

Soda Bottlers and Bottles
in the Black Range

KINGSTON BOTTLING WORKS.

FLEISHMAN & BRANDON, PROP'S

OFFICE ON WATER ST.

Manufacturers of all kinds of Soft Drinks. Goods shipped to any town
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Bill Lockhart and Zang Wood

Soda Bottlers and Bottles in the Black Range

Bill Lockhart and Zang Wood

with contributions by Ron Fowler, Virginia Bergey, Pat Brown, and Lynn Loomis

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While trying to reach an understanding of a mysterious soda bottle, noted New Mexico bottle collector and author, Zang Wood, delved into the history and workings of the towns of the Black Range in central New Mexico. Wood discovered references to bottlers in old issues of the *New Mexico Business Directory and Gazetteer*, a few ads in the Black Range newspapers, and an intriguing set of promissory notes and mortgage records.

This research remained in Wood's files until Virginia Bergey visited New Mexico in 2010 in search of her relative, Theodore L. Reber. Bergey knew that Reber had been a soda bottler, with plants at several locations within New Mexico Territory during the late 19th century. Her search brought her to Pat Brown's Trading Post & Mining Museum in Cerrillos.

Brown was intrigued. She sent e-mail messages to collectors and others whom she thought might be interested, including Bill Lockhart, a professor at the Alamogordo campus of New Mexico State University. Lockhart, a sociologist and historical archaeologist, was just as captivated as Brown. As part of Lockhart's ongoing investigation into the bottle-related industries of Southern New Mexico, El Paso, Texas, and Juárez, Mexico, Reber's experience in the Black Hills fit perfectly. The group began sharing information . . .

The Black Range

The Black Range is located in the southwestern quadrant of New Mexico and extends between the historic towns of Hot Springs (now Truth or Consequences) on its eastern extreme and Silver City at its western terminus. The major mining towns of the region were the ghost towns of Robinson and Chloride to the north, Lake Valley to the south, and the current (and historic) communities of Kingston and Hillsboro more toward the center of the range (Figure 2-1). Highway 152 runs across the Black Range from Silver City to I-25 at Caballo Reservoir.

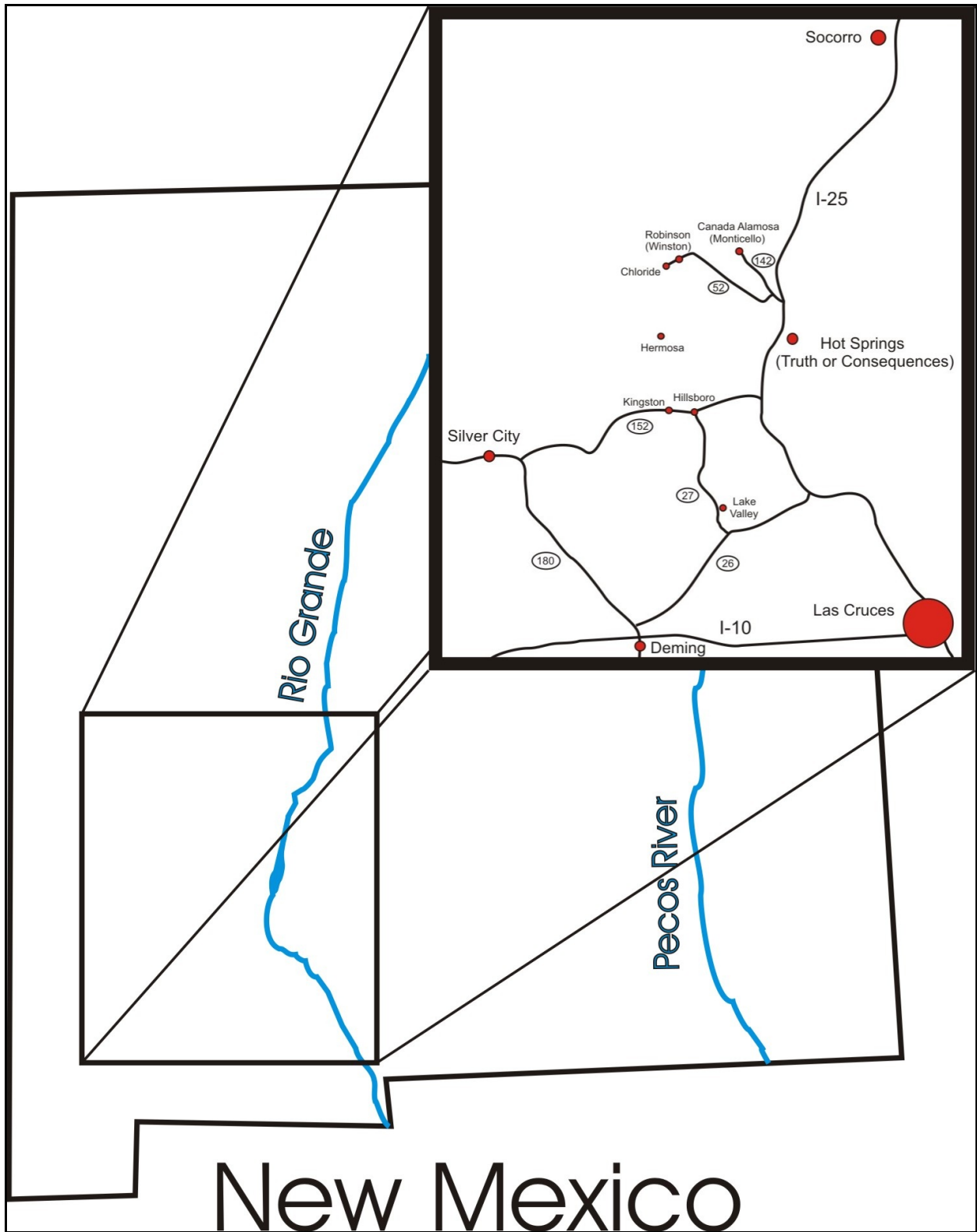


Figure 2-1 – Map of Black Range towns and 21st century highways

Miners arrived at the Black Range in the mid- to late 1870s and established towns and strikes over the next few years. The example of Lake Valley pretty much sets the tone for the region. Miners hit the Bridal Chamber strike in 1878, and a town quickly grew around the mine. By 1883, the Bridal Chamber was pretty much worked out. Even though the railroad arrived in 1884, the mines struggled to stay open after that. The last resident left in 1894. Other towns remained active for a longer period, of course, and both Kingston and Hillsboro have survived to the present. However, the silver panic of 1893 (also called a depression then, unlike the current term – recession), effectively destroyed the mining industry in the Black Range.

