

Chapter 4 Milk Bottle Terminology, Descriptions, and Photographs

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Descriptions

Descriptions of bottles generally require some explanations. As with all specialties, the study of bottles has its own set of nomenclature (Figure 4-1).

Bore or throat – the inside diameter of the neck

Rim or Lip – the extreme upper surface

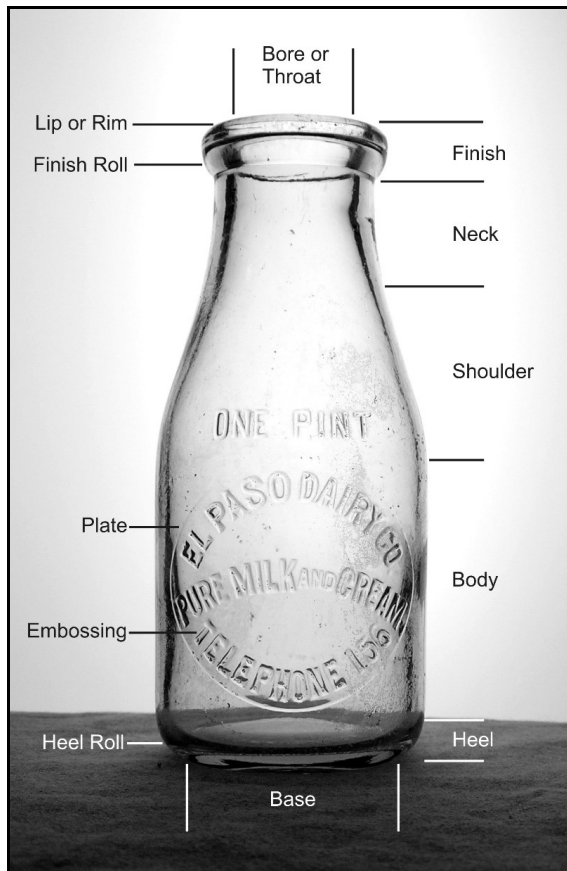


Figure 4-1 – Terminology

finish that “rolls” to the neck of the bottle

Neck – the usually narrow area between the shoulder and the finish

Shoulder – the change in slope where the body begins to narrow to form the neck

Body – the central section of the bottle, usually containing embossed, paper, or pyroglazed labels

Heel – the lower section of the body, just above the base

Heel Roll – the part of the heel that “rolls” under the body to the base

Base – the very bottom of the bottle – where it sits on the table

Resting point – the part of the base that actually makes contact with the table

Embossing – raised glass letters, pictures, or designs that are molding into the glass

Plate, plate mold, or slug plate – separate plate with embossed message – on body or neck

Finish – the final, upper section of the bottle, sometimes including part or all of the neck

Finish roll – the lower part of the common sense

The finish received its name because it was the last part of the bottle to be completed in the hand-made or mouth-blown manufacturing process. In milk bottles, the most common finish is the cap-seat of common sense finish (see Chapter 3 for description and more on finishes).

Wherever possible, I have used descriptive terms found in Jones and Sullivan (1989), such as ribs to describe embossed, rounded ridges, although I have continued to use spelling common to the United States (e.g. mold rather than mould).

Although I have attempted to be as comprehensive as possible, it is important to note that the list of bottles in this volume is incomplete. I know of at least two embossed milk bottles from Alamogordo that do not appear here because I have not yet seen or photographed them. One is from Bass dairy; the other is, according to the collector who owns it “not from there [Bass Dairy].” It is very likely that other local dairies bought embossed bottles at least once, and examples of these may still exist. In addition, some dairies etched their names on bottles. Although I have not seen examples from Otero County, some of these are probably still in existence as well.

Descriptions Within the Text

Each bottle listed in the text is described using the same format. At the top of each bottle description is a brief discussion that highlights the container’s differences from preceding and/or following bottles. If certain sections (e.g. neck or heel) are excluded in a given description, it is because they contain no labeling or descriptive design. If more than one size bottle is described or if the bottle type contains minor variations, those are listed in a “Variations” section following the descriptions.

Embossing, etching, or ACL labeling is presented in either capitals or mixed letters as it appears on the bottle or printed label. Details (such as italics, arches, upwardly slanted labels, etc.) follow the lettering in parentheses (.). A line change is indicated by a slash (/) between words (e.g. THIS BOTTLE / TO BE RETURNED means the second set of words appear below the first set of words).

Method of Manufacture: Thus far, only bottles made by machine have been identified as being used by Otero County dairies. I will be surprised to find any other marked manufacturing styles here.

Color: This refers only to the color of the glass (e.g. green, colorless, or amethyst), not to labeling colors. Glass that contains no apparent pigmentation is referred to as colorless, not clear. The word, clear, is a very ambiguous term. The word, colorless, is much more (pardon the expression) clear. Virtually all but the earliest milk bottles and some specialty bottles were colorless. Manganese-bearing glass is variously described in the literature as purple, solarized amethyst, or SCA (sun-colored amethyst). I use the word, amethyst to cover all minor variations.

