Coca-Cola / trademark) with “UNICAMENTE / PARA / VENDEDORAS / AUTOMATICAS” (only for vending machines) on the reverse (Figure 9-14). Although vending machines appeared in the 1930s, they were not common until the 1940s in the U.S. and probably not until at least that decade in Juárez.



Figure 9-13 – Plant inauguration tray



Figure 9-14 – Vending token

Embotelladora el Norte

This intriguing photo shows an obvious bottling plant, identified as Embotelladora el Norte, featuring Grapette, a popular non-carbonated grape drink (See Lockhart 2010, Chapter 5d, for a history of the product and the El Paso bottler). The plant was at the corner of Ninos Heroes and Columbia Streets (Figure 9-15). Manuel Armendáriz recalled that the plant was over 75 years old (i.e., 1937 or earlier); however, Grapette was not introduced until 1940. José Luis Hernandez Caudillo suggested “desde los 50s” (from the 50s), which is likely more accurate (*Rancho Las Voces* 2012). I have not discovered a closing date or seen one of the bottles.

Embotelladora La Popular

Aside from surviving bottles and one online source, this company is a complete mystery. According to Universidad Anónima de Ciudad Juárez (2014b), Francisco Cárdenas Martínez and Manuel Dieguez opened the plant – the first bottler in Juárez – in 1905. The bottles showed that Embotelladora La Popular was operated by “Vda. E Hijas de Manuel Diegues” (Widow and daughters of Manuel Dieguez) at Calle Ugarte No. 323 (323 Ugarte Street) at Juárez. I have no further information on the firm. The term may be translated as “the Popular” or “the People” – possibly an intentional double entendre – the popular soda from the bottler of the people. Since one of the ACL bottles could not have been made prior to 1948, the firm had to have remained in business until at least that point, probably into the 1950s.

Bottles

At least three bottles have survived from Embotelladora La Popular. All had ACL labels, were made by Mexican glass houses, and had uncertain possible date codes. La Popular was the brand name of the soda as well as the name of the bottler. The ACL process was first used on soda bottles in 1934, but the technique was not sufficiently advanced to place a label on the neck (with two different curves) until 1940. Thus, these bottles were certainly not made until the 1940s and possibly even the 1950s or later.

Probably the earliest of the three was colorless, with three large embossed rings at the shoulder and three more at the heel. The central area bulged outward. The front shoulder had “Popular” in upwardly



Figure 9-15 – Embotelladora el Norte (Manuel Armendáriz)



Figure 9-16 – La Popular 1 (Willie Terrazas collection)

slanted cursive. The front label consisted of a blue-outlined white shield with “REFRESCOS / La Popular (upwardly-slanted cursive) / REG. N^o “A” / C. JUAREZ, CHIH.” in blue letters (Figure 9-16). The back label had more information: “PREFIERA LOS REFRESCOS DE LA / Embotelladora / La Popular (both cursive) / SON LOS MEJORES / VDA. E. HIJAS DE MANUEL DIEGUEZ / CALLE UGARTE No. 323 – CD. JUAREZ, CHIH. / HECHO EN MEXICO” (Prefer the drinks of the La Popular Bottler. It is the best. Widow and daughters of Manuel Dieguez, Ugarte St.) all in white letters.



Figure 9-17 – La Popular 1 base (Willie Terrazas collection)

The base was embossed “M inside a C / 4” (Figure 9-17). Fontana (1968:47-49) suggested that the logo may have been used by either of two companies: 1) Cristales Mexicanos, “a bottle-making plant begun in Monterrey in 1946, although their mark in 1964 was a fully-circled ‘M’”; or 2) Cerveceria Moctezuma of Orizaba, Vera Cruz, a “firm more involved in making beer bottles” in 1948. Since “Cristales” means “Crystal,” Cristales Mexicanos almost certainly made fine tableware – not bottles.

Cerveceria Moctezuma, S.A., was a large brewery in Orizaba, Vera Cruz. The cerveceria (brewery) built its own bottle factory in 1948 and commenced production in September. Two Lynch Model 10 machines were “automatically fed by two T.E.CO. oil-fired, automatic, glass gob feeders.” The plant made amber beer bottles (Carnes 1949:262-264). In 1985, the factory had three 340-ton tanks, working seven I.S. machines to make “amber glass containers for beverages” (Perrine 1985:32). It is likely that the plant also made colorless bottles during the 1940s and 1950s.



