

Bottles on the Border:
The History and Bottles of the Soft Drink Industry
in El Paso, Texas, 1881-2000



© Bill Lockhart 2010

[Revised Edition – Originally Published Online in 2000]

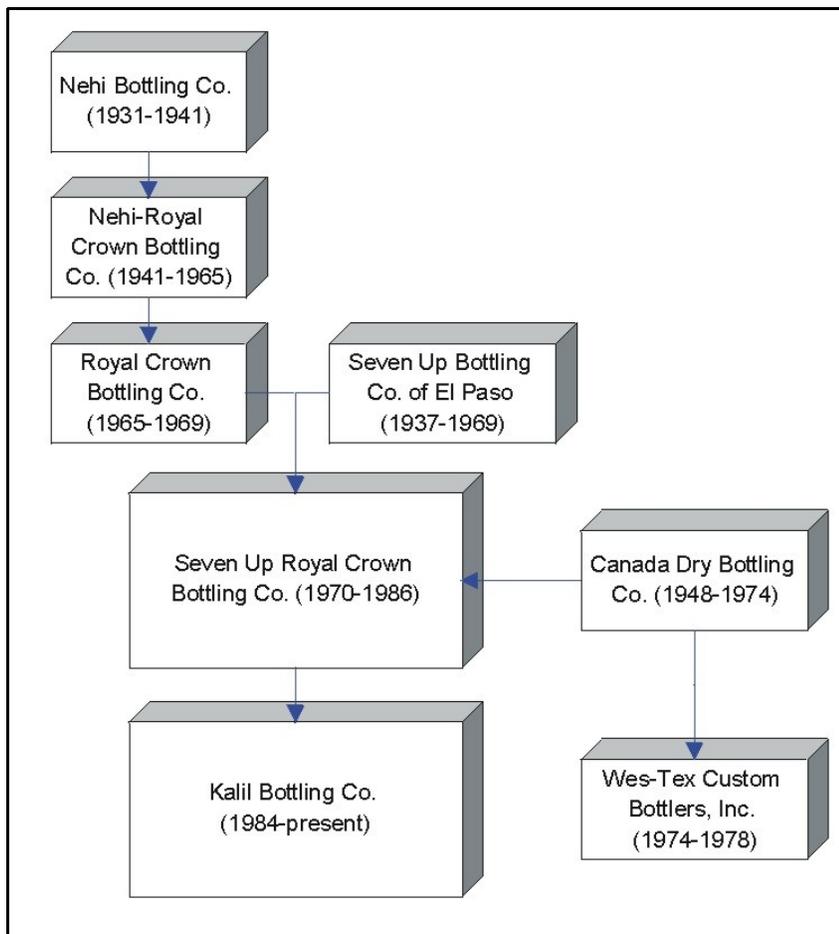
Chapter 10a

Chapter 10a

Nehi Bottling Co., Nehi-Royal Crown Bottling Co., and Royal Crown Bottling Co.

Bill Lockhart

The Nehi Bottling Co. arrived at El Paso in 1931. A decade later, the owners renamed the company Nehi-Royal Crown to reflect its popular cola drink. The name, Nehi, was dropped in favor of its younger, still more popular Royal Crown Cola in 1965. In 1970 the company merged with The Seven-Up Bottling Co. of El Paso (in business in El Paso since 1937) to join forces against the two giants of the industry, Coke (Magnolia Coca-Cola Co.) and Pepsi (Woodlawn Bottling Co.), who were engulfing the sales market. The growing company bought out the Canada Dry Bottling Co. that had been in business since 1948. The triple company was in turn swallowed by a newcomer to El Paso, Kalil Bottling Co. of Tucson, Arizona, the firm that continues to distribute products from all three sources in 2010.



Nehi Bottling Co. (1931-1941)

History

Nehi originated with the Chero-Cola Co., started in Columbus, Georgia, by Claude A. Hatcher in 1912. Twelve years later, in 1924, the company initiated Nehi flavors and became the Nehi Corp. soon afterward (Riley 1958:264). The El Paso plant, a subsidiary of the Nehi Bottling Co. of Phoenix, Arizona, opened at 1916 Myrtle Ave. in April 1931, under the direction of Rhea R. Faulkner. The proprietor of the firm, Joseph S. Pittman, was a resident of Phoenix and owned the Nehi bottling plant in that city (EPCD 1931; U. S. Census of Manufacturers 1931). Pittman started the Nehi Bottling Co. at 14 N. 14th St. in Phoenix in 1929. He was both owner and manager of the Phoenix plant and listed the company as “bottlers of Quality beverages” (Phoenix, Arizona, City Directory 1929-1930).

In 1931, the El Paso Nehi plant employed eleven workers (including both plant employees and drivers) during the hot summer months but decreased its staff to seven employees during the slack, colder months. Plant workers generally labored for a four-day week unless extra production was necessary to maintain the flow of product to the route drivers. The drivers, however, delivered six days per week during the peak season. The company utilized four one-and-one-half-ton trucks to deliver a total of 24,058 cases of soda from April to December along with 4,498 cases of still (non-carbonated) beverages. Both still and carbonated beverages wholesaled at 80¢ per case and were sold in nine-ounce containers (U.S. Census of Manufacturers 1931).

Faulkner was replaced by Sidney O. Austin, who managed the El Paso operation in 1933 and 1934 and was followed by Homer T. Archer in 1935. Austin became a salesman for the Harry Mitchell Brewing Co. after he left Nehi but moved from El Paso in 1936. Archer, on the other hand, had worked for Nehi from its inception in 1931 and remained as foreman in 1936, after his short stint as manager. Archer continued to serve as foreman until 1939, after which he no longer appeared in the city directories (EPCD 1931-1939).

Prohibition ended in 1933, and soft drink sales fell due to the combination of increased beer drinking and the continuing influence of the Great Depression. By 1933, sales had decreased to 18,500 cases per year (a 38.5% drop), and the company correspondingly employed

less workers than in 1931 – ten during peak periods with a decrease to only four during the winter. Not only were sales lower, but Nehi used smaller, seven-ounce bottles which sold for 70¢ per case, a price more in line with the smaller bottlers in the city (U.S. Census of Manufacturers 1933).

To help make ends meet, Nehi began distributing Coors beer on September 16, 1933, the day after Prohibition vanished, and beer sales were again legal in El Paso. Coors was advertised by S.O. Austin, and Nehi received a half-railroad-carload by the morning of the 16th (EPT 9/15/1933, 9/16/1933). Interestingly, the beer distributorship was listed in the name of the manager rather than under Nehi Bottling Co., although it was handled from 1916 Myrtle Ave. Both Austin and Archer served as Coors distributors, but the company closed out beer sales after 1935. City directories only list Pittman from 1935 until the company changed its name in 1941. The plant was still listed as the Nehi Bottling Co. on the 1941 Sanborn map (Figure 10a-1). Names of local managers during that period are unknown (EPCD 1934-1940).

Bottles and Artifacts

Nehi Flavors

Nehi flavors were introduced in 1924 by the Chero Co. of Columbus, Georgia. Although Chero-Cola had once been a renowned drink, its popularity was eclipsed by the new flavors, and, in 1928, the company renamed itself the Nehi Corp. By the time Pittman started the Nehi Bottling Co. in El Paso (1931), Nehi flavors were already popular in much of the United States (Vaughn 1995a:30-31). Pittman used the same bottles interchangeably between the El Paso and Phoenix plants beginning as early as 1931.