Soda Bottling in the West

Like the saloons and liquor dealers, soda bottlers followed the mines and the towns. As noted in Part I, the bottling apparatus used by small-town soda bottlers could be very compact and portable (see Part I for details). In the histories below, even the most complex bottling setups were relatively small. The earliest bottler in the Black Range had an additional asset – he was a carpenter.

Theodore L. Reber

The story of Theodore L. Reber and his wife, Rebecca, is told Part I, but this remarkable couple wended their way across New Mexico, leaving a legacy of soda bottlers behind them. Indeed, Reber could be called the Johnny Appleseed of soda bottling. Although possibly an apocryphal remark, Reber, himself, claimed to have started more than 50 soda bottling businesses, mostly within the borders of New Mexico (*Santa Fe New Mexican* 9/16/1898).

Reber was in the business of selling soda bottling outfits, and his unique method was to build a plant, develop the business, then sell out and move on. Once called “the perambulating soda water manufacturer,” Reber’s bottling career began by at least 1879 and continued into the first few years of the 20th century (*Santa Fe New Mexican* 9/16/1898). Fairly early, the couple perambulated into the Black Range.

Reber at Robinson and Hillsboro

Our knowledge about T.L. Reber and his wife, Rebecca, is limited and comes almost entirely from brief newspaper blurbs and occasional ads. After moving to New Mexico in 1879, Reber had been in business at Silver City in 1880 but had moved on to Mesilla by mid-year. We have not (yet) ascertained how long he remained at Mesilla, although Reber claimed in 1899 that he had sold the first soda bottling outfit in El Paso, Texas, to Houck & Dieter, a liquor wholesaler (*Sacramento Chief* 4/22/1899). Houck & Dieter bottled sodas from 1881 until the firm merged with the Purity Bottling & Mfg. Co. in 1912 to form the Empire Bottling Works (see Lockhart 2010 for the history of Houck & Dieter).

A report in the *El Paso Times* on April 2, 1881, noted that “Reber & Co., have removed their business to the new store room on El Paso Street next to Palace Drug Store, where they will be glad to welcome their friends and former patrons.” Since Houck & Dieter began soda bottling in April 1881, the firm almost certainly took over Reber’s original location (see Lockhart 2010; 2011 for more on Reber). For photos and ads of this period see Part I.

Reber apparently sold a second bottling outfit to Coffin & Co. about that time, and subsequent newspaper reports failed to mention sodas in connection with Reber’s store. On September 28, 1881, the *El Paso Herald* informed the public that Reber needed to sell his entire supply of paper goods within 30 days. Reber was almost certainly on the move again by the end of October.

When the Rebers left the Black Range for Socorro by October 1883, the local paper noted that the family had *returned* to Socorro. Although we have found no other reference to this occupation, there is an empty spot in our records about Reber between October 1881 and October 1882. We otherwise have a fairly continuous record of Reber from 1879 to 1883. This 1881-1882 “space” is very likely when the couple operated their first Socorro business. That also puts the Rebers in a perfect position for their Black Range entry.¹

¹ There is also a “blank” space from the July 1880 report of Reber at Mesilla to his arrival at El Paso. Since we know that Houck & Dieter opened its bottling works in April 1881, Reber had to have been there by at least March. That leaves as much as a seven-month stretch. Reber had often been to a town, set up, sold out, and moved on in less time. However, the proximity of

Although we have not discovered the exact timing, Reber had certainly moved to the Black Range by July 27, 1882, when an article in the *Las Vegas Daily Gazette* reported the arrival of Mrs. Reber from Robinson. At that point, Robinson was a new town in the northern part of the Black Range, possibly settled a year or so earlier. It was the perfect setting for Reber – a fresh territory with thirsty miners.

A February 12, 1883, ad in the *Black Range* stated that “Reber & Co. Soda Water Manufactory makes sarsaparilla, ginger ale, and plain pop. Uses new patent stopper bottle and pure syrups, Robinson, N.M.” (Figure 2-2). The ads ran from at least January 12 to August 31, and all had the same content.

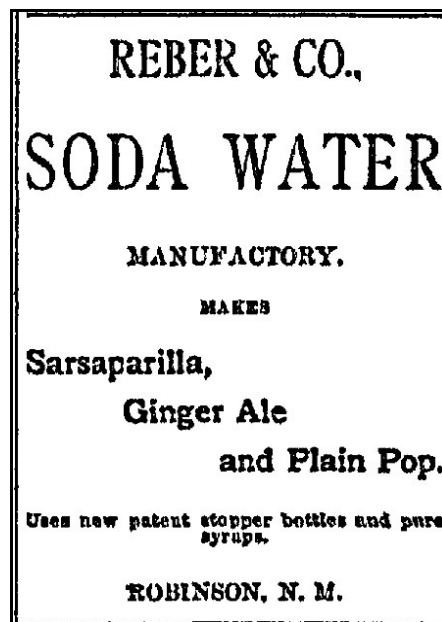


Figure 2-2 – Ad for Reber & Co. at Robinson (*Black Range* 2/12/1883)

Despite the ads, the *Black Range* reported on March 3, 1883, that “Reber is pushing his residence and soda factory to completion, and when finished he will have things arranged in good shape for manufacturing soda. A driven well under cover will make the supply of water convenient.” The availability of good water was a problem at the town, but the same newspaper reported on March 27 that Reber had “an abundance of water in his well at his ranch just east of Robinson,” and he apparently used that well water for the production of his drinks. There is an apparent contradiction between Reber’s January ads and the lack of completion of his “residence and soda factory,” but that may only mean that he was renting a space until he finished building – or that he was bottling at the ranch.

