

# Soda Bottles and Bottling at Alamogordo, New Mexico



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New, updated edition

Originally published as:

“From Weigle’s Pop to Coca-Cola: The Soda Bottlers of Alamogordo, New Mexico  
and Their Bottles.”

The Pioneer 1998 1(3, 4):1-45.

Revised in 2001 as:

Just Who in the Heck is Lula, Anyway?

The Alamogordo, New Mexico, Carbonated Beverage Industry and Its Bottles

This work is dedicated to the hardworking Board of Directors and members of the Tularosa Basin Historical Society. Keep up the good work.

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## 2011 Forward

In historical and archaeological research, nothing is static. Since I have devoted my professional (and avocational) life to the study of bottles and their related industries, I am always learning more. When I look back at research I conducted a decade ago, I am always amazed at two things. The first is how much I managed to get right with the available resources at the time. The second is how much I did *not* know at that time.

In the case of the Alamogordo soda bottling industry, I completely missed the earliest bottler – who was quite obscure. T.L. Reber was a fascinating character, and he deserves his own publication – and he will get it. Reber opened his first soda bottling works at Las Vegas, New Mexico, in 1979 and sold out by 1880. He continued that pattern for more than two decades, opening and selling more than 20 bottling works in New Mexico and the surrounding states. Aside from Reber, the only changes I have made in the histories of the bottlers are minor. I have certainly improved the quality of the maps, ads, and photos.

What has change the most in this revision is the treatment of the bottles. The Bottle Research Group (which I helped found) has made tremendous strides in the understanding of manufacturer's marks on glass bottles and the various codes – especially date codes – that accompany them. I have added new information about the bottles – including the ones likely imported from El Paso.

The story of one bottle is worth telling here. In the summer of 2010, I presented a paper about Alamogordo's drug store industry at the Tularosa Basin Conference held at the Tays Center at the Alamogordo campus of New Mexico State University. The presentation included a discussion about the two major drugs stores in early Alamogordo and the types of bottles they used. At the end of the talk, a few people had questions.

One audience member, Cliff McDonald, asked if I knew anything about soda bottles that had been used at Alamogordo. I said that I did, and he said he had one I might be interested in seeing. He said he had "plowed it up" just a week prior to the conference. Did I want to see the bottle? To say "yes" is an understatement.

At that point, I had been studying and collecting Alamogordo bottles for 15 years. When

Cliff showed me this one, my face split into a huge grin. Along with Alamogordo Bottling Works, the name embossed on the bottle was “JOHNSON.” Jerry Johnson was the second owner of the Alamogordo Bottling Works, and I had previously posited that he had used generic bottles with paper labels. I have looked at bottle collections around the state and locally, and such a bottle had never been recorded. I was ecstatic!

Cliff loaned me the bottle to clean, record, and photograph. It was a defining moment for the study of Alamogordo bottles. The results have been added to Chapter 4. As a post script, when I returned the bottle, Cliff and his wife, Barbara, gave it to me – along with several others they have found on their property over the years. Many of those bottles have added bits of information to our store of knowledge.

In summary, while much of this book remains the same, a great deal of it has changed in both breadth and depth of knowledge and information. For those who are more visual by nature, the improved graphics, especially maps and advertisements will be welcome.

## Original (2001) Foreword

It was never my intention to be an archaeologist nor to specialize in glass artifacts. When I returned to college in 1988 (at the age of 44), I intended to join the ranks of the counselors in an attempt to help save the world. My original attempt at higher education in 1963 (West Texas State University) had been a disaster, and I became a college drop-out. After 25 years spent pursuing a number of different jobs, I returned to take classes at El Paso Community College. A transfer to The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) proved to be fortuitous.

At UTEP, my introduction to archaeology was accidental. By that time, I was majoring in sociology (which turned into one of my career fields) and was receiving a UTEP scholarship. The scholarship demanded a minimum of 15 hours of classwork per semester, and one of my needed classes failed to “make.” The only class that fit into my schedule well was entitled “Southwest Archaeology.” The class was taught by Dave Carmichael, and I became deeply interested. I went somewhat beyond the bounds of requirement in the class paper, and Dave suggested that I submit it to the El Paso Archaeological Society for inclusion in their journal *The Artifact*. The paper was published, and I was hooked. My baccalaureate included a double major – sociology and anthropology (with a focus on archaeology).