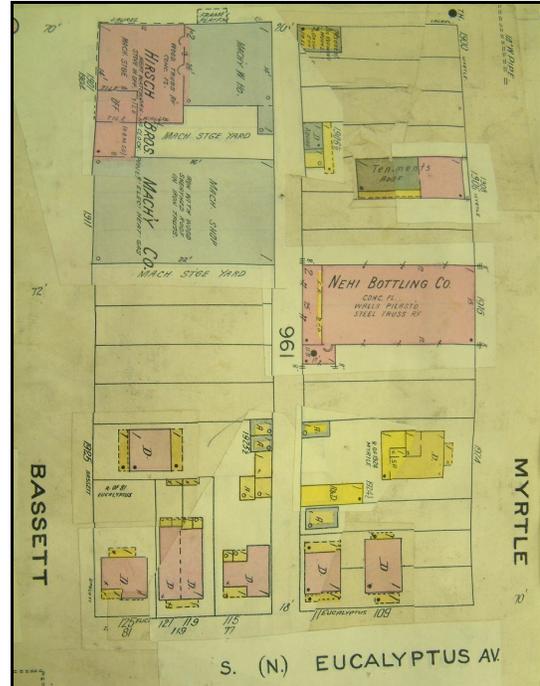


Figure 10a-1 – Nehi Bottling Co. (Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1941)

Nehi bottlers were offered a choice of two types of crown caps. One depicted a stockinged lady's leg complete with high-heeled shoe (the basis for the term "silk stocking" preferred by Nehi collectors to describe the bottles); the other a more demure Nehi logo above angled rays. It is currently unknown which cap was used in El Paso (personal communication from Michael M. Elling, February 20, 1997).

Embossed Bottles

The original bottle style used in Phoenix and El Paso was a specialty (proprietary) design that was unique to Nehi. Claud A. Sears applied for a patent on December 6, 1924, and received Design Patent No. 66,755 on March 3, 1925. The bottle became almost as well known for its shape as the Coke bottle (Figure 10a-2).

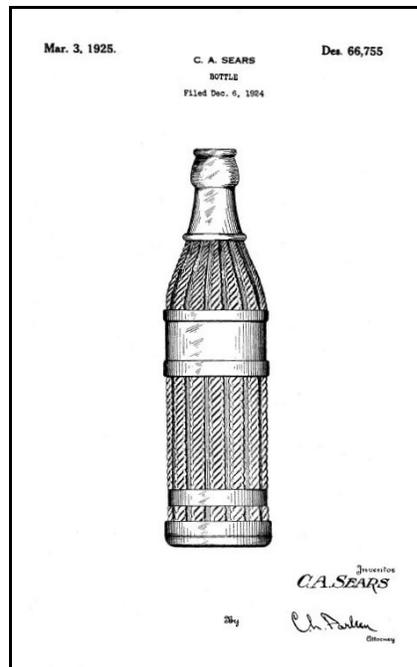


Figure 10a-2 – Patent for the Nehi “Silk-Stocking” bottle

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Colorless

Size (in cm.): 23.7 (h); 5.6 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: Embossed

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 9 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical with embossed vertical “ropes” on body and neck/shoulder – known to collectors as the “silk stocking design”¹ (Figure 10a-3)

Front Description

Neck: Embossed “ropes”

Shoulder: Embossed “ropes”

Body: Embossed - NEHI / BEVERAGES, with MINIMUM / CONTENTS on left side; 9 FLUID / OUNCES on the right

¹ According to Mike Elling, although the term “rope design” is used by some, the preferred designation is “silk stocking design. . . Nehiophiles never say rope” (personal communication).

Heel: Embossed - NEHI BOTTLING CO. / 5

Back Description

Neck: Embossed “ropes”

Shoulder: Embossed “ropes”

Body: Embossed NEHI / REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

Heel: Embossed PHOENIX - EL PASO / 22 I-in-an-oval-
superimposed-on-a-diamond 0

Base: Embossed - DESIGN / PAT'D / MAR. 3, 29

Manufacturer: Owens Illinois Glass Co. (1929-1954)

Dating: [1930] Containers of this design were obviously in use in 1929 but were not bottled in El Paso until after the company's starting date of 1931. They were replaced in parts of the country about 1939 by containers decorated with ACL labels, but some bottlers continued to use embossed bottles until the mid-1950s (Bates et al 1992a:185, N3-7; personal communication, Mike Elling). The codes on the bottle are contradictory (see section on Dating the Silk Stocking Bottle below).

Collection: Viola Salas Collection, Alamogordo.



Figure 10a-3 – Nehi “Silk-Stocking” bottle (Viola Salas collection)

Dating the Silk Stocking Bottle

The symbol on the heel clearly identifies the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. as the manufacturer of the bottle, but the accompanying codes are confusing. To the left of the logo is “22,” the designation for Plant 22 at San Francisco, California (1932-1937). The factory was part of the former Illinois-Pacific Coast Co., acquired by Owens-Illinois in April 1932. The factory number seems obvious, until we consider the date code.

The date code of “0” could equal either 1930 or 1940 – by 1950, the company had entirely made the transition to two-digit date codes. Since the bottles were introduced in 1928, Pittman had certainly used this style as his first bottles. Pittman claimed nine-ounce bottles in his report to the census in 1931, suggesting the silk-stocking bottle. Owens-Illinois advertised the bottles in its first catalog, published in December 1930 (Figure 10a-4). Thus, a 1930 date code is certainly possible.

Pittman had likely ordered his first bottles, embossed only with a Phoenix location, when he opened the Arizona plant in 1929 (possibly late 1928 – the first listing was in 1929)². The El Paso factory was first listed in 1931, and that was likely the correct year. When Pittman filled out the 1931 census form, he only reported from April to December. Forms from other companies and Pittman’s 1933 enumeration all included the entire year. Thus, Pittman almost certainly began production in April 1931.

Pittman almost certainly began construction of the building in 1930. He probably ordered the bottles in anticipation of the opening. In addition, he may have needed a reorder for the Phoenix plant. A 1930 order solved both problems.

A 1940 date seems less likely. Most of the country had switched to the ACL bottle by 1939-1940, and Pittman was apparently an early adopter. See the section below for a description of his 1939 ACL bottle. Although the “9” date code could technically equal 1929 or 1939, an ACL bottle could not have been made prior to 1934. Equally unlikely is a 1949 date; by at least 1947, the transition to two-digit date codes was complete. In addition, the first ACL bottle has the Good Housekeeping seal, found only on bottles made in the late 1930s-early 1940s. It makes no sense that Pittman would have ordered an ACL bottle in 1939, followed by an older-style embossed bottle in 1940.

The reason for this careful dating is that a 1930 date code could *not* have been used by Plant No. 22! Since the San Francisco factories could not have joined the Owens-Illinois group until 1932, the date code is two years too early. This is clearly a contradiction in the codes.



Figure 10a-4 – Nehi bottle (Owens-Illinois 1930:B17)

² Since directories were typically printed before mid-year, the listings could not reflect businesses that opened during the latter half of the year. Thus, any business listed in 1929 could have been opened as early as mid-1928.

The 1930 date fits too well to be ignored. In addition to the reasons outlined above, a 1930 date fits in the documented sequence of events (see Seven-Ounce Bottles below). Unfortunately, I recorded and photographed this bottle during the early years of my research. As a result, I did not know to look for modifications (drilling out, peening, over stamping) of the various codes. While I have no explanation at this point for *why* the “22” code was embossed on the bottle, it is reasonably certain that the 1930 date is correct.

When I posited the plant code being in error, Phil Perry, an Owens-Illinois employee, replied that he could “not believe that any mold shop would punch in a 2 digit plant code when that plant was not even in existence. . . . However, I could see them leaving an existing year code unchanged, especially if they were trying to get an old set of equipment quickly into production in a newly acquired facility.”

This suggests that a 1930 bottle *was* made, probably by an Owens-Illinois plant east of the Mississippi, and the molds were transferred to the San Francisco plant. Once the molds were at San Francisco, a new Plant No. 22 code was engraved, but, in the rush, the date code was not altered. Assuming this is correct, it almost certainly transpired during the latter part of 1932. Pittman probably placed a small order, and those may have been mostly used at the Phoenix plant.

Seven-Ounce Bottles

The Great Depression was a tough time – by virtually all reports. Sales at Nehi declined by 38.5% – apparently forcing Pittman to take drastic action. Part of that action has been documented throughout this book – using bottles until they completely wore out. The photo of the Viola Salas bottle – the only example I have ever seen – shows a *very* worn container.

