

## Wrapping Up the Research



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## Wrapping it All Up

One of the most difficult things about putting together a book that combines three studies is tying them all together. One of the “rules” of writing is having a thesis statement or an overarching theme. The task is quite simple with the last two sections, since they are geographically connected as well as centered on the bottling industry.

The main connection, of course, revolves around a single couple – Theodore L. Reber and his wife, Rebecca. These two clearly deserve the appellation of pioneers. One editor called Reber “the perambulating soda bottler” – a title that fits well. Reber claimed the start of fifty bottling plants – and our research suggests that he may have actually initiated that many. The sheer volume is almost unsettling.

Reber opened his initial bottling operation at Las Vegas, New Mexico, in 1879 – at the age of 41. Considering that New Mexico was a wild frontier at that time, the accomplishment was even more impressive. His final solidly researched bottling venue was at Estancia, New Mexico, in 1904. By this time, Reber was 66 and had attained stardom among bottling apparatus salesmen in just 25 years. The man’s energy was astounding.

Silver City was Reber’s second venue, with the Black Range just two years later. This pattern had far-reaching consequences. In most of Reber’s venues, he began an unbroken chain of soda bottlers that continued until the consolidations during the mid-20th century that undermined most of the small, local bottlers and drove them out of business. That makes Reber the link between a huge number of the bottlers in New Mexico.

Although solid evidence is lacking, we are convinced that Reber actually started *most* of the soda bottling in New Mexico. We know, for example, that he and Rebecca were responsible for the first plants in El Paso, Texas, Alamogordo, Roswell, Silver City, and many other venues. Numerous other towns have what we have come to know as Reber “signatures” – they were railroad or mining centers with a legacy of Hutchinson bottles. He may have begun all the bottling plants that eventually used Hutchinson bottles within the state boundary. We present this entire volume as a tribute to an incredible pioneer.