

## **Chapter 7b**

### **Containers and Accessories used by City Dairy**

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#### Containers

City Dairy was actually in business during three periods of container use. The earliest of these, from the 1880s (*much* earlier than the dairy began business in 1925) until generally the 1950s period. Some dairies, especially in small towns used generic bottles with only the disk closure to identify the dairy. The second period was the pyroglazed era, beginning in 1934, although pyroglazing or Applied Color Lettering (also called “painted labels” by collectors) remains in use on glass bottles of various kinds today. The final period, the use of waxed-paper cartons actually began near the turn of the century but did not really become popular with dairies until the late 1930s-1950s. See Chapter 2 for a discussion of all these methods.

#### Bottles

The earliest bottles used by City Dairy were round in cross-section but unmarked, and some sizes remained generic throughout the life of the business. During the 1930s, pressure from large dairies caused city, county, and state ordinances to be passed in many parts of the U.S. to deal with the problem of “strayed bottles” (see Chapter 2 for more discussion). Because returnable bottles are owned by the companies (in this case dairies), rather than the customers, the restoration of the bottle to the proper owner is expected. New ordinances required that each dairy mark its bottles and use only bottles belonging to it (See *El Paso Times* February 22, 1938 for the 1936 Ordinance in that city).

Because of these ordinances, some dairies etched their company names in script or block letters using a hand-held electronic or diamond-tipped etching tool. Dairies in both El Paso and Las Cruces used etched bottles, sometimes etching over the embossed names of other dairies! At this point, however, I have not seen any etched bottles from Otero County.

In 1946, the McMurrays introduced round bottles with red pyroglazed labeling and a red line drawing of a cow standing on a patch of green grass on the back of the container. The brothers ordered a half-railroad car of the bottles as an experiment, but they proved too

expensive, and only one batch was ever manufactured (McMurry Interview 1998). Collectors say that this was the only two-color, round pyroglazed bottle used in New Mexico.

During the late 1940s, the McMurrays followed the national trend with a change to square (in cross section) quart bottles, rectangular half-gallons, and square gallons. Although square milk bottles were developed in 1900, the idea did not catch on until the late 1940s (see Chapter 2). In 1962, City Dairy ordered half-gallon bottles that were pyroglazed with red lettering on a yellow background, but these – like the bi-color round bottles of 1946 – were only made once. Other containers were never marked, and most of the bottles used by City Dairy bore no company identification – aside from marked caps. Sizes offered by that time ranged from half-pints to gallons. The company sold unmarked round creamers to restaurants and eventually provided square creamers with green pyroglazing that identified the owner as “CITY / DAIRY” surrounded by a rectangular outline composed of green stippling.

#### The 1946 Pyroglazed Quart

There is a possibility that some older bottles had been etched with the City Dairy name, but that is unlikely, and I have never seen one. As noted above, the first marked bottle was labeled with the pyroglaze technique (see Chapter 2). It is very unusual among New Mexico pyroglazed bottles in that it is bichromatic, using red and green colors (Figure 7-23). The brothers ordered a half railroad car of bottles in 1946, but they proved to be too expensive, and the dairy used unmarked, round bottles until the 1960s.

**Method of Manufacture:** Machine

**Color:** Colorless

**Size (in cm.):** (h) 24.0; 9.7 (d); 3.7 throat; 4.2 cap seat

**Primary Labeling Style:** Red and Green  
Pyroglazed

**Finish:** Cap Seat



Figure 7-23 – Bi-color, round quart bottle, 1943

**Capacity:** 1 qt.

**Overall Bottle Design:** Cylindrical

**Front Description**

**Body:** Red Pyroglazed - CITY DAIRY / GRADE "A" / ALAMOGORDO, N. M.

**Heel:** Embossed - ONE QUART LIQUID / REG. CAL.

**Back Description**

**Body:** Red Pyroglazed - FOR SERVICE - / AND QUALITY / [red drawing of a cow on green grass] / CALL 23

**Heel:** Embossed - SEALED 52 L-G 9 / 8-74

**Base:** Embossed - 8 (inside ejection ring) / 46 (very faint)

**Manufacturer:** Liberty Glass Co. (1934-1954)

**Dating:** (1946) These bottles were only ordered once, although they continued to be used until the order was depleted. Although a number of the bottles survived, they are uncommon.

**Collection(s):** Author's collection.

A slight variation was embossed "L-G SEALED 52 B74-56" on the back heel and "B / C46" on the base. The bottle was part of the same order but was made by a different engraver.

### Creamers

At some point, probably in the 1950s, City Dairy provided square creamers (small bottles to hold cream) for Alamogordo restaurants. The dairy had previously furnished the restaurants with unmarked, round creamers. The creamers were simply marked "CITY / DAIRY" in green pyroglazing but had no glass house logo embossed on the bases (Figure 7-24). As with the 1946 bottle, once the supply ran out, the McMurrays never re-instituted the program. These are rare, and the only ones I have ever seen (aside from one in my possession) belonged to Willie McMurry.