The second tactic was the adoption of seven-ounce bottles. Pittman reported in 1933 that he sold seven-ounce bottles all year at a lower price than the nine-ounce bottles offered in 1931. According to Mike Elling, one of the foremost Nehi collectors, many Nehi bottlers adopted seven-ounce “silk-stocking” bottles to save money during the Great Depression and again during World War II. Thus, Pittman apparently joined the trend toward these smaller bottles.

However, I have never found a seven-ounce Nehi bottle with an El Paso designation. Of course, these were certainly used until they were completely unfillable, they are certainly rare. It is, however, possible that Pittman moved to a cheaper, generic bottle. These could have been obtained more cheaply at used bottle stores and would have been cheaper to buy from the glass houses. This would undoubtedly have been frowned on by the main office, so the smaller Nehi bottle is the more likely explanation.

ACL Bottles

Pittman adopted nine-ounce ACL bottles as soon as they were available in 1939. These had red-on-yellow front labels with NEHI in imitation three-dimensional letters. The bottles will be fully described in the section below on the Nehi-Royal Crown Bottling Co. – the period when most of these ACL bottles were used.

Two main markings identify these as being used during the Pittman era. First, the back label was lettered in yellow ACL: BOTTLE STERILIZED / BEFORE FILLING / (oval outline) with . . . d Appr / (star) / Good Houskeeping / Bureau / KEEPING . . . / (below oval) PROPERTY OF / NEHI BOTTLING CO. / EL PASO, . . . The ellipses indicate missing letters, where the only example I have seen had been fire damaged. Second, the base was embossed I-in-an-oval-superimposed-on-an-elongated-diamond / DESIGN / 23 PAT'D 9 / MAR. 3, 25. Plant No. 23 was located at Los Angeles, and the “9” indicated the year 1939. In addition, the heel was embossed 4455 G 6. This is an unusual Owens-Illinois mark (Figure 10a-5).



Figure 10a-5 – Unusual Owens-Illinois codes on Nehi bottle

Par-T-Pak

Par-T-Pak flavors had been introduced by Nehi in 1933, and the El Paso franchise may have begun carrying it soon thereafter (Riley 1958:266). Par-T-Pak was probably continuously offered by Nehi and the Nehi-Royal Crown Bottling Co. (see below) until it was advertised by the Nehi-Royal Crown in quart bottles by at least February 1951, with continuing ads until at least April 1954 (EPTD 2/1951; EPT 4/5/1953 B13:4; 4/25/1954 E11:2).

The El Paso branch initially used smaller containers, in generic bottles with paper labels. Par-T-Pak flavors included Orange Soda, Ginger Ale, Imitation Cherry Soda, Cola, and Root Beer. The drink was eventually available in ACL bottles.

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Forest Green

Size (in cm.): 24.6 (h); 6.7 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: Paper

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 12 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical with no embossing

Front Description

Shoulder: Horizontally rectangular, dark blue paper label with an olive green strip along its bottom edge. Entered on the label is PAR-T-PAK in white letters / Extra Dry (red - script) / GINGER ALE (white). Vertical ovals on each side of the label contain Good Housekeeping seal, serial no. 4897 (Figure 10a-6)

Body: Same color scheme with the addition of a smaller strip of dark blue below the olive green strip. The top blue area warns, EXCESSIVE STIRRING DESTROYS CARBONATION, followed by PAR-T-PAK / Extra Dry / GINGER ALE in the same configuration described above, but with the words, TRADE, below PAR and, MARK, below PAK. In the green area is printed, MINIMUM CONTENTS / 12 FLUID OUNCES / NEHI BOTTLING CO., El Paso, Tex. The final blue strip is labeled, A NEHI PRODUCT - LICENSED BY NEHI, INC. - COLUMBUS, GA.

Back Description

Shoulder: No label

Body: No label

Base: Embossed - 32E / 19 (Figure 10a-7)

Manufacturer: Unknown



Figure 10a-6 – Par-T-Pak bottle offered by the El Paso plant



Figure 10a-7 – Base of Par-T-Pak bottle

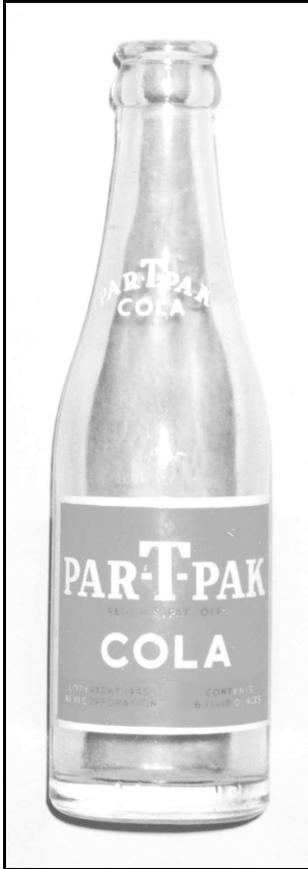


Figure 10a-8 – ACL Par-T-Pak Cola bottle (Willie Terrazas collection)

Dating: [1933-?] The “32A” on the base is probably a date code for 1932, although there is no way to determine the manufacturer. The American Bottle Co. made huge quantities of these 12-ounce generic bottles, with bases only embossed with codes like “N26” or “S-30” (for the Newark, Ohio, and Streator, Illinois, plants), stretching into the Owens-Illinois period (after 1929). These represented a period when generic bottles were popular (Lockhart et al. 2007:53). The Bottle Research Group has cataloged a few other letters – including at least one other E – that were in conjunction with “30” (1930) date codes. This may have been an extension of the codes used in the early days of the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. This could even be one of the last bottles made at the Evansville, Indiana, plant before it became idle.

Collection(s): Author’s collection.



Figure 10a-9 – ACL Par-T-Pak ginger ale bottle (eBay)

An ACL bottle with a complex label was produced in the late 1930s (cf Bates et al 1996a:P-2), but a simpler label followed at some point. The Par-T-Pak cola drink appears to have been made with a white-on-red ACL label, although ginger ale has a slightly more complex label black-on-white and white-on-brown (Figures 10a-8 & 10a-9). It is unlikely that colas – which would compete with the firm’s best selling Royal Crown Cola – were sold in El Paso.

Royal Crown Cola

Royal Crown Cola was introduced to a limited audience in mid-1934 but was not fully available to the public until the following year. The new cola soon came to dominate the Nehi product line. The initial bottles appear to have been produced with paper labels that were similar to the ACL labels that followed in 1936 (Vaughn 1995a:28-31).

Although later bottles were made with ACL neck designs, the technology was not sufficiently advanced to produce ACL on the early ones. It was not until ca. 1937 that ACL machinery was able to apply the enamel to two curves in the glass at the same time, although the 1937 bottle used at El Paso did not yet use this technology. Thus, the earliest two logos were embossed or debossed on the bottle's shoulder (Figures 10a-10 & 10a-11).

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Aqua

Size (in cm.): 24.1 (h); 6.4 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: Yellow and Red ACL

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 12 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical

Front Description

Neck/shoulder: Debossed - RC enclosed by a trapezoid topped by a star³

Body: A yellow square enclosed a depiction of four yellow pyramids on a yellow sand foreground with a red sky background. The words ROYAL CROWN were emblazoned in yellow across the red sky, followed by REG. U.S. PAT. OFF., then a star in the bottle's aqua color stenciled through the red background. The initials RC (yellow) appeared on an aqua background between the two center pyramids followed on the yellow foreground by COLA in red lettering. The words MINIMUM CONTENTS 12 FLUID OUNCES appeared in red below COLA.

Heel: Embossed - PROPERTY OF / 4302-G 17



Figure 10a-10 – ACL Royal Crown Cola bottle with debossed shoulder label



Figure 10a-11 – Closeup of debossed shoulder label

³ Bates, et al. (1996a:R-11), show that a similar bottle had the RC embossed within a triangle. The label was larger and had a star enameled over the RC in the body front label. It is doubtful that this variation was ever used in El Paso.