As a way to continue to eat while achieving my goals, I became a work-study student for John Peterson (UTEP’s historical archaeologist). My first job (which he said had driven off three previous work-studies) was to clean and catalog 379 bottles excavated from the El Paso Coliseum parking lot. I found the job fascinating! The next semester, I took the historical archaeology course with John (by then, I was working as a research assistant for Dave). Part of the requirement for the course was to complete a significant project in historical archaeology. Along with another student, Wanda Olszewski, I chose to finish the Cultural Resource Management (CRM) report on the bottles I had cataloged the previous semester (see Lockhart & Olszewski 1993, 1995).

Later, during a volunteer excavation in San Elizario, Texas (near El Paso), my interest became stronger. Involved in the excavation were John Peterson (supervision), Wanda Olszewski, Bill Fling (specializing in faunal remains), and I (as well as other students and archaeologists). We were working in three different units, and someone unearthed the top of a bottle pit. He called out the name, Bill. Someone else answered, “Do you want Bone Bill (Bill

Fling) or Bottle Bill (me)?” The nickname stuck, and I have been involved with glass artifacts (especially bottles) ever since (see Lockhart & Olszewski 1994 for our report on the bottle pit), although Wanda joined the Peace Corps and never returned to archaeology).

Researching the Coliseum bottles caused me to realize something important: there is rarely (if ever) enough local research on artifacts. Most people (who care about artifacts at all) are interested in national products because they cover a broader range and bring more prestige. After all, how many people care about soda bottlers in Alamogordo, New Mexico? Although there are few of us in each locale, some of the best dating tools we have are locally-researched artifacts. For example, bottles from Crystal Beverage Co. are dateable within two-to-five-year periods (not counting deposition lag). Few national products have short date ranges, and most of them have longer deposition lag (for a discussion on deposition lag for glass containers, see Lockhart 2000, Chapter 2).

In early 1998, I had mostly finished my soda bottle epic (*Bottles on the Border: The History and Bottles of the Soft Drink Industry in El Paso, Texas, 1881-2000*)<sup>1</sup> and was researching the El Paso dairy industry (and bottles) when I realized that the Alamogordo Centennial celebration was under way, and I was missing a good opportunity. So, I began research on Alamogordo’s Soda Bottling Industry and published that history through the *Pioneer*, the journal of the Tularosa Basin Historical Society (TBHS) (Lockhart 1998). In my ongoing research, I have found a great many additional bits of information, some of it very important in telling the story of the Alamogordo soda bottlers, which is included in this [i.e., 2001] edition. The following year (1999) was the centennial of Otero County, so I wrote a history of the Otero County dairy industry, again published in the *Pioneer* (see Lockhart 1999, 2001 – the web version).

As always, as soon as both publications were available, I discovered information I wished I had been able to include. Fortunately, the Board of Directors of TBHS have allowed me to republish revised editions via the Internet, compliments of the Townsend Library, New Mexico State University at Alamogordo. Web-based publications have two great advantages which cause them to be my preference for publishing. First, the information is now available to the public free! Since I make little or no money from academic publishing, why not pass on the

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<sup>1</sup> 2011 note: I revised that e-book in 2010.



information for little or no money as well? Second, the work can be ongoing. Since research is normally limited by publication date, it is refreshing to know that, as I discover new knowledge, I can include it by way of update pages.

As always, this publication is intended to reach a wide range of audiences. The major group I hope to help is local archaeologists. As a result, I attempt to describe all bottles in as great detail as possible. I know we frequently only find fragments that need identification. Generally, bottle collectors are more interested in owning than learning, but there is a growing number of collectors who are choosing to research their bottles and are interested in the background of the industry. Finally, local history buffs should find helpful information about their community. I hope this research is helpful to you all.