Reber opened a branch at Hillsboro about March 2, 1883 (*Black Range* 3/2/1883). On August 24, he described Hillsboro to the *Black Range* as “equally as dull as the town here [i.e., Robinson]” (Figure 2-3). Reber apparently had become discouraged with business at Robinson and Hillsboro. By February 5, 1884, J.D. Perkins sold “the Reber Building” at Robinson to H.N. Castle. Reber, however, was no longer interested. He had returned to Socorro by the first of October 1883.

Mesilla and El Paso makes a move directly to El Paso more likely.



Figure 2-3 – T.L. and Rebecca Reber on a buckboard (Courtesy of Cynthia Smith)

Edward James Ryan

Successor to Reber

Edward James Ryan (always called James or “Jas.” in the newspapers) was in the Black Range by at least early 1883. He leased seven acres at Cañada de Alamosa that year to grow potatoes and various truck products. On November 14, 1883, Ryan mortgaged a team of horses for \$110 to T.L. and Rebecca Reber at Socorro – payable just over two weeks later on December 1. This deal was almost certainly a way for the Rebers to finance Ryan in the purchase of the soda business in the Black Range.

E.J. Ryan was next listed in the 1884 New Mexico Business Directory and Gazetteer (Polk 1984:323) as “soda mnfrs.” at Lake Valley. It is *very* likely that Ryan moved to Lake Valley to take advantage of the railroad. The New Mexico Railroad Co., a branch of the Santa Fe Railway, built a 13-mile extension from the station at Nutt to Lake Valley. The new line opened officially on April 5, 1884, and Ryan probably moved the bottling works from Hillsboro to Lake Valley very close to that time (Myrick 1990:204-205).

Ryan's Notes of February 15, 1886

On February 15, 1886, E.J. Ryan wrote three notes (i.e., promises to pay) to Philipp Madlener of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for "Value Received."² These notes describe "Soda-Water Apparatus" that includes:

one 18-gallon generator [i.e., carbonator]
one 18-gallon fountain
one force pump
one bottling table
one syrup gauge
15 Grose [*sic*] Soda Bottles with Patent Stoppers (i.e. 2,160 bottles)

These are clearly promissory notes, written to pay for the bottling apparatus – with one note due "three months after date" (i.e., the purchase date) and at three month intervals thereafter until the equipment was paid in full nine months later (November 5, 1886). Ryan was still at Lake Valley. The listing for "Patent Stoppers" is a virtually certain reference to the patented Hutchinson stoppers.

Phillip Madlener

In the Spring of 1873, John Graf and Philip Madlener formed the partnership of Graf & Madlener "in the soda water business" at Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The 1880 census noted the Madlener was born in Bavaria about 1843. He was 37 years old at the time and listed his profession as a "Soda Water Manufacturer." Graf purchased Madlener's interest in 1883. When Madlener left the business, he became a producer of soda bottling equipment, under the name of Philip Madlener. In 1888, he was listed as "Mfr. Soda Water Apparatus." During the 1890s, Madlener ordered Hutchinson bottles from the Cream City Glass Co. for sale to those he supplied. These were embossed with a PHM monogram in a plate on the front of each bottle (Figure 2-4). Madlener remained in business until 1907 (Currey :450-453; Flower 1888:288).

² The record of these notes and mortgages that follow are on file with the Sierra County Clerk, Truth or Consequences, New Mexico.

Ryan's New Equipment

E.J. Ryan obviously purchased new bottling equipment from Philip Madlener on February 15, 1886. He remained at Lake Valley, presumably with the intent to continue bottling operations there. It is worth speculating a bit about why Ryan bought new equipment.

If our assumption that Ryan originally acquired his bottling apparatus from Reber is correct, then we can interpolate three probable conditions for the equipment. First, it was likely minimal. Reber was highly mobile and probably only used the smallest and most basic equipment available. He also had a minimal labor force, consisting only of his wife and himself. Second, the equipment worked on Hutchinson-style bottles. The *Black Range* for February 12, 1883, reported that Reber “uses new patent stopper bottle” at Robinson. Thus, the tone for bottle type was already set.

Third, and probably most important, the equipment was getting old and probably quite worn from moving and use. The apparatus was probably no newer than Reber's move to the Black Range in 1882 and may have been a couple of years older than that. It had also been moved at least once (Hillsboro or Robinson to Lake Valley) and maybe several more times. Although this is all speculation, it is reasonable to assume that Ryan felt he needed new equipment.

A contributing factor may have been the bottles. Assuming Ryan purchased his equipment from Reber, he almost certainly also acquired Reber's Hutchinson bottles. After at least four years, these were certainly almost gone. In the days prior to the use of deposits, customers were very slow to return bottles and frequently discarded them. The bottles were the property of the bottler – not the customer – but soda buyers were either unaware or uncaring. Bottles were lost primarily in three ways: 1) breakage (at the bottling plant, the retail outlet, or by the customer); 2) wear (from transportation or cleaning); and/or 3) theft by the customer. One study (Lockhart 1999) found that most bottles had been lost by these processes by the end of five years. Since Ryan's bottle supply was dwindling, he almost certainly needed to replenish. What better time to buy new equipment?



Figure 2-4 – Madlener's PHM bottle (eBay)

The Mary Ryan Mortgage

On May 8, 1886, just three months after E.J. Ryan purchased the equipment from Madlener, and three days after the first payment was due, Ryan borrowed \$300 from Mary Ryan, almost certainly to pay off the original notes to Madlener. The collateral for the mortgage is described recognizably as the same equipment and the same number of bottles (“c. fifteen gross” or about 2,160 bottles).