Back Description

Neck/Shoulder: Same as front

Body: Yellow ACL - An oval enclosed a message, Tested and Approved / {star} / Serial No. 4897 / by / Good Housekeeping / Bureau / Conducted by / Good Housekeeping Magazine. Below that was EVERY BOTTLE STERILIZED / EL PASO - TEXAS

Heel: Embossed - NEHI BOTTLING CO. / CONT. 12 FL. OZS.

Base: Embossed - 23 I-in-an-oval-superimposed-on-an-elongated diamond 7

Manufacturer: Owens Illinois Glass Co. (1929-1654)

Dating: [1937-ca. 1940] The Nehi Corporation first introduced Royal Crown Cola in 1935, but this bottle, probably the earliest ACL, was made in 1937. The second variation (described below) was probably made a year or two later. Michael Elling (personal communication) noted that the bottles with embossed/debossed shoulder label was used from 1935-1939. He further claimed that paper-label bottles were used during the same period of time. Only the larger, more successful bottlers used the ACL bottles at that time.

Collection(s): Willie F. Terrazas collection; author's collection.

Variations:

1. Described above.
2. This second example had the RC/trapezoid/star embossed instead of debossed (Figures 10a-12 & 10a-13). The major change in the front body label was the addition of COPYRIGHT 1936 / BY NEHI, INC. in the the lower left corner and NET CONTENTS / 12 FLUID OUNCES to the right – replacing the volume information in the lower center of the earlier bottle. The front heel was embossed NEHI BOTTLING CO. / CONT. 12 FL. OZS. with PROPERTY OF / 4302-G on the back heel. On the back label, EVERY BOTTLE STERILIZED is above the Good Housekeeping seal with CONTAINS COLA BLEND / WITH NATURAL FLAVORS / CANE SUGAR /

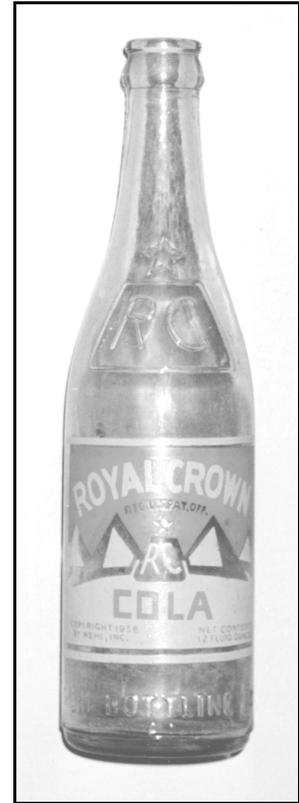


Figure 10a-12 – ACL RC Cola bottle with embossed shoulder label



Figure 10a-13 – Closeup of embossed shoulder label (Willie Terrazas collection)

CARBONATED WATER / AND CARAMEL / _____ / EL PASO - TEXAS below it.

The base was embossed 23 {I-in-an-oval-with-elongated-diamond 8. Factory 23 of the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. was located at Los Angeles, and the “8” indicates 1938.

3. A second example of the embossed neck-shoulder label was virtually identical, except that the line between the ingredients and the city/state was moved upward between the Good Housekeeping seal and the contents information. The base was embossed “LGW / 2,” the logo of the Laurens Glass Works. Unfortunately, Laurens was inconsistent in its use of date codes.

Royal Crown – ACL Shoulder Label

These bottles were used during the last years of the Nehi Bottling Co. An ad from the June 9, 1939, *El Paso Times* shows a bottle with ROYAL CROWN in an arch above a trapezoid surrounding the initials RC (Figure 10a-14). According to Mike Elling, “The trapezoid at the neck was developed early in 1939, and then was considered redundant to that of the main label, and the terms ROYAL CROWN were finalized for continued use.” It is thus no surprise that the only example I have found is just like the one in the ad – including the Good Housekeeping seal – except for the lack of the trapezoid on the shoulder (Figure 10a-15). The ads were obviously created and circulated before decision was made to abort the trapezoid.



Figure 10a-14 – Ad for RC bottle with ACL shoulder label (*El Paso Times* 6/9/1939)

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Aqua

Size (in cm.): 24.2 (h); 6.5 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: Yellow and Red ACL

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 12 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical

Front Description

Shoulder: Yellow ACL - ROYAL CROWN

Body: A yellow square enclosed a depiction of four yellow pyramids on a yellow sand foreground with a red sky background. The words ROYAL CROWN were emblazoned in yellow across the red sky, followed by REG. U.S. PAT. OFF., then a star in the bottle's aqua color stenciled through the red background. The initials RC (with both letters leaned inward) appeared on a stenciled trapezoidal background between the two center pyramids followed on the yellow foreground by COLA in red lettering. Lower left corner: COPYRIGHT 1936 / NEHI CORPORATION, lower right: CONTENTS / 12 FLUID OUNCES.

Back Description

Shoulder: Same as front

Body: Yellow ACL - EVERY BOTTLE

STERILIZED / {Good Housekeeping Seal – see description of seal above} / CONTAINS CARBONATED WATER, / SUGAR, AND ACIDULANT, / COLA NUT EXTRACTIVES, / NATURAL FLAVORS, / CARMEL COLOR / {star} / PROPERTY OF / NEHI BOTTLING CO. / EL PASO, TEXAS

Heel: Embossed - 4441-G

Base: Embossed - 23 {I-in-an-oval-superimposed-on-a-diamond} 9 (Figure 10a-16)

Manufacturer: Owens Illinois Glass Co. (1929-1954)

Dating: [1939-ca. 1941] This bottle was made in 1939, heralding a departure from the 1938 embossed bottle. The company name was changed from the Nehi Bottling Co. to the Nehi-Royal Crown Bottling Co. in 1941, effectively setting an end date.

Collection(s): Author's collection.



Figure 10a-15 – ACL RC Cola bottle with ACL shoulder label



Figure 10a-16 – Base of 1939 RC Cola bottle

Nehi-Royal Crown Bottling Co. (1941-1965)

History

Although the company remained at 1916 Myrtle Ave., changes began to happen during World War II. In 1941, Raymond Platt took control of the business, changing the name to the Nehi-Royal Crown Bottling Co. to reflect the popular cola drink that had been introduced by Nehi in 1935 (Figure 10a-17). Whether Platt actually bought the business, was an intermediate selling agent, or was another manager for Pittman is unknown.

Winfield Fulton Ritter bought the company in 1942 as a means of livelihood for his son, Robert. The family had been looking for a good investment and purchased the company through an El Paso bank, never even meeting Pittman or Platt. Robert R. Ritter signed the note his father produced and succeeded in paying off the entire sum in less than three years. Robert soon took on his brother, William P. Ritter, as a partner in the enterprise (EPCD 1941-1946; Ritter interview).⁴



Figure 10a-17 – Nehi-Royal Crown plant, 1940s (courtesy of Robert R. Ritter)

The elder Ritter had originally migrated from Camden, New Jersey, in hopes that the desert climate would be good for his health. He eventually settled in Lordsburg but met his future bride, Margaret Barnes, in Silver City and married her there in 1910. The family moved to El Paso in 1920. Ritter was the father of four children, John, Robert, William, and Margaret.

⁴ Unless otherwise cited, information about the Ritter family and operations of the Nehi-Royal Crown business during their ownership comes from interviews with Robert R. Ritter.

Robert was born on Christmas Day, 1916, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, while his parents were there on a trip. He met Anna Tomasine Gray in college at the Texas School of Mines (now UTEP), and the couple graduated together in 1940. Two years later, they were married, and, in July, Robert was inducted into the Army where he served until the end of World War II. He was trained as a lieutenant in anti-aircraft, but, because he was bilingual in Spanish, he was stationed in Panama for three years. Robert returned in October 1945 to rejoin his brother, William, who had served as a Staff Sergeant during that time in the U.S. Army Air Corps.