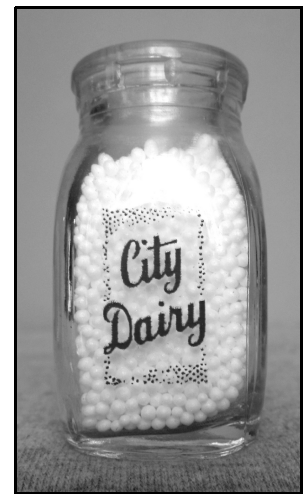


Figure 7-24 – Green pyroglazed creamer

## All Jersey Half Gallons

The final marked bottles used by City Dairy were rectangular half-gallons (Figure 7-25; also see Figure 7-18). These were also bichrome with yellow and red pyroglazing. The McMurrays ordered a large quantity of these bottles in the early 1960s, and they were still in use when the brothers went out of business in 1977. When I visited the old dairy buildings in 1998, courtesy of Leonard Sheffield, the owner of the land at that time, I observed stacks of these and generic bottles (Figure 7-26).

**Method of Manufacture:** Machine

**Color:** Colorless

**Size (in cm.):** 25.3 (h); 12.7 (w); 9.6 (d); 3.3 throat; 3.6 cap seat

**Primary Labeling Style:** Red and Yellow Pyroglaze

**Finish:** Econopour with bumper roll (see Chapter 3 for description and history of the finish)

**Capacity:** 2 qt.

**Overall Bottle Design:** Rectangular in cross section with embossed wavy ridges extending from heel to shoulder on right and left of the labels on the widest two sides to form gripping surfaces

### Front Description

**Body:** A vertical yellow pyroglaze rectangle with red pyroglaze lettering and drawing: ENJOY / A (large shadowed letter) ll (script) / J (large shadowed letter) ersey (script) / Queen of (script) / Quality (script) {line drawing of cow's head with crown} / MILK / CITY DAIRY / ALAMOGORDO / NEW MEXICO

**Heel:** Embossed - REG. SEALED {I-in-an-oval} OB; Right side: Bare

### Back Description

**Body:** Same as front

**Heel:** Embossed - TWO QUARTS LIQUID; Left side: 24 MLX 355

**Base:** Embossed - 9 61 / Duraglass (script) / M-265

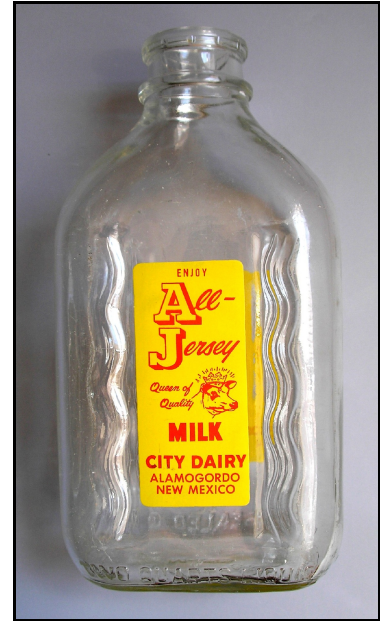


Figure 7-25 – Bi-color half-gallon bottle, 1962

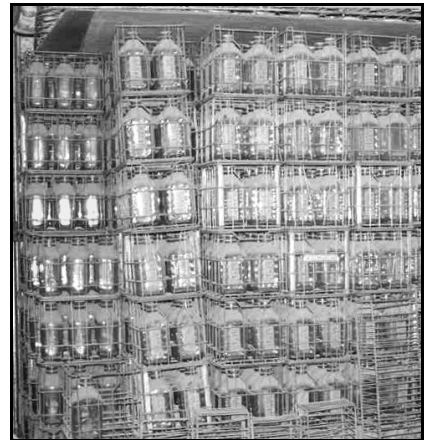


Figure 7-26 – Crates of half-gallon and quart bottles at the former city dairy warehouse

**Manufacturer:** Owens Illinois Glass Co. (1954-present)

**Dating:** [1961-1962] The initial order for these bottles was apparently made in 1961. I have only seen date codes for 1961 and 1962, but there is certainly a possibility that the McMurry brothers re-ordered the bottles at some point. It is probable that bottles with both date codes were sent to City Dairy in 1962. The bottles were generic until the pyroglazing was added, so some could have been manufactured during both years – with the pyroglaze added in 1962.