Of at least as much importance (possibly more), the “complete Soda Water Machine and Soda Water out-fit” was “now located in the Town of Hillsborough and used by said party of the first part” (i.e. E.J. Ryan). This implies that Ryan had moved (back?) to Hillsboro and was using the equipment to manufacture sodas. The move was most likely inspired by the collapse of the mining industry at Lake Valley after 1884. The mortgage was due in a single payment a year later to the day (May 8, 1887), but Ryan satisfied the mortgage (almost certainly paid it in full) just less than a month later, on June 7, 1886.

Mary Ryan was almost certainly the wife or mother of James. She was listed as the proprietress of The Cosmopolitan (hotel) at Lake Valley, on April 7, 1888. Since Mrs. D.G. Meredith managed the hotel in March of that year and was again in charge by the end of July, Mary Ryan was only there for a short time. However, she was apparently moving with James, who had relocated to Lake Valley by at least February 1887.

The Cahill and Parker Mortgage

On the same date that the mortgage to Mary Ryan was satisfied (June 7, 1886), Ryan took out a loan with Thomas Cahill and F.W. Parker for \$300, almost certainly to pay the note to Mary Ryan. The entire sum was due in six months, on December 7, 1886. Parker recorded on December 13, 1886, that the mortgage was “satisfied and discharged” – in other words, paid. Even though the loan was recorded on December 13, that does not necessarily mean that Ryan was late in his payment. The fact that Charles Lerr borrowed against the equipment on December 4 argues that Ryan had paid the mortgage by that time.

This was obviously the same “Soda Water Outfit”; it was still “situated in Hillsboro”; and Ryan continued as the user. However, there were some interesting changes. First, Cahill and

Parker were a bit more demanding, and Ryan had to include a spring wagon in the collateral to get the loan. The other changes had to do with numbers. The amount of \$300 leads to the obvious conclusion that the Cahill and Parker loan was made to pay off Mary Ryan.

However, recall that the first two mortgages counted 15 gross of bottles (or 2,160 bottles). This mortgage lists “one hundred & sixty boxes bottles” and “one hundred & sixty boxes 25 gross stoppers.” The term “boxes” almost certainly refers to cases of bottles, typically stocked 24 to a case. That adds up to 3,840 bottles. It is unfortunate that we do not have the original mortgage document. What we have is a *recording* of the document in the mortgage book by the County Clerk. The way many people wrote a “0” in handwritten script, especially during that time period, could easily be mistaken for a “6” – leading to “160” being recorded, when the actual document was for an even hundred. One hundred cases multiplied by 24 bottles equals 2,400 bottles, much closer to the original estimate and the same as estimates in the following mortgages.

This correction, however, still leaves an additional 240 bottles or ten extra cases. Assuming this is a correct count (rather than an error), something must have changed. Indeed, this record includes “one corking machine.” Assuming that this is not just a misunderstanding of a machine to install “patent” (i.e., Hutchinson) stoppers, why would Ryan have acquired a machine to install corks?

A simple explanation fits both the era and circumstances. First, ginger ale and various forms of specific waters (e.g., Apollinaris Water) were popular on the frontier by this point in history. Decades earlier, ginger ale was bottled in tall, thin bottles with rounded or pointed bases. By the late 1880s, those had evolved into tall, thin bottles with rounded bases that had small concave centers (to create a stable bottom that would allow the bottle to stand upright). These were generally sealed with corks as were the various types of specialty waters. If Ryan began bottling ginger ale and/or specialty waters, it explains both the corking machine and the additional bottles.

All of this borrowing to pay off other notes is an early form of check kiting (writing a check from one bank to pay off another bank and repeating that until you have enough money to cover the original bad check) – currently illegal in every state. This suggests that Ryan was not doing well in the bottling business – at least not after he bought the new bottling equipment. Of

course, mining in the Black Range was beginning to seriously decline about then, so sales must have fallen off pretty drastically.

Charles Lerr

The Charles Lerr Mortgage

On December 4, 1886, Charles Lerr borrowed \$425 from two sets of local Hillsboro merchants – Sowell & Brandon and Herrin, Keller & Miller. The loan was to be paid back in two payments on April 1 and June 1, 1887. The list of the property mortgaged was essentially the same equipment originally purchased from Madlener on February 15, 1886, “including the soda-water outfit formerly owned by E.J. Ryan.” The Mortgage was cancelled just two months later, on February 1, 1887.

This brings up far more questions than it answers. Who was Lerr? How did he get involved? Did he, indeed, take up soda bottling? This mortgage and the term “soda-water outfit formerly owned by E.J. Ryan” certainly implies that the purpose of this loan was to allow Lerr to purchase the equipment. Did the equipment stay at Hillsboro? The entry does not say, although the mortgage was *recorded* as cancelled at Hillsboro. However, Hillsboro is where the mortgage was recorded – not the location of the equipment. Herrin, Keller & Miller had locations at both Hillsboro and Lake Valley, so the locations of their businesses is no help. In the Remarks section, the entry states “Herrin Keller & Miller and Sowell & Brandon request this mortgage cancelled.” Why? Did Lerr cease operations, abandon the equipment, and leave? Did he pay it off? So, why use the word “cancelled” instead of “satisfied?” The mortgage was cancelled on February 1, 1887, a date significant to the next mortgage.

E.J. Ryan – Again

The Perrault Mortgage

It is highly probable that Lerr defaulted on the loan. Judging by the date, he defaulted without making a single payment. Although we will never be certain, it is very likely that the two firms (Herrin, Keller & Miller and Sowell & Brandon) got their money back from Ryan (if Ryan ever actually *saw* the money), and Ryan once more was in possession of the equipment.

On February 1, 1887, the same day that Lerr's note was declared cancelled, Ryan once again floated a loan. This time, however, the loan was for a smaller sum: \$127.85, and the mortgagee was George O. Perrault, whose family was in business at Hillsboro. A single payment was due on August 1, six months later. This time, for the lesser sum, Ryan only put part of the equipment up as collateral:

1 - 7 Gallon Generator
1 Bottling Table
100 Boxes
200 Doz Bottles with stoppers

Note that the "100 Boxes" did not include the bottles. The total was 200 dozen bottles (2,400 bottles, the same number as in the last transaction). The record added that the "Complete Soda Water Outfit [was] now in Lake Valley."