While the brothers were away during the war, the company bookkeeper, Mrs. Cartwright, took over the business – and ran it quite competently until they returned. Although sugar was rationed during World War II, the Nehi-Royal Crown Bottling Co. survived comfortably due to military contracts with nearby Fort Bliss. The Ritters negotiated an agreement whereby their company would have the stock of sugar that went into military sales replenished by the post, thus allowing them to have sufficient available sugar to fulfill their civilian contracts. The brothers sold Nehi and Royal Crown beverages to Post Exchanges as far away as White Sands, and business prospered through the war years.

In fact, business was good throughout the 1940s. The Royal Crown territory expanded until it covered an area from Van Horn, Texas, in the southeast to Lordsburg, New Mexico, in the west and on northward to Truth or Consequences (formerly Hot Springs). Nine trucks serviced customers and tended to the first paper cup dispensers in El Paso. The Ritters introduced the cup dispensers to Post Exchanges at Fort Bliss in 1946 or 1947 and even had them installed in the popular Plaza Theater in downtown El Paso.

The Ritter brothers expanded their business in 1947, buying the Nehi Bottling Co. in Phoenix, Arizona, from J. S. Pittman, the original owner of the El Paso plant. The Ritters immediately renamed the company the Nehi-Royal Crown Bottling Co. to match the name of their El Paso enterprise (Phoenix, Arizona, City Directory, 1946-47). Winfield Ritter died of cancer that year, leaving his four children financially well off. William, who had moved to Phoenix, sold his share of the El Paso enterprise to Robert in 1948. The following year, William became the sole owner of the Phoenix plant (EPCD 1947; Phoenix CD 1949-50; Ritter interview). During this time, G.A. Simmons, Jr. managed the plant (receipts dated 1949 – Tularosa Basin Historical Society).

Bottling and bottlers flourished in El Paso during the early 1950s. The *El Paso Times* called the city “the soft-drink capital of the Southwest” (EPT 4/25/1954 E11:2). Nehi-Royal Crown flourished along with it, although its territory had diminished somewhat. The company employed eleven to thirteen employees, and its trucks delivered to an area that extended from a western extreme of Las Cruces, New Mexico, to Sierra Blanca, Texas, in the east. As a franchise bottler, all bottles, caps, and flavor syrups were received from the parent company at Columbus, Georgia. With the latest in postwar technology, the entire bottling process took only twenty-three minutes – twenty of which were used in the sterilization of the bottle prior to filling. In addition to Royal Crown Cola, Nehi flavors, and Par-T-Pak mixers, the company bottled two unnamed varieties of sugar-free drinks in cola and orange flavors (EPT 4/5/1953 B13:4; 4/25/1954 E11:2; EPHP 4/24/1954 39:1; 4/28/1956 F12:1). Par-T-Pak had also been sold in El Paso by Nehi and had probably been carried continuously.

William became interested in Phoenix real estate and, in order to devote more time to his new pursuit, sold the Phoenix plant to a syndicate in 1969, with Roy Blakeman as the new president, Rafael Scobey as vice president, secretary, and treasurer, and A.G. Charlton as general manager. The new company, located at 2121 Willett St., advertised itself as “Bottlers and Distributors of RC Cola Diet Rite Cola Par-T-Pak Beverages and Nehi Flavors, Delivery Throughout Maricopa County, Pima County, Globe And Miami, Arizona” (Phoenix CD 1969).

Although friends chided him that it was a poor choice, he bought the Safari Motel in Scottsdale and expanded his real estate interests. It proved to be a wise decision – in 1996 (the date of the Ritter interview) William P. Ritter was a multimillionaire. Robert and Anna were divorced in 1967, and he remarried to Ouida Williamson in 1970. Always an avid photographer, he discovered an artistic talent upon retirement and became a serious painter – with works selling for as much as \$1,000 (Figure 10a-18).



Figure 10a-18 – Robert R. Ritter in 1996 with one of his paintings

Table 10a-1 – Chronology of Nehi-Royal Crown in El Paso and Phoenix

El Paso	Owner	Dates	Phoenix	Owner
		1929	Nehi Bottling Co.	J.S. Pittman
Nehi Bottling Co.	J.S. Pittman	1931	same	same
Nehi RC Bottling Co.	Raymond Platt	1941	same	same
same	Ritter Brothers	1942	same	same
same	same	1947	Nehi RC Bottling Co.	Ritter Brothers
same	Robert Ritter	1948	same	same
same	same	1949	same	William Ritter
same	L.C. Hamilton	1956	same	same
Royal Crown Bottling Co.	Royal Crown main office	1965	same	same
Seven-Up Royal Crown Bottling Co.	Al Randle	1969	same	Roy Blakeman
Kalil Bottling Co.	George Kalil	1986	unknown	unknown

Ready for retirement, Robert Ritter sold the Nehi-Royal Crown Bottling Co. in El Paso to Louis C. Hamilton and Louis C. Hamilton, Jr., in 1956. The Hamiltons had come to El Paso a year earlier from Muskogee, Oklahoma, looking for a dry climate to help Louis Jr.'s daughter to recover from asthma. Although they were not specifically looking for a bottling operation, the family believed that money could be made in any type of business and took advantage of the opportunity offered by the Ritters.

The Hamiltons operated the company until the parent company instigated the use of cans in promoting the product. They refused to undergo the necessary retooling of the plant to accommodate the canning operation, so the parent company in Atlanta, Georgia, purchased the outstanding stock and took over management of the El Paso branch in 1965. Lloyd Hopkins and David Zimmerman, both from Salt Lake City, served as president and vice president, respectively. Robert Ranslem became vice president and manager in El Paso. As before, the company remained at 1916 Myrtle Ave. The younger Hamilton took a position as a bookkeeper with Joe W. Yowell at Barq's Dr. Pepper Bottling Co. and remained there until Yowell sold to Magnolia Coca-Cola in 1980 (Randle interview; Yowell interview; EPCD 1955-1965; EPHP 11/18/1965 A2:1).⁵ See Table 10a-1 for a chronology of the company names and owners.



Figure 10a-19 – ACL Nehi bottles – red-on-yellow (left), white-on-red (right)

Bottles and Artifacts

Nehi Flavors

Nehi ACL bottles came in two color schemes on colorless glass (Figure 10a-19), each with two variations. The earliest color combination, red on yellow, was used from 1939 to 1956 on seven-, nine-, ten-, and twelve-ounce bottles (Bates et al 1996a:N-2). The various Nehi flavors were bottled in identical containers with the individual flavor indicated by the crown cap. About this time, Nehi flavors included Imitation Cherry Soda, Orange Soda, Imitation Grape Soda, and Imitation Strawberry soda.

⁵ There are discrepancies between the newspaper account and the city directory. The newspaper article is probably correct, and its information is used here.

Although Louis C. Hamilton, Jr., granted me an interview, he subsequently refused to allow publication of any of his information. All data included about the Hamiltons came from the sources cited – not from the Hamilton interview

Red-on-Yellow

The first variation of the red-on-yellow bottle is identifiable by the word NEHI in red letters on the front label. At least some of these also had NEHI at the neck/shoulder (Bates et al. 1996a:N-2). I have never actually seen an example.

The second variation was characterized by the illusion of three-dimensional letters in the word, NEHI on the body front label and the lack of a neck label (Figure 10a-20). Bottles of this type may be labeled EL PASO, TEXAS; PHOENIX, ARIZONA; EL PASO-PHOENIX; or PHOENIX-EL PASO. The three-dimensional-letter bottles are the only ones I have found from El Paso.