Size (in cm.): Size is given in centimeters and always includes height (h) and diameter (d) at center body. In most cases, body diameter is the mean diameter of a bottle. Although milk bottles appear to be circular in cross-section, they are usually slightly oval. Even relatively new bottles can vary in diametric measurement by as much as 0.1 cm., and older containers sometimes vary by more than 0.2 cm. If other diametric measurements are significant, they are also listed.

Bore diameter and diameter at cap seat are both important in milk bottles as there are several standardized sizes of ligueous disks (and therefore, bottles to accommodate them). Prior to standardization, there was even greater variation. Both height and diameter tend to vary among individual containers that were blown into a two-piece mold. Measurements were maintained at a closer tolerance with the advent of machine-made containers.

Primary Labeling Style: Labeling falls into three categories: embossed, etched, or pyroglazed. Embossing is raised lettering created during the molding process. Etching was usually accomplished by employees of the individual dairy with a hand tool and is generally quite crude. Pyroglazing, also known as Applied Color Lettering (ACL), is the application of heated enamel to the glass surface through a silk screen. Both embossed and pyroglazed labels appear on the few Alamogordo bottles of which I am aware, although etched bottles may have existed.

Finish: All known Alamogordo milk bottles were manufactured with cap seat finishes, except the half-gallon bottle ordered by the City Dairy in 1962. These had Econopour finishes with cap seats (see Chapter 3 for explanations of the terms).

Capacity: Capacity is measured in generally accepted units (i.e. pints, quarts, etc.) or fluid ounces. Where such information was included as a part of the bottle labeling, it is reported as *x* pint/quart (e.g. ½ pint) or *x* oz. (e.g. 10 oz.). Except where sizes were obvious (e.g. quarts or pints), when circumstances allowed, bottles with no content information on the label were filled with water to approximately 1.5 inches below the rim and then poured into a measuring cup. These were reported as ca. *x* oz. (e.g. ca. 10 oz.). Bottles I was unable to measure and which contained no content information were reported as ca. *x* oz. (est.) [e.g. ca. 10 oz. (est)].

Overall Bottle Design: This section describes the overall shape of the bottle (usually cylindrical) along with general embossed designs, such as swirls, vertical ropes, ribs, constricted waists, etc.

Front Description The sections below refer to the obverse or front side of the bottle. This generally contains the main labeling area.

Neck: Neck area labels or designs are described here.

Neck/Shoulder: Sometimes, because of the shape of the shoulder, location of the label, or label size, it is unclear whether a label is actually on the shoulder or the neck. In these cases, the designation, neck/shoulder, is appropriate.

Shoulder: Shoulder area labels or designs are described here. On milk bottles – especially ones that were round in cross-section – made prior to ca. 1950, the shoulder was the most common area for volume information, although volume information moved to the heel on square milk bottles.

Body: Labels or designs located on the body (usually the primary labeling area) are described here.

Heel: Information, such as manufacturer's marks, mold numbers, and words like "SEALED" appear here.

Back Description The sections below refer to the reverse of back side of the bottle.

Neck: Same as front description.

Neck/Shoulder: Same as front description.

Shoulder: Same as front description.

Body: Same as front description.

Heel: Same as front description.

Base: Important dating information such as manufacturer's marks, patent dates, year of manufacture, or even initials of the dairy or dairy owner were frequently embossed on the base.

Manufacturer: Where known, the manufacturer is listed, along with the dates (in parentheses) during which the mark appearing on the bottle was used. Dates reflect the latest information in Bottle Research Group files.

Dating: The approximate dating period for the bottle or the exact date of manufacture – when known – appears in brackets (e.g. [1921-1933] or [1945]). Wherever pertinent, an explanation of how the dating was derived follows. In Alamogordo most labeled milk bottles were probably only ordered once.

Collection(s): This section contains names of collectors and/or collections where samples were obtained.

Bottle descriptions follow the histories of the companies that filled them. For help in cross-referencing, a list of dairies, owners/managers, and known dates of operation is provided in Appendix A.

Photographs

These photographs come from a variety of sources, including eBay, other internet sources, and photos others have sent me, although most come from my own collection. Because of lighting, age, and other considerations, these photos vary in quality. Because they provide increased clarity in most cases, I have presented photos in black-and-white formats. If color is of vital interest (e.g., in the bichrome milk bottle used by City Dairy), I have used color photos.

Photos were selected because of the quality of each bottle's details or historical veracity, rather than for overall photo quality – although I have tried to also select the best ones available. Photos of my collection, taken by me, will not carry citations. If a photo came from another collection, it is labeled just below the picture with the collector's name or name of the specific collection (for archaeological collections or museums). Photographers sent to me by others will say "Courtesy of . . ."

Sources

Jones, Olive and Catherine Sullivan

1989 *The Parks Canada Glass Glossary for the Description of Containers, Tableware, Flat Glass, and Closures*. Parks Canada, Ottawa.