At Hillsboro, on June 7, 1887, Perrault recorded "I hereby acknowledge Satisfaction in full on the within mortgage." As noted above, this a date of recording, not necessarily the date that the mortgage was satisfied. The reason this is important is that Ryan probably repaid Perrault in mid-February, but Perrault, for whatever reason, did not get to Hillsboro to record the transaction until four months later.

The Holz and Cotton Mortgage

The final mortgage listed for Ryan was a \$500 loan from Conrad Holz and William Cotton. The listing of the collateral this time was not very thorough: "One complete Soda Water Apparatus together with all necessary appurtenances thereunto [*sic*] belonging, also about 100 Soda Water Boxes together with the entire bottles corks &c." The note was due in full on May 15, 1887, only three months from the date of the loan. The entry said nothing about the location of the equipment.

Even more inconvenient (for us), there was no record of the final disposition of the mortgage. Since this is the last mortgage entry we have found for Ryan, he may have defaulted on the loan and left town – in which case, Holz and Cotton probably repossessed the bottling equipment.

Summing up the Ryan Years

There is no question that T.L. Reber moved to the Black Range by July 1882, settling at Robinson and opening a bottling works. He branched out to Hillsboro in 1883, but there is no indication that he closed the Robinson business. Reber sold out to Ryan in November. Ryan had moved the bottling works to Lake Valley by early 1884. He bought a new bottling outfit in February 1886 and moved (back?) to Hillsboro. Then, Ryan began a streak of borrowing money – repeatedly using the new equipment and the same number of bottles as collateral.

Aside from the initial notes to Philip Madlener, the manufacturer of the soda bottling outfit, Ryan took out two other loans, each to pay off the previous note. He apparently sold the equipment to Charles Lerr in December 1886, but Lerr defaulted on the loan (probably without bottling a single soda), and Ryan again gained possession of the equipment in early 1887. At this point, Ryan may have quit bottling, although he floated two more loans, still using the bottling outfit for collateral. He may have defaulted on the final loan and left town.

Ryan seems to have also dropped out of the newspapers. He became news again in April 1888, when he was peripherally involved in a shooting at Hermosa (in the north of the Black Range). Ryan returned to Cañada de Alamosa and farming in August. Our last glimpse of Ryan was in Santa Fe on February 12, 1898, where he was described as “a traveling man” who had just come “up from Albuquerque” en route to Colorado, his bottling days almost certainly just a distant memory.

A strange loose end remains. Ryan apparently purchased 2,160 Hutchinson bottles in February 1886. By June, the number had increased to 2,400, possibly by the inclusion of ginger ale bottles. By June 1887, the number remained the same. During this 16-month period, Ryan does not seem to have lost a single bottle. Since the deposit system did not yet exist to reclaim bottles, it seems incredible that no one seems to have kept or broken a single one! Either the people recording the mortgages were not counting, or Ryan was not bottling.

L.P. Johnson

Another Successor to Reber?

On March 21, 1884, the *Black Range* printed a brief but intriguing blurb: “L.P. Johnson is fixing up a building adjoining his residence which he will occupy as a soda factory. He has his fountain and bottling apparatus on the way and will soon be ready for business.”³ The newspaper was printed at Chloride, just a few miles west of Robinson, the location where T.L. Reber had operated his bottling works until at least August, possibly as late as October 1883.

Unfortunately, we have found no other information about the Johnson bottling plant. Johnson may have just been another short-term Western soda bottler, but the timing and location form a possible connection with Reber that is simply too compelling to ignore. Since Reber was bottling at two locations in the Black Range, he very likely had two sets of bottling apparatus. If Ryan had purchased the Hillsboro set up in November 1883, that still left the Robinson equipment – very conveniently located for Johnson.

Fleischman and Brandon

The Snyder and Johnson Mortgage

On June 25, 1888, Leopold Fleishman and Archie C. Brandon borrowed \$912.85 from R.W. Snyder and S.N. Johnson to buy a large inventory of bottling equipment. The inventory was so detailed that it included such items as “1 punch . . . 1 stove & pipe . . . 1 saw . . . 1 green coat . . . 1 Bay horse,” and numerous other items – a total of 63 entries! Of specific interest, the inventory listed:

3 cases ginger ale & bottles
65 dozen ale bottles
107 empty soda cases

³ The words “on the way” may be misleading. The reader should be aware that newspaper reporters of the period were not known for pinpoint accuracy. Thus, “on the way” could mean shipped from Chicago – or being moved across town that day.

36 ginger ale cases empty
6 doz quart soda bottles
80 cases sodas filled with soda bottles
21 full quart cases filled with bottles

This came to 2,772 regular-sized bottles (about 8 ounces) and 576 quarts (3,348 bottles total). If this were the same soda bottling outfit ordered by Ryan two-and-a-half years earlier, it was a much more detailed inventory and/or had been greatly enhanced. Since the loan was for almost a thousand dollars, this may reflect a new set of bottling equipment. The bottling outfit was “situated in the Town of Kingston,” and the mortgage was to be paid in monthly installments that culminated in a final payment on May 25, 1889.

This inventory is *very* different from the earlier ones made by (or for) Ryan. If this is the same equipment, then there had been numerous additions. Alternatively, the early inventories may simply have been less thorough. Such items as the bay horse and accompanying tack and livery, however, were almost certainly additions. In any event, the gap of at least a year in the record, and the difference in inventory, strongly suggests a break in the continuity that began with Reber in 1882.

The Pegues Mortgage

Taking a page from Ryan’s book, Fleischman and Brandon took out a new loan from Phil T. Pegues on December 31, 1888, to pay off the Snyder & Johnson loan early. Snyder & Johnson acknowledged “payment in full of this Mortgage” on December 31, 1888, the same day that Fleischman and Brandon mortgaged the soda outfit to Pegues for \$900. This time, however, the clerk eliminated the details and called it simply “A complete Soda Water Manufacturing Out-fit – located in Kingston.” Again, the payments were monthly, and they extended to December 31, 1889. As with Ryan’s final mortgage, there is no record of the disposition of the loan.