Table 10a-2 – Chronology for Location Markings on Red-on-Yellow Nehi Bottles

Company	Owner	Location	Dates	Marking
Nehi Bottling Co.	J.S. Pittman	Phoenix/El Paso	1939-1941	EL PASO* or PHOENIX (poss. both)
Nehi Bottling Co.	J.S. Pittman	Phoenix	1941-1947	PHOENIX
Nehi RC Bottling Co.	Raymond Platt	El Paso	1941-1942	EL PASO
Nehi RC Bottling Co.	Ritter Brothers	El Paso	1942-1947	EL PASO
Nehi RC Bottling Co.	Ritter Brothers	El Paso/Phoenix	1947-1949	EL PASO-PHOENIX
Nehi RC Bottling Co.	Robert (EP) William (Ph)	El Paso/Phoenix	1949-1956	EL PASO-PHOENIX or PHOENIX-EL PASO

* The only example I have seen appeared to have a comma after EL PASO, but the bottle was fire damaged. It could have been EL PASO, TEXAS or PHOENIX, ARIZONA could be intended.

The changes in company ownership during the 1939-1956 period are useful in dating bottles with no date codes (see Table 10a-2). At least two of the bottles discussed below were made by glass houses that did not use date codes. Neither the Knox Glass Bottle Co. nor the Chattanooga Glass Co. used date codes until they were required on returnable bottles by national decree at some point during the late 1960s or 1970s – well beyond the period when local designations were included on the bottles.

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Colorless

Size (in cm.): 23.9 (h); 5.8 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: Yellow and Red ACL

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 9 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical with embossed vertical “ropes” (silk stocking) on body and neck/shoulder

Front Description

Neck: Embossed “ropes”

Shoulder: Embossed “ropes”

Body: Yellow rectangular background with NEHI in yellow three-dimensional letters. Below, REG. U.S. PAT. OFF. was stenciled into the background. A red band followed with the word BEVERAGES in yellow, and the final line, again in red, promised CONTENTS 9 FLU. OZS.

Heel: Embossed “ropes”

Back Description

Neck: Embossed “ropes”

Shoulder: Embossed “ropes”

Body: Yellow ACL labeling - BOTTLE STERILIZED / BEFORE FILLING / {star} / PROPERTY OF / NEHI-ROYAL CROWN BOTTLING CO. / PHOENIX - EL PASO (Figure 10a-21).

Heel: Embossed “ropes”



Figure 10a-20 – Red-on-Yellow ACL Nehi bottle
 Figure 10a-21 – Back of Nehi bottle with PHOENIX - EL PASO

Base: Embossed - DESIGN PAT'D MAR 3 25 (arch) / 9 / 4597-G / 20 {Owens-Illinois symbol} 4 {illegible} (all horizontal) – The illegible number appears to have been peened and re-stamped.

Manufacturer: Owens Illinois Glass Co. (1926-1954)

Dating: [1942-1956] As discussed in that section, the Nehi Bottling Co. opened in El Paso in 1931, and used bottles of this type from at least 1939 until the company name change to the Nehi-Royal Crown Bottling Co. in 1941. The company retained that name until 1965. Red-on-yellow labels date nationally, however, from 1940-1956.

Collection(s): Mike Morrison Collection; Willie F. Terrazas collection; Michael M. Elling collection; UTEP archaeology (Lower Valley investigation); author's collection.

Variations:

1. Described above.
2. This variation is identical with the one above (including a volume of nine ounces). except that the stippled base is embossed DESIGN PAT'D MAR 3 25 (arch) / 1 / G972 / 3 {Owens-Illinois symbol} 47 (all horizontal), and the back label has EL PASO, TEXAS for the city/state designation (Figures 10a-22 & 10a-23).



Figure 10a-22 – Back of Nehi bottle with EL PASO, TEXAS



Figure 10a-23 – Base of the 1947 Nehi bottle

This change requires a discussion about the Owens-Illinois model codes. Eastern and mid-country plants used a model code beginning with “G.” Since Factory No. 3 at Fairmont, West Virginia, the maker of this bottle fell into that category, the model number was G972. West Coast plants (such as Plant 20, San Francisco, the manufacturer of Variation 1), however, placed the number first followed by “G” or a hyphen, then “G.” Thus, the model number for Variation 1 was 4597-G.

3. Variation 3 was also a nine-ounce bottle. The back label this time had two changes. The first was very minor. The hyphen was missing in NEHI ROYAL CROWN BOTTLING



Figure 10a-24 – Keystone-T mark on a Nehi base

CO., and the city designation had become EL PASO-PHOENIX. The base was embossed with the T-in-a-keystone logo above DESIGN / PAT'D / MAR. 3, 25. The Keystone-T mark was used by the Knox Glass Bottle Co. plant at Palestine, Texas between 1941 and 1952 (Figure 10a-24).

4. A 12-ounce bottle measured 24.1 cm. in height and 6.1 cm. in diameter. The front body label reflected the size with CONTENTS 12 FLU. OZS. (Figure 10a-25). The back label also had the no-hyphen NEHI ROYAL CROWN BOTTLING CO. designation above PHOENIX - EL PASO. The base was

embossed DESIGN PAT'D MAR. 3, 25 (arch) / 8516 / MG (connected) 54 / 6, made by the Maywood Glass Co., Los Angeles (1930-1959) in 1954.

5. I recorded a basemark of L G W / DESIGN / PAT'D / MAR. 3, 25 / 225 5 (Laurens Glass Works – 1913-1970) at some point but failed to record which variation it was on. There is no question that more variations were made.

White-on-Red

Just as the Hamiltons took over the business, the colors changed to white-on-red. Like the first color scheme, bottles appeared in seven-, nine-, ten-, and twelve-ounce sizes between 1956 and 1965 (Bates et al 1996a:N-3).

As with the first color variant, two different configurations exist. The most notable difference is the inclusion of the word, NEHI, in white on the neck of the second variation (Bates et al 1996a:N-3). In some sub-variations, the volume information appeared on the front at the bottom of the red area; on others, it was in white on the back label (Figure 10-26). The body-label-only version is the only one I have identified from El Paso and only in the nine-ounce



Figure 10a-25 – Nehi bottles, 9 and 12 ounces

configuration (Figure 10a-27).
It is not known at this time
whether a temporal range can
be assigned to either variation.

Method of Manufacture:

Machine

Color: Colorless

Size (in cm.): 23.3 (h); 5.6 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: red
and White ACL

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 9 oz.

Overall Bottle Design:

Cylindrical with embossed
vertical “ropes” (or silk
stocking) on body and
neck/shoulder; embossed ring
encircles neck to form the top
of the “rope” pattern.

Front Description

Neck: Bare

Shoulder: Embossed “ropes”

Body: Red ACL rectangle with white bars on top and bottom with the word, NEHI, in white in center with ® to right

Heel: Embossed “ropes”

Back Description

Neck: Same as front

Shoulder: Embossed “ropes”

Body: White ACL - BOTTLE STERILIZED / BEFORE FILLING / (star) / CONTENTS 9 FLU. OZ. / (star) / BOTTLED BY NEHI-ROYAL CROWN BOTTLING CO. / EL PASO, TEXAS

Heel: Embossed “ropes”

Base: Embossed - C-in-a-circle / DESIGN / PAT'D. / MAR.3,25



Figure 10a-26 –
White-on-red ACL
Nehi bottle – style *not*
used in El Paso (eBay)

Figure 10a-27 – White-on-red ACL Nehi
bottle – from El Paso

Manufacturer: Chattanooga Glass Co. (1925-present)

Dating: [1956-1965] According to Bates et al, (1996a:N-3), red and white ACL bottles were only used by Nehi from 1956-1965. Although the Chattanooga Glass Co. bottle has no date code, it was probably made during the earlier part of the span. It still had the embossed ring around the neck at the top of the “rope” design – a feature lacking on at least one bottle.

Collection(s): Author’s collection.

Table 10a-3 – Chronology of Royal Crown Bottles at El Paso

Front Label	Back Label	Neck Label	Firm	Years
Pyramid no copyright	Good Housekeeping; no ingredients	debossed	Nehi	1937
Pyramid w/ copyright*	Good Housekeeping; w/ ingredients	embossed	Nehi	1938
Pyramid w/ copyright	Good Housekeeping; w/ ingredients	ACL arch	Nehi	1939-1941
Pyramid w/ copyright	Ingredients but no seal	ACL arch	Nehi-RC	1942-1952
No pyramid/ no copyright**	No ingredients	ACL arch	Nehi-RC	1953?-1957?
Diamond†	none	Diamond	RC	1958-?