## Acknowledgments

Historical inquiry is rarely accomplished in a vacuum. Although the individual historian may spend hours pouring through records in archives, libraries, and on microfilm, she or he must come in occasional (or frequent) contact with other human beings. These people can make life quite pleasant or, periodically, difficult. Fortunately, I often encounter the former and, rarely, the latter.

In this work, I only encountered helpful people – for the most part very helpful people. Posthumous thanks to Tom Lucky for a series of interviews in 1996. Although we were primarily discussing Magnolia Coca-Cola Bottling Co. of El Paso, Tom shared with me his memories of the founding of the Alamogordo Coca-Cola Bottling Co. He died just eleven months after we talked. Further thanks to Dorothy Lucky, Tom’s widow for the photograph of Tom and Hope Smith (along with others) which graces this publication. In addition, for the 2011 edition, I had spent some time with Kurt Goetting, Hope Smith’s nephew, who provided helpful information and some great photos of the Alamogordo plant.

Other former and current [as of 2001] managers of the Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola plants and warehouses of Alamogordo – Mike Haines, Kenneth Josselyn, Steve Peacock, and L.W. “Buz” Zink – provided invaluable information about the operation of the plants and warehouses, as did Durwood Jones, founder of Consolidated Bottlers in Roswell. Robert Callaway (Firestone Tires) shared his boyhood memories of the Hotel Weigele and Crystal Beverage Co., and Leonard Sheffield, whose land speculation included ownership of the building formerly occupied by Crystal, offered building descriptions available from no other source. My gratitude to you all.

Photographs of the past are frequently difficult to obtain. My thanks to Kathy and Lee Gren and Mildred Evaskovich for helping me search for documents and photos at the Tularosa Basin Historical Society (TBHS) museum (including the finding of the photo of the original Coca-Cola plant) and, of course, for publishing my work in *The Pioneer*. My gratitude also goes to Mike Haines for providing photos of the (now demolished) original Pepsi-Cola warehouse and to Pete Eidenbach for making me aware of the Hotel Weigele photo in the TBHS collection.

Thanks also to former bottle collector, Keith Austin, for valuable information about Alamogordo (and other) bottles and other collectors and bottle owners – Kay Denny, Bob Evans, and Viola Salas – for allowing me to observe and/or display their bottles.

Both libraries in Alamogordo have been especially helpful. I appreciate the help of the Alamogordo Public Library staff in helping me locate city directories, newspaper articles, and generally answering my endless inquiries with good grace. Similarly, Lois Knowles at the Townsend Library at New Mexico State University's Alamogordo branch has been invaluable in filling my constant interlibrary loan requests, notably obtaining the Sanford Insurance Maps for this study.<sup>2</sup> Thanks also to Kimberly D. Russell, Consumer Affairs Specialist, The Coca-Cola Company, Atlanta, Georgia, for searching their archives and the staff at the County Clerk's office in the Alamogordo Court House for showing me how to navigate among the deed records. Additional gratitude to Marion Harrington of Coldwell Banker Sudderth Nelson for looking up the dates when her company listed the former Coca-Cola plant (Florida Ave.) for sale.

Additional thanks to Dr. Cheri Jimeno, President of the Alamogordo branch of New Mexico State University; Dr. Debra Teachman, Vice President of Academic Affairs; and Dr. Joyce Hill, Head of the Division of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education, for their help and approval of my sabbatical for the Fall Semester of 2011 – a time for research, including the revision of this book.

Thanks to Cliff and Barbara McDonald for donating the “Johnson” bottle to my research efforts. That bottle fills in an important gap in the history of Alamogordo soda bottles! Kudos, too, to Chris Weide for putting me on the trail of information about the unusual national brands offered by the Crystal Beverage Co. A final bouquet of gratitude to my wife, Wanda Wakkinen, who listens to my endless speculation and shares in my excitement upon each tiny new discovery.

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<sup>2</sup> Since the original publications, Pete Eidenbach has obtained a clean set of the microfilm for the Alamogordo maps and has kindly allowed me to use it.