**Collection(s):** Author's collection.

## Paper Cartons

City Dairy began advertising waxed paper containers in February 1950, along with Grand Champion Milk. The Pure-Pak containers were easy to pour, saved space, and could be discarded after use. Although the dairy made no specific claims for a change, ads in 1954 showed the flat-top, corner-pour style of paper container (Figure 7-27), invented by J.M. Hothersall in 1935 (*Alamogordo News* February 9, 1950; September 16, 1954). Willie McMurray recalled that City Dairy originally bought its paper cartons from other dairies, and this may explain the change.

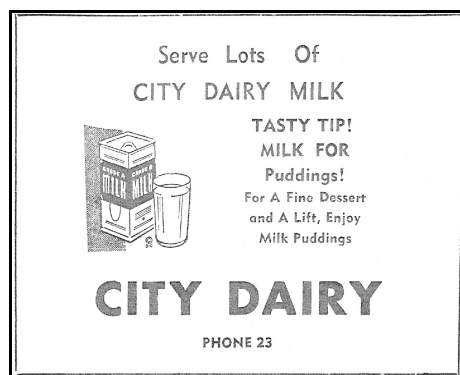


Figure 7-27 – Ad showing corner-pour wax-paper carton (*Alamogordo News* September 16, 1954)

Around 1970, the brothers leased a paper carton machine which created the smaller size containers, but around 1974 or 1975 they purchased a machine that made larger sizes. The new machine formed half-gallon, three-quart and one-gallon cartons, but the three-quart size was never authorized in New Mexico. Even though the use of waxed paper containers was initiated for sale in stores, City Dairy also used them for home delivery until residential transport was halted by 1970 (McMurry Interview 1998).

## Ice Cream Cartons

When City Dairy began making and selling ice cream in 1950, it used paper containers of at least two types. One was shaped like a wide paper cup. At least one of these was red in color, with blue lettering on an off-white background (Figure 7-28). The dairy offered a similar decal



for advertising (Figure 7-29). The storage room at the old dairy buildings contained a number of unused waxed-paper cartons for Humboldt Strawberry Marble ice cream (Figure 7-30) and City Dairy Bulk Pak ice cream (Figure 7-31).



Figure 7-28 – Round ice cream carton



Figure 7-29 – Ice cream decal



Figure 7-30 – Wax-paper carton for Humboldt Strawberry Marble ice cream



Figure 7-31 – Wax-paper carton for City Dairy Bulk Pak ice cream

## Closures

A number of cardboard caps for City Dairy bottles have survived. One such cap was printed with “CITY DAIRY (arch – red) / GRADE (with a large “A” / RAW (both horizontal – blue) / PHONE NO. 23 (inverted arch – red)” all in a red-outlined circle. Another was printed “CITY / DAIRY / GRADE (all stenciled in a blue circle) A (red) / Coffee (stylized red letters) / CREAM (blue)” with “PHONE / 23” to the left (Figure 7-32).



Figure 7-32 – City Dairy milk and cream caps

At some point, probably during the 1950s, possibly not until the 1960s, City Dairy used hoods on its bottles. The only surviving examples I saw were on bottles in the Willie McMurry collection, and I was unable to tell whether a cardboard cap was also used. The covers were Sealon Hoods (see Chapter 3), with the Circle-S logo on the sides of the hood. The top had “GRADE (with a large A) / City Dairy (upwardly slanted script) / PASTEURIZED / FAT FREE / MILK / {three lines of illegible lettering} / ALAMOGORDO, NEW MEXICO (inverted arch)” all printed in blue letters (Figure 7-33).

## Deposits and Cleaning

The McMurrays generally bought their bottles from Owens-Illinois Glass Co. and once (the 1946 pyroglazed bottles) split an order with one of the El Paso dairies to save shipping costs. City Dairy generally purchased new bottles about twice a year, and they were shipped in by truck. Along with the other dairies, City Dairy charged a deposit for glass containers sold through grocery stores (McMurry Interview 1998).

Home delivery worked a little differently, however. A home delivery customer was expected to return a number of empties equal to the number of full bottles he or she ordered. Often, both the bottles and the wood-and-steel carrying cases

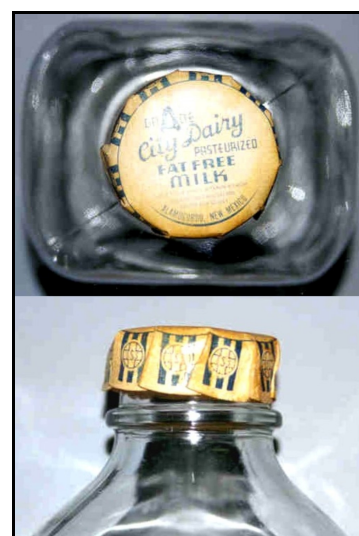


Figure 7-33 – Sealon Hood used by City Dairy (Courtesy of Willie McMurry)

disappeared. Route men often observed the cases being used to prop up automobiles with the bottles collecting the oil drained from the crank case. The McMurrys added a charge for missing bottles to the bill (McMurry Interview 1998).