Fleischman & Brandon

Fleischman & Brandon are listed in the 1889 *New Mexico Business Directory and Gazetteer* as “Soda Mfgs” at Kingston – but were not enumerated in 1888. This, too, gives us an interesting hint. If Fleischman and Brandon entered the soda business when they mortgaged the

equipment on June 25, 1888, it was almost certainly too late in the year to have been included in the 1888 Gazetteer. Thus, the pair probably opened their business sometime after the June 25, 1888, mortgage. It would certainly have taken awhile to set up such a plant.

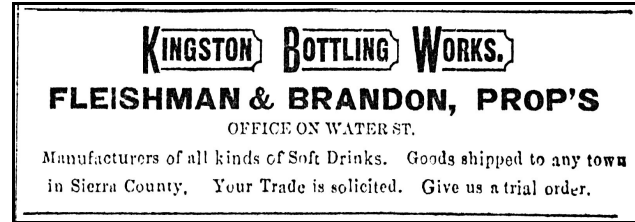


Figure 2-5 – Fleishman & Brandon ad (*Kingston Weekly Shaft* 6/8/1889)

Along with the 1889 directory listing, advertisements from the firm have also survived. The partners took out ads in the *Kingston Weekly Shaft* from at least May 1889 to July 8 of that year. However, there was no ad in the July 13 issue nor any that followed. The ad was short but informative: “KINGSTON BOTTLING WORKS. FLEISHMAN & BRANDON, PROP'S. OFFICE ON WATER ST. Manufacturers of all kinds of Soft Drinks. Goods shipped to any town in Sierra County. Your Trade is solicited. Give us a trial order” (Figure 2-5).

The abrupt cessation of ads in the middle of the prime soft drink sale season suggests that something was suddenly amiss. This abrupt termination, coupled with the unresolved payment record on the loan is ominous, indeed. The combination suggests that Fleishman & Brandon went out of business sometime in early July 1889.

Jake Reidlinger

The Last of the Black Range Soda Bottlers

Jacob Reidlinger⁴ advertised as J. Reidlinger and Son in the *Sierra County Advocate* from October 2, 1891, through April 28, 1893. His plant was called the Hillsboro Bottling Works. He advertised an incredibly diverse choice of sodas that included:

“lemon soda, sarsparilla soda, cream soda, orange soda, crystal soda, orange color [what *that* means is lost in the recesses of time], ginger ale, birch beer, pear champagne, champagne ciders, Cherrie Ferri Phosphate, iron tonic, Standard

⁴ Although the name is spelled both Riedlinger and Reidlinger, the latter is the spelling used in his advertisements.

Nerve Food, Standard Neur [?] Cure, Waukesha water, seltzer water, mineral waters, and other waters and tonics.”

A long-established Silver City bottler, Reidlinger, along with his son, Jake, Jr., stated their intention to open two new bottling operations in September 1891 (*Silver City Independent* 9/18/1891). Jake, Jr., was to operate the Hillsboro works, while “an expert from St. Louis” was being imported to run the new plant at Clifton, Arizona. Apparently, Jake, Sr., was to continue the Silver City business. The younger Reidlinger may have bought the much newer bottling equipment used by Fleischman & Brandon – already available at nearby Kingston – since the senior Reidlinger remained in business at Silver City.

The Hillsboro Bottling Works appears on the 1893 Sanborn map (shown as “Soda Wks.”). The plant was located behind the saloon and billiard hall in the center of Block 34 (Figure 2-6). The saloon faced W. Main, and the block was between 1st and 2nd Avenues. The street behind the bottling works was noted as “not defined” on the map. Although the small building was still shown on the 1898 map, it was not labeled – suggesting that Reidlinger was not succeeded by another bottler.

Born in 1837, Reidlinger had come to Silver City from Albuquerque ca. 1882 and advertised his bottling works in the *Silver City Enterprise* at least as early as April 20, 1883 (Wood 1998:[74]). Reidlinger operated his “Soda Water Factory” – shown on the 1886 Sanborn map – at the corner of Texas and San Vicente until at least August of 1896. He retained at least some connection with the Black Range. On August 23, 1895, Reidlinger

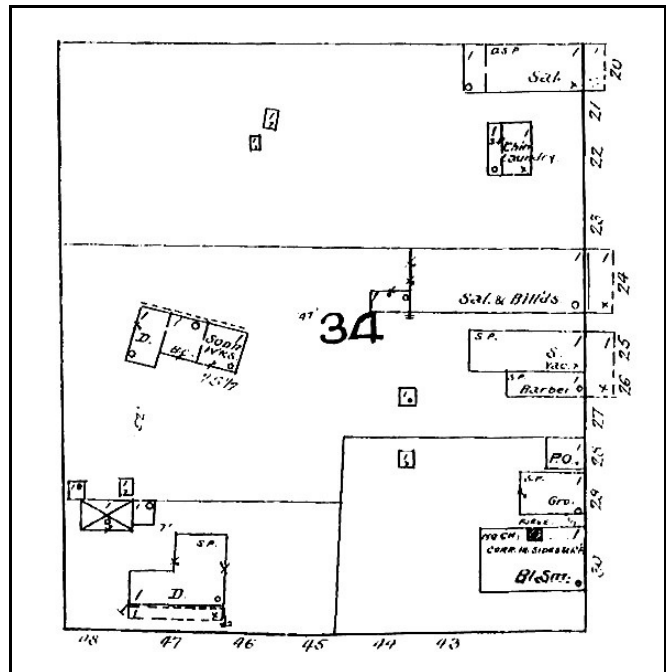


Figure 2-6 – Soda Works at Hillsboro (Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1893)

advertised (with *no* sons included in the ad) in the *Sierra Count Advocate* that he was a “Dealer in all kinds of Soda Water” and that “Orders from Sierra County [were] solicited” (Figure 2-7) Jacob Reidlinger died in 1911.