Figure 9-18 – La Popular 2



Figure 9-19 – La Popular 2 base

The next two bottles were probably used during the same time period, likely the early to mid-1950s. One of them was colorless, with a white and blue ACL label. The bottle was cylindrical with two single-hatched rings around the neck, just above the shoulder, and “La Popular” in upwardly slanted cursive between them. The shoulder had an orange-peel texture separated from the labeling area by an embossed ring. Four white lines topped an upwardly slanted white banner with “La Popular” in upwardly slanted blue cursive. Below the banner and slightly above the heel was “CD. JUAREZ, CHIH.” in white (Figure 6-18). The back label read “Embotelladora /

La Popular (cursive) / REFRESCOS SIEMPRE BUENOS / VDA. E. HIJAS DE MANUEL DIEGUEZ / CALLE UGARTE No. 323 – CD. JUAREZ, CHIH. / HECHO EN MEXICO.” The base was embossed “9 / {Circle-VM} / 6” (Figure 6-19). Vidriera Monterrey used the Circle-VM logo from 1934 to ca. 1990.



Figure 9-21 – La Popular 3 base

Monterrey used the Circle-VM logo from 1934 to ca. 1990.

The next two bottles were probably used during the same time period, likely the early to mid-1950s. One of them was colorless, with a white and blue ACL label. The bottle was cylindrical with two single-hatched rings around the neck, just above the shoulder, and “La Popular” in upwardly slanted cursive between them. The shoulder had an orange-peel texture separated from the labeling area by an embossed ring. Four white lines topped an upwardly slanted white banner with “La Popular” in upwardly slanted blue cursive. Below the banner and slightly above the heel was “CD. JUAREZ, CHIH.” in white (Figure 6-18). The back label read “Embotelladora /



Figure 9-20 – La Popular 3

La Popular (cursive) / REFRESCOS SIEMPRE BUENOS / VDA. E. HIJAS DE MANUEL DIEGUEZ / CALLE UGARTE No. 323 – CD. JUAREZ, CHIH. / HECHO EN MEXICO.” The base was embossed “2 / {Circle-VM} / 2” (Figure 6-21). Vidriera Monterrey used the Circle-VM logo from 1934 to ca. 1990.

The final bottle was cylindrical and forest green in color – made for ginger ale – with no embossed decorations. The front had a gold-outlined white shield with “GINGER ALE / La Popular (underlined upwardly slanted cursive) / C. JUAREZ, CHIH.” inside (Figure 6-20). The back was identical to the one discussed immediately above, and the base was embossed “2 / {Circle-VM} / 2” (Figure 6-21). Vidriera

S.K.Y.

About 1922, Luis Olague founded S.K.Y. or La Favorita Refresquera (the Favorite Soda Bottler). Flavors sold by the firm over the years included grapefruit, orange, pineapple, strawberry, grape, apple, and root beer. Jesus Cruz Ramirez, an employee for 19 years, recalled that the company was so busy around 1980 that “sometimes we did not even have time to go home.” The plant even bottled Pespi-Cola when that firm did not have its own production unit in place. The drinks were very popular in Juárez until the last decade, when competition for foreign brands reduced the sales base to almost nothing, forcing the plant to close in February 2012 (Rebolledo 2012).

This was probably the same Olague family that opened the Olague Bottling Corp. at El Paso in 1961 or 1962, with a plant adjacent to the Farmers Dairy lot in the Lower Valley. Olague distributed Three V Cola in sixteen-ounce bottles, the first bottles of that size sold in the city. The firm merged with the Vess Distributing Co. in late 1962, with Miguel A. Navar as president and Raul M. Olague as vice president. By the next year, however, Olague had vanished from the listing, and the Navar family operated the plant until 1974 (Lockhart 2010).



Figure 9-22 – S.K.Y. tip tray

Tray

I have a single small tip tray marked “Tome Refrescos S.K.Y. (arch) / BEGONIAS 900 – CD JUAREZ CHIH. (inverted arch)” (Drink S.K.Y. Beverages) in a red border around a drawing of an Eskimo holding a giant bottle of S.K.Y. refrescos. The bottle had a blue label in the center with four embossed rings at the shoulder and six more at the heel. The liquid in the bottle was red – probably indicating strawberry flavor (Figure 9-22).

Discussion and Conclusions

This very short study of Juárez bottles hardly does justice to the diversity of containers and other paraphernalia that were certainly used in the city during the last century or earlier. There were certainly other bottles and labels used by the drug stores and, undoubtedly, more soda bottles. Future research should concentrate on Coca-Cola bottles and S.K.Y. bottles. Both of those companies almost certainly used bottles marked with their name – ones that are currently unknown to me.

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