

Milk Bottles and the El Paso Dairy Industry



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Preface

Details about my involvement with bottles have been published in other venues, so I will only summarize my journey here. I was a late bloomer due at least in part to 20 years of alcoholism from ages 13 to 33. My recovery was speedy, and it fed me to devote years to personal growth – culminating in my entry into college at the age of 44.

I never intended to devote my life to bottle research. Both my BA and MA degrees were in sociology, although I spent a great deal of time in the field of archaeology, actually double majoring in my BA. However, I was involved in lithics (the study of flaked stone tools) in prehistoric archaeology, when a series of events pushed me into bottle research in historical archaeology.

Once the die was cast, I began research on El Paso soda bottles because I had been able to find so little information when I researched my first two bottle reports with Wanda Olszewski (Lockhart & Olszeswski 1993; 1994; 1995). For the first few years of my research, I was only interested in the El Paso area (where I lived at the time) and in soft drink bottles – and I began developing my own collection. At some point, I realized that I needed to expand my data to include other El Paso bottles, although I limited my collecting to soda containers.

John Gross was responsible for my interest in milk bottles. John used to work estate sales, and he sold bottles and many other items out of his garage on the East side of El Paso. I became a regular customer, digging ever deeper into his vast holdings. Eventually, I tried photographing his collection of El Paso milk bottles, which he claimed was the best collection of its type anywhere. When John decided to sell the collection, he gave me first option to buy, and I took it. I have since more than doubled the size of the collection.

At some point, I realized that I wanted to create histories and bottle chronologies for all of the bottle-related industries of El Paso, Southern New Mexico, and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. I began with the soda bottling industry of El Paso in 2000 (revised in 2010) online, then added the bottling industry in Alamogordo and the dairy industry in Otero County – both New Mexico – in 2001 (both revised in 2011). I have followed those with studies on Socorro and Deming soda bottles and the El Paso brewing industry (Lockhart 2005; 2009; 2010; 2011a; 2011b).

Because my wife, Wanda Wakkinen, and I now live in a motor home, my time frame has advanced. We plan to retire in the summer of 2015, and I will lose my office space at the Alamogordo Campus of New Mexico State University at that time – where I currently store my remaining El Paso collections. That means I must photograph and publish books while the collections are available. This book is the current culmination of this plan, and I intend to publish the final El Paso study – on the drug stores, prescription bottles, and “other” bottles in 2015. As usual, this study is weighted toward the bottles rather than the operation of the dairies and related information.

Bill Lockhart

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