As noted above, the Reidlinger ads continued in the *Sierra County Advocate* until late April of 1893. Since 1893 was the year of the Silver Panic and a major depression that especially affected mines, business at Hillsboro had probably dropped drastically. At that point, Jake, Jr., apparently closed the business and returned to Silver City to work with his father. The *Enterprise* (8/10/1897) reported in 1897 that Jake, Jr., was departing to “Torreon, Mexico, where he will work in a large bottling plant at good wages. He is experienced in this kind of work.” Jake, Sr., and his younger son, P.J., remained at Silver City. For a look at all the bottlers, see Table 2-1.

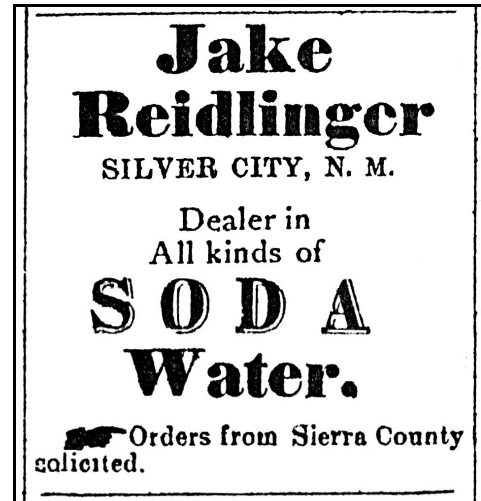


Figure 2-7 – Ad from Reidlinger in the *Sierra County Advocate* (8/23/1895)

A Legacy in Glass

The final chapter, however, was written long after all of the bottlers had died, much of the Black Range had become ghost towns, and all of the bottling plants had long since collapsed. At least one of these bottling firms left a legacy in glass – Hutchinson soda bottles. Soda bottlers from the late 19th century identified their products in three ways. First, the cases or wooden boxes in which the bottles were carried usually had the bottlers’ names either stamped or burned into the wood – a clear identification.

The other two forms of designation were found on the bottles, themselves. The cheapest method was to affix paper labels to the bottles with glue. This, of course, while relatively inexpensive, was messy and required an extra step in the preparation of the final product – the bottled soda. It also required labels. To look professional, these had to be ordered from a label maker in the East and stored. Alternatively, they could be printed at the local newspaper office and cut into appropriate sizes with scissors.

Table 2-1 – Black Range Soda Bottlers

Bottler	Location	Date Range
T.L. Reber	Robinson	1882-1883
T.L. Reber	Hillsboro	1883
E.J. Ryan	Hillsboro?	1883
L.P. Johnson	Chloride	1884
E.J. Ryan	Lake Valley	1884-1886
E.J. Ryan	Hillsboro	1886
Charles Lerr	Hillsboro	1886-1887
E.J. Ryan	Lake Valley	1887
Unknown (no one?)	Hillsboro? (anywhere?)	1887-1888
Fleishman & Brandon	Kingston	1888-1889
Jake Reidlinger	Hillsboro	1891-1893

Many New Mexico bottlers opted for the simpler but more expensive means of embossed labeling. Embossing is a process that began by at least 1812, whereby letters, numbers, and/or pictures are engraved into the metal of the glass mold to leave a protruding impression on the side or base of the bottle. These raised letters were seen (and felt) by anyone drinking or handling the bottle of soda. Unlike the paper label, embossing did not wash off with cleaning or cooling in ice and did not wear off with handling. Embossing, however, could only be done during the manufacturing process; it was permanent. Of course, a few bottlers used no identification on their bottles at all – but these were distinct exceptions.

This brings us to soda bottles in the Black Range – and T.L. Reber. To date, local/regional archaeologists and collectors have discovered four separate Hutchinson-style bottles embossed with Reber’s name. One, embossed “SANTA FE,” could not have been one of the Black Range bottles (see Figure 1-28, Part I). Another used manufacturing techniques that also place its use at a later date (see Figure 1-40, Part I). Of the two remaining bottles, one is embossed “REBER” in an arch with “N.M.” below it in a round plate on the front. The other is

identical but lacks the “N.M.” designation. Although we have not been able to trace the exact provenience, tradition suggests that the bottle with “N.M.” was found in the Black Range. This may have been the bottle used by Reber at Robinson and Hillsboro in 1882 and 1883 (Figure 2-8), although it was more likely used during the pre-El Paso period (see discussion in Part I).

No one has yet discovered a bottle embossed with the name of E.J. Ryan. The immediate reaction to this lack of bottles is to believe that Ryan only used generic Hutchinson bottles with paper labels. But the picture may be bigger than that. If Ryan bought out Reber, he may have inherited Reber’s bottles in the process – and undoubtedly used them until they all wore out. The containers formed the single greatest cost item in bottling. Bottles broke, wore out to the point where they would no longer seal, and were discarded by customers. In fact, Ryan may have only bought a new bottling outfit in 1886 because he was running out of bottles and decided to replace and replenish everything.

New Mexico Hutchinson bottles are almost all scarce or rare. Virtually all the bottlers used the containers until they completely wore out. Only one or two of each Reber bottle has been found, and only three of the ones described below. The absence of a Ryan bottle may just mean that we have not found one yet.

On the other hand, we may actually *have* examples of the Ryan bottles. “Black Range Lodge,” an article in *New Mexico Magazine* (Groves 2007:40-43) described what has become known as the “Black Range Hutch.” Pete Fust, co-owner of the Black Range Lodge at Kingston at that time, discovered the bottle while digging a trench with his backhoe. Based on the article and photo, the New Mexico Historical Bottle Society rented the Lodge for its annual “bottle dig.”