* The El Paso franchise ordered these at least twice from two different glass houses

** The examples I have are only 1954 and 1956; it is likely that use extended from 1953 to 1957.

† By this time, the local bottler’s name was no longer included.

Royal Crown

During the period when Royal Crown Cola was available in El Paso, the parent company offered five different datable bottle types that were marked with the name of local bottler. These are reflected in chronology in Table 10a-3.

Pyramid Variation

As noted above, the early El Paso Royal Crown bottles were used by the Nehi Bottling Co. from 1937 to ca. 1941. The next style was very similar to ACL neck/shoulder variation used by the earlier firm, except that the Good Housekeeping Seal was missing (Figure 10a-28).

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Aqua

Size (in cm.): 23.1 (h); 6.5 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: Yellow and Red ACL

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 12 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical

Front Description

Shoulder: Yellow ACL - ROYAL CROWN (arch)

Body: A yellow square enclosed a depiction of four yellow pyramids on a yellow sand foreground with a red sky background. The words ROYAL CROWN were emblazoned in yellow across the red sky, followed by REG. U.S. PAT. OFF., then a star in the bottle's aqua color stenciled through the red background. The initials RC (with both letters leaned inward) appeared on a stenciled trapezoidal background between the two center pyramids followed on the yellow foreground by COLA in red lettering. The lower left corner proclaimed, COPYRIGHT 1936 / NEHI CORPORATION, with CONTENTS / 12 FLUID OUNCES on the right.



Figure 10a-28 – Pyramid-style ACL Royal Crown bottle

Heel: Bare

Back Description

Shoulder: Same as front

Body: Yellow ACL - BOTTLE STERILIZED / BEFORE FILLING / CONTAINS CARBONATED WATER, / SUGAR, AND ACIDULANT, / COLA NUT EXTRACTIVES, / NATURAL FLAVORS, / CARAMEL COLOR {star} / PROPERTY OF / NEHI-ROYAL CROWN BOTTLING CO. / EL PASO, TEXAS

Heel: Embossed - 19 G286

Base: Embossed - 9 {I-in-an-oval-superimposed-on-a-diamond} 2. / Duraglass (script)

Manufacturer: Owens Illinois Glass Co. (1929-1954)

Dating: [ca. 1941-1952] The company name was changed from Nehi Bottling Co. to Nehi-Royal Crown Bottling Co. in 1941. Bottles of this type were used in El Paso from about 1941 (the renaming of the company) to the change of bottle styles by 1952. Note that the parent company changed Royal Crown bottle styles (see below) in 1952, and both the new and old types of bottles were made during that year (Miller 2004:9).

Collection(s): Mike Morrison Collection; Bill Ward Collection; Willie Terrazas collection; author's collection.

Variations:

1. See description above. This was one of the early bottles used by this incarnation of the company.
2. The bottle was identical to the one featured above except that the base was embossed "Duraglas (script) / 9 {OI symbol} 3. / 17. / G286. Th bottle was made in 1943. A second example was the same except for an "8" below the logo – indicating that more than one mold was used for the order.
3. This bottle demonstrates a move to the Laurens Glass Works (1913-1970). The front heel was embossed 8 430, with 5 L G W 0 on the back heel. The base was bare. The back label read BOTTLE STERILIZED / BEFORE FILLING / [star] / PROPERTY OF / NEHI ROYAL CROWN BOTTLING CO. / EL PASO-PHOENIX. The Phoenix name could not have been used prior to the purchase of that plant by the Ritters in 1947.
4. Two changes on these bottles are important. First, the back label was BOTTLE STERILIZED / BEFORE FILLING / [star] / PROPERTY OF / ROYAL CROWN BOTTLING CO. / EL



Figure 10a-29 – Back of Pyramid RC bottle made in 1951

PASO-PHOENIX (Figure 10a-29). Second, the stippled base was embossed G 286 / Duraglass (script) / 15 {I-in-an-oval-superimposed-on-a-diamond} 51 / 2 [or 52 / 3]. Note that 1951 and 1952 bottles bore the name ROYAL CROWN BOTTLING CO. / EL PASO-PHOENIX, even though the change to that name in El Paso did not appear until 1965. Even though the El Paso name appears first, the Royal Crown Bottling Co. name is may have belonged to the Phoenix plant.

5. There were certainly more variations during the period between 1943 and 1950. At this point, we do not know when the list of ingredients disappeared from the back label – only that the ingredients were gone by 1950.

Non-Pyramid Variation

Around 1952, Royal Crown slightly simplified their labeling design by removing the pyramids, along with minor changes, such as moving the volume information to the back label, eliminating the copyright date, and placing the ® symbol inside the

star above RC in the center of the label (Figures 10a-30 & 10a-31). Along with the twelve-ounce bottle for home distribution, a ten-ounce package was designed for use in vending machines. RC used the ten-ounce bottle from 1953 to about 1956 (personal communication from Mike Elling).

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Georgia Green

Size (in cm.): 24.1 (h); 6.4 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: Red and Yellow ACL



Figure 10a-30 – Three styles of Royal Crown Bottles

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 12 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical with light stippling on shoulder and neck

Front Description

Shoulder: Bare

Body: The new label bore the same basic design, a red upper rectangle and yellow lower one, both outlined with a yellow border. In the center was a stenciled trapezoid with RC in the center. Unlike the earlier variation, where the letters leaned inward toward each other, these were in upright block capitals. The star above the stenciled trapezoid now had the ® symbol inside. The pyramids on the body front had disappeared, and the more complicated copyright information was replaced by COPYRIGHT on the left and NEHI CORP. on the right.

Back Description

Shoulder: Bare

Body: Yellow ACL - BOTTLE STERILIZED / BEFORE FILLING / {star} / CONTENTS 12 FLU. OZS. / {star} / PROPERTY OF / NEHI-ROYAL CROWN BOTTLING CO. / PHOENIX - EL PASO __

Base: Embossed - 23 {I-in-an-oval} 54 (arch) / 6D / Duraglas (script) / 4441-G

Manufacturer: Owens Illinois Glass Co. (1954-present)

Dating: [1952-1958] Bottles of this type were used from 1952 (Miller 2004:9) to the next design change in 1958.

Collection(s): Willie F. Terrazas collection; author's collection.



Figure 10a-31 – Royal Crown bottle – no pyramids

Variations:

1. See description above.
2. This was the same bottle, except that the back label was in white ACL and replaced PHOENIX - EL PASO with EL PASO, TEXAS (Figure 10a-32), and the shoulder was stippled (all others I



Figure 10a-32 – Back of 1956 Royal Crown bottle

have examined were smooth). The base was embossed G-2906 / Duraglass (script) 9 {I-in-an-oval} 56 / 2– (Figure 10a-33). This is another example of the change in model numbers between the West Coast plants (4441-G) and those in the rest of the country (G-2906).

3. There were undoubtedly other bottles of this type used by the Royal Crown Bottling Co.; however, this was about the period where franchisers were moving away from local designations on bottles. There may have been few, if any, Royal Crown bottles with the local company name on the back.



Figure 10a-33 – Base of 1956 Royal Crown bottle

Later Royal Crown Bottles

The next design change was major, including the alteration of both the bottle and label. The bottle was cylindrical, narrowing slightly at the heel, and gradually widening back to 6.5 cm. at the center body with eighteen vertical panels. The front shoulder was embossed with a double-diamond, the top diamond being smaller than the bottom one. The larger diamond was enameled red with a white border and the words, Royal / Crown® / Cola, in white above another line drawing of a crown. A white diamond was superimposed at the apex of the first with the initials, R / C in red. Bottles of this type were introduced in 1958 and may have extended into the 1980s.