Sometimes cleaning the bottles presented a problem, especially when the container had been reused to collect oil or other hard-to-remove substances. Bottles had initially been washed by hand, a less efficient process but one that helped increase bottle longevity. When bottle washing machines were introduced, the caustic solution (much stronger than that which could be used in hand washing) would etch into the glass after repeated washings. Improved cleaning efficiency resulted in shorter bottle life.

### Advertising Gimmicks

Virtually all really successful dairies used some form of advertising gimmicks, and City Dairy was no exception. The Dairy offered a variety of pens and pencils over the years (e.g., Figure 7-34). At least one of these in the author's collection was still in the original wrapping. The firm also offered rulers (Figure 7-35), tape measures (Figure 7-36), and an unusual sponge business card (Figure 7-37). The sponge card – which grew when wet – said “JUST DIP IN WATER AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS.” I'm sure that other items were also used.



Figure 7-34 – Advertising pen

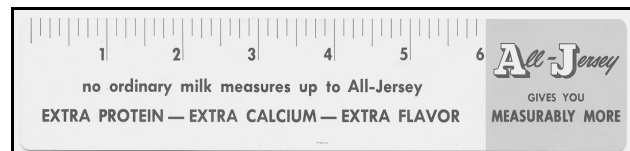


Figure 7-35 – Advertising ruler (Courtesy of Ryal McMurry)

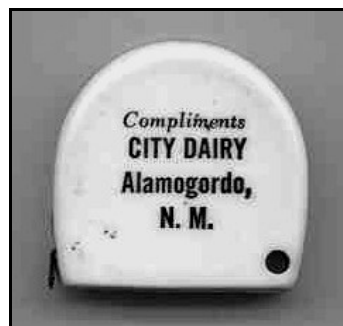


Figure 7-36 – Advertising tape measure (eBay)

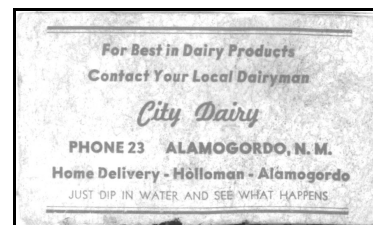


Figure 7-37 – Sponge business card (Courtesy of Rick Miller)



## Crates and Receiving Boxes

Because of the shortage of steel during World War II, milk crates (for transportation and delivery of full and empty milk bottles) were built of wood with steel corner braces (earlier crates had been constructed entirely of wood,. When steel once again became available, crates were made from heavy-gauge steel wire, but the older wooden crates continued to be used for square half-pints (McMurry Interview 1998 – also see Chapter 2). City dairy used marked wooden crates (Figures 7-38 & 7-39), but the later, steel-wire cases were not stamped with the City Dairy name (Figure 7-40 – also see Figure 7-27).



Figure 7-38 – End panel of City Dairy wooden crate

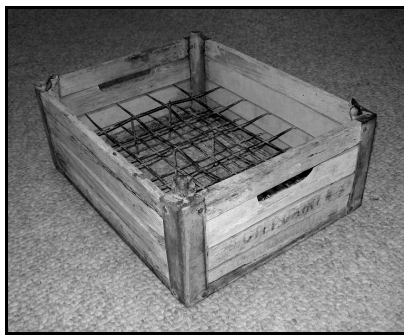


Figure 7-39 – Above view of City Dairy wooden crate

Plastic became the common crate material after dairies began to use paper containers (again, see Chapter 2). The combination of paper and plastic weighed much less and allowed the larger dairies to ship greater volumes of milk at lower prices. If City Dairy ever used plastic crates, Willie never mentioned it, and I have never seen one.

Carriers, used by route men for home delivery, were made from steel frames with aluminum bands to contain the bottles and originally held eight quart bottles. Later carriers held four half-gallon bottles plus four quarts, and the final carriers held four half-gallons (McMurry Interview 1998; Taylor 1972:97).



Figure 7-40 – Steel-wire crate used by City Dairy

## Receiving Boxes

The company also furnished receiving boxes for its regular customers. These were made of insulated aluminum to help keep milk from spoiling in the summer or freezing in the winter. They were marked with the City Dairy name. See Figures 2-69 & 2-70 in Chapter 2 for photos of a City Dairy receiving box and a history of receiving boxes.

## Sources

### Primary Sources

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*El Paso Times*

McMurry, W. J. "Willie," interview, March 20, 27, 1998.

### Secondary Sources

Taylor, Gordon A.

*1972 Milk Bottle Manual: A Collector's Pictorial Primer & Pricing Guide.* Old Time Bottle Publishers, Salem, Oregon.