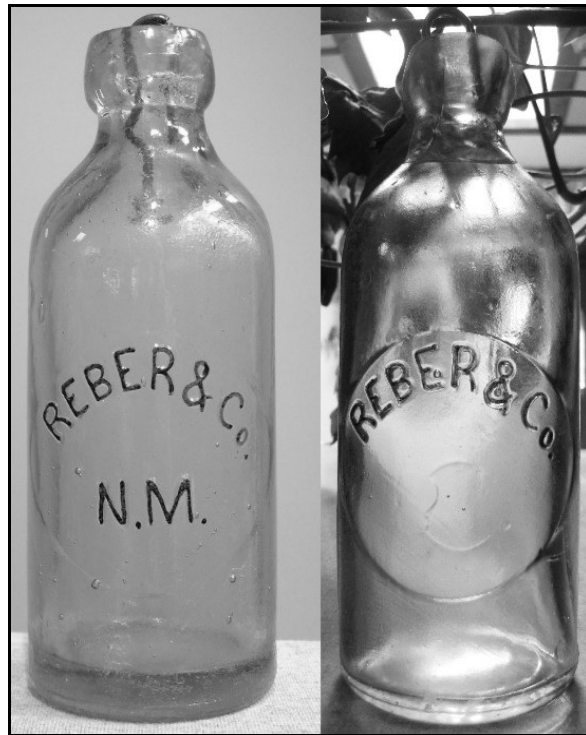


Figure 2-8 – Two Hutchinson bottles used by Reber – one possibly used during his Black Range period (Lynn Loomis collection)

The Hutchinson bottle found by Fust and two more that have been discovered since, are all embossed “BLACK, RANGE, SODA CO.” in an arch with “NEW MEXICO” in an inverted arch below it – all in a round plate on the front of the bottle (Figure 2-9). The bottle had an applied finish (Figure 2-10). Two of the three known bottles were found at Kingston. The logical conclusion is that the Black Range Soda Co. was operated by Leopold Fleishman and Archie C. Brandon – during 1888 and 1889.

This identification, however, may be what mystery fans call a “red herring” – evidence that is misleading. Two other bits of information are important. First, bottlers in the Black Range, and even those as far away as Silver City, advertised their abilities to sell sodas throughout the Black Range. Thus, anyone’s bottle could be found anywhere in the area. Second, Fleishman & Brandon called their plant the Kingston Bottling Works, a name inconsistent with the Black Range Soda Co. on the bottles.



Figure 2-9 – Bottle from the Black Range Soda Co., known to collectors as the Black Range Hutch (Zang Wood collection)



Figure 2-10 – Finish on a Black Range Soda Co. bottle (Zang Wood collection)

There is one other virtually unrecognized possibility – L.P.

Johnson of Chloride. Because we

have only discovered a single reference to Johnson, it is

tempting to disregard him. We only know that he was in the process of opening a soda factory at Chloride in March 1884.

The proximity of Robinson and Chloride (see Figure 2-1) makes

Johnson the most likely candidate as the buyer of Reber’s

Robinson soda equipment. This tiny bit of information and

speculation is all we have. Johnson may have gone the way of

most small businesses, unable to make it in the long – or even

short – run. However, he may have remained in business for a

decade – without any mention that we have found in the *Black*

Range. He cannot be eliminated just because we have little knowledge.

Although Reidlinger is a contender, he, too, is unlikely for two reasons. First, he advertised his plant as the Hillsboro Bottling Works, so the name “Black Range Soda Co.” would not make any sense. Second, the manufacturing technique used to make the bottle was rarely still used in the 1890s. Of the five known bottlers in the Black Range, L.P. Johnson appears to be the most likely candidate as the user of the Black Range Hutch. As Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote, “When you have eliminated all which is impossible, then whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.”

Of course, many mysteries remain in the Black Range. We still have blank spots in our knowledge, especially for the 1887-1888 and 1889-1891 periods – and we have not found a bottle made for Fleishman & Brandon. Reidlinger used a very rare embossed Hutchinson bottle at Silver City, but it is unlikely that his son would have continued to use the same bottle in the Black Range. However, no Reidlinger bottle with Hillsboro embossing has been found – at least not yet.

As in Silver City, each bottler may only have placed a single, initial order for embossed bottles – then filled anything he could get his hands on. That behavior would explain the scarcity of bottles in the area. But, the search is never over. Just a short time ago, no one had heard of the Black Range Hutch. New discoveries will provide fresh answers. History is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle with most of the pieces missing – and we take great joy in discovering every piece!

The California Brewery

According to Kiser (2009) Frank Kleiner opened the California Brewery at Kingston, New Mexico, in 1883. Two years later, the Sierra County Advocate (1/10/1885) featured a short blurb on Williams & Kleiner (possibly Wilson & Kleiner – the edition was blurry), operators of the California Brewery on N. Main St. at Kingston. The pair advertised themselves as “Wholesale & Retail Dealers in Bottled and Keg Beer.” Although Kiser claimed 1899 as he final year for the brewery, Van Wieren (1995:214) placed Frank Kleiner as a brewer at Kingston from 1888 to 1890.

The January 18, 1890, issue of the Las Vegas Daily Optic noted that “Frank Kleiner is re-painting and re-papering the Brewery saloon at Kingston and otherwise repairing it.” A

mention on August 2, 1891, in the Santa Fe Weekly Sun, however, only mentioned Frank Kleiner along with William Burns in connection with shipping 20 tons of high grade ore from the “famous Brush Heap” – a mine near Kingston.

According to Greever (2013), the brewery used at least two types of tokens – worth 12 ½ ¢. Each was minted with



Figure 2-11 – California Brewery token (Greever 2013)

“GOOD FOR (arch) / 12 ½ ¢ / CALIFORNIA / BREWERY / IN (all horizontal / TRADE (inverted arch)” (Figure 2-11). Although the town and state do not appear on the tokens, Greever attributed them both to Kingston, New Mexico (probably after Kiser 2009).

Based on the above information, it is likely that Frank Kleiner and a partner – named Williams or Wilson – opened the California Brewery ca. 1883. The partner may have been silent – i.e., he furnished the capital, while Kleiner ran the operation. At some point, Kleiner also opened the Brewery Saloon. The term Brewery Saloon was fairly common (e.g., there was also one at Deming, New Mexico, during the same period). It indicated that the saloon sold beer made at the local brewery. At some point, Kleiner’s partner apparently left the firm, and Kleiner continued until ca. 1890. The brewery almost certainly used the typical 26-ounce “quart” export beer bottles with paper labels – the standard in the West.

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