Figure 10a-34 – Royal Crown diamond bottle (Willie Terrazas collection)

About the same time, another variation appeared. In this one, the diamond migrated down to the body front and became a white-outlined red diamond with Royal / Crown / Cola / {crown} in white ACL at the

center. A second, white diamond was superimposed over the top termination of the main diamond with the horizontal initials, RC, in red. An additional white crown was placed at the shoulder (Figure 10a-34). Bottles of this type, in eight-, ten-, and twelve-ounce configurations, were in use from 1958 to at least 1966 and may have varied by location (Bates et al 1996a:R-11-12).

A final variety returned the main logo to the shoulder, this time in the form of a white enameled circle superimposed with a red, stylized RC, commonly called the “RC target.” Just outside the circle, wrapped around the lower half, were the words, ROYAL CROWN COLA • CARMEL COLOR (Figure 10a-35). The lower body front was enameled 12 FL. OZ. Bottles of this type came in ten-, twelve-, and sixteen-ounce sizes and were used, with slight variations, from 1970 to 1988 (Bates et al 1996a:R-12).

A more recent addition to the RC family was Royal Crown Draft Cola, introduced in 1995. The new drink was sweetened with cane sugar and packaged in an amber bottle with a paper label that was reminiscent of a beer bottle. The bottles were topped with continuous thread aluminum caps. The body label contained a distinctive star (Elling 1997).



Figure 10a-35 – Royal Crown with circle label

Upper 10

Although not specifically mentioned in telephone or city directory advertisements, the Nehi-Royal Crown Bottling Co. may have offered Upper 10, a lemon-lime drink available from the franchiser, Nehi Corp., Columbus, Georgia. However, I have never seen a bottle with the El Paso designation.

Diet Rite Cola

No diet drinks were mentioned in the articles on the El Paso bottling industry in 1953 or 1954, but the *Herald Post* stated that the Nehi-Royal Crown Bottling Co. bottled “two lines of sugar-free drinks, cola and orange” in 1956 (EHPH 4/28/1956 F12:1). Although the brands referred to are unknown, either could have been test marketed dietary drinks under strict corporate control.

However, neither could have been the regular Diet Rite Cola which was not introduced until 1963, although it had been invented the previous year. The original Diet Rite was packaged in an unembossed bottle with paper labels on body front and neck. The neck label said, Diet Rite, with a drop-down addition that informed, SUGAR / FREE. The body front label contained the words, Diet Rite / Cola / Par-T-Pak, suggesting that the first Diet Rite was bottled under the Par-T-Pak label (Behar 1995:49).

Royal Crown Bottling Co. (1965-1969)

History

When the parent company took over the operation in 1965, it changed the name of the El Paso enterprise to the Royal Crown Bottling Co. They incorporated the firm and placed John R. Broadhurst in the position of president. A period of management turn-over followed when Lloyd Hopkin replaced Broadhurst the following year and was in turn replaced by W.G. Wolfe in 1967. John Garson took control in 1968 and retained his position until the company again changed ownership in 1969 (EPCD 1965-1969).

Bottles and Artifacts

The firm advertised in the 1967 city directory, showing a six-pack of Royal Crown bottles with unmistakable diamonds on the side and a can with the double-diamond motif described in the previous section. The ad also mentioned Diet-Rite, Nehi, and Quench, although it did not include drawings. The plant was listed as the R-C Cola Beverage Co., although that name was probably used for advertising purposes – rather than an actual change (Figure 10a-36).



Figure 10a-36 – Royal Crown ad (El Paso City Directory, 1967)

Nehi Flavors

The white-on-red variation of the Nehi bottle was discussed in the Nehi-Royal Crown Bottling Co. section above. This configuration was used between 1956 and 1965, barely stretching into the Royal Crown Bottling Co. era. The new firm ordered these in 1965 (although the date code is 61 – see discussion below) – probably the last bottles marked with a local name that were used by the company (Figure 10a-37). Although these were virtually identical with the earlier white-on-red bottles (except for back label and base), I have included a full description here.

Method of Manufacture: Machine

Color: Colorless

Size (in cm.): 23.3 (h); 5.6 (d)

Primary Labeling Style: Red and White ACL

Finish: Crown

Capacity: 9 oz.

Overall Bottle Design: Cylindrical with embossed vertical “ropes” (or silk stocking) on body and neck/shoulder

Front Description

Neck: Bare

Shoulder: Embossed “ropes” with no embossed ring at the top of the “rope” section⁶

Body: Red ACL rectangle with white bars on top and bottom with the word, NEHI, in white in center with ® to right

Heel: Embossed “ropes”

Back Description

Neck: Same as front



Figure 10a-37 – Nehi – no-garter bottle

⁶ Mike Elling informs me that Nehi collectors call the embossed ring the “garter” in keeping with the “silk stocking” term for the bottle. The bottles could be ordered without the “garter” – and collectors call these “ropers” and consider this a “neutral rope design.” The vast majority of Nehi bottles were of the “garter” design.

Shoulder: Embossed “ropes”

Body: White ACL - CONTENTS 9 FLU. OZ. / (star) /
BOTTLED BY ROYAL CROWN BOTTLING CO. / EL
PASO, TEXAS

Heel: Embossed “ropes”

Base: Embossed - L-G 61 / 388-1 (Figure 10a-38)

Manufacturer: Liberty Glass Co. (1954-present)

Dating: [1956-1965] The Elling bottle (see the Nehi-Royal
Crown Bottling Co. section above) and one in the author’s
collection provoke a question as to the accuracy of the two-
digit numbers in Liberty Glass Co. bottles or the storage

time of Liberty bottles. The date code 61 on the bases of both bottles suggests that they were
made in 1961, but the Royal Crown Bottling Co. was only in existence in El Paso from 1965 to
1969. The bottle is therefore older than the company. Either the numbering system does not
accurately reflect the manufacturing date, or bottles were being stored for four years prior to
application of the labels. According to Bates et al, (1996a:N-3), red and white ACL bottles were
only used by Nehi from 1956-1965.

Collection(s): Michael M. Elling collection; author’s collection.



Figure 10a-38 – Nehi base with
1961 date code

Dating the Nehi Bottle

Like the earliest Nehi bottle used in El Paso (see above), embossing and ACL labeling on
this one does not fit the historical record. The base is very clearly dated “61” (1961), but the
back label identifies the firm as the Royal Crown Bottling Co. – which did not come into
existence until 1965 – four years later. Clearly, both cannot be correct.

There are two possible explanations – storage time for bottles or date code error. Each is
possible. Both are based on the assumption that the name ROYAL CROWN BOTTLING CO. in
the back label is correct. Since the screen for the earlier name NEHI-ROYAL CROWN
BOTTLING CO. was already made, it is logical that the name change is correct.

In the ongoing debate about deposition lag, the topic of storage time by various glass houses has been discussed (e.g., Newman 1970). Storage of bottles – by the glass house – is logical, even probable, with generic bottles. It is very *unlikely* with embossed bottles. Bottlers were too fickle, changing glass houses at every sale or even a manager's whim.

However, these ACL Nehi bottles fall somewhere in between. The basic embossed bottle could be made and store in quantity, waiting for an order. At that point, the ACL could be applied. By 1961, the basic bottle had been in use for 33 years. Thus, the bottles could have been made in 1961, but the ACL may not have been applied until 1965. The problem with this explanation is that the bottles would have sat in storage for at least four years – a long time to tie up storage space.

The second, more probable explanation is an error in date code. A virtually identical bottle – described in the Nehi-Royal Crown section – was made by the Liberty Glass Co. in 1961. This bottle was probably used as the template for the Royal Crown Bottling Co. bottle that was actually made in 1965 – someone just missed the baseplate and left the date code unchanged. Only a slight retooling of the silk screen – to eliminate the “NEHI” and center the new name – would have been required.

Quench

Quench was only mentioned in advertisements in 1967-1969 (EPT 1967-1969). It was undoubtedly present for a longer time, but no further dating possibilities have surfaced. I have found no Quench bottles with the El Paso designation or in El Paso contexts.

