

Breweries
and
Beer Bottles
at
El Paso, Texas



Bill Lockhart
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Chapter 5c
Liquor Bottles and Brands
Used at Juárez During Prohibition I

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Chapter 5c

Liquor Bottles and Brands Used at Juárez During Prohibition I

Even though this is a book about breweries and beer bottles, the Juárez distilleries played a distinct and unique part in the Prohibition dance in the El Paso area. In addition, some of the bars had their own bottles. This sub-chapter will thus cover the whiskey containers that were used at night clubs in Juárez along with some of the ones from the distilleries. The remaining distillery will be discussed in Chapter 5d.

Liquor Bottles

Liquor bottles used at Juárez fall into two categories: 1) bottles used at specific cafés or bars; and 2) bottles from Juárez distilleries. Only a few bottles from the various clubs seem to have survived, although numerous bottles, trays, ash trays, and other items remain from the two largest distilleries.

Bottles from Clubs

Some of the clubs (cafés, bars, nightclubs) had individual-size bottles of liquor or wine made for them. These were ca. 1/10 pint by volume and were identified by paper labels. All of these are rare, and there were almost certainly many more than I have listed below.

Café Francaise

Although not referenced in the report, Lockhart and Olszewski (1995) discovered a flask at the El Paso Coliseum embossed “CAFÉ FRANCAISE (arch) / C. RIVA PETIT / CIUDAD JUAREZ (both horizontal) / MEXICO (inverted arch)” in a round plate (Figure 5c-1). The flask was topped with a prescription finish reinforced by a thick ring below it (Figure 5c-2). Lindsey (2012) noted that “physically, the Olympia flask is a symmetrically flattened oval in cross-section



Figure 5c-1 – Plate on Café Francaise flask (Mike Miller collection)



Figure 5c-2 – Café Francaise flask (Mike Miller collection)

with relatively flat panels on the front and back. It also tapers noticeably from the shoulder to the heel.”

By at least 1903, the Illinois Glass Co. advertised the container as the “new Olympia flask” and had copyrighted the name (Figure 5c-3). The flasks were offered in sizes ranging from ¼ pint to quart. The catalog noted that the design was patented on August 9, 1898 (Lindsey 2012). Robert Levis (probably one of the sons of co-

OLYMPIA FLASK.
Name Copyrighted, Patented Aug. 9th, 1898.

WE take pleasure in presenting to the trade our new **Olympia Flask**, in whose shape we have carefully avoided all the objectionable features of ordinary flasks, but preserving their good points and uniting them in a novel design, which, as will be noted by reference to the illustration on this page, is not only pleasing to the eye, but is strong and handy, too.

SIZES AND LIST PRICES OF OLYMPIA FLASKS.

1½ oz. cap.	\$19 00	per gross,	3 gross boxes.
¼ Pint 3	12 90	“	2 “ “
“ 4	13 25	“	“ “
“ 5	14 00	“	1 “ “
“ 6	15 00	“	“ “
“ 7	16 00	“	1 “ “
“ 8	17 00	“	1 “ “
Pints 10	22 75	“	“ “
“ 12	22 75	“	“ “
“ 14	22 75	“	“ “
“ 16	25 00	“	“ “
Quarts 24	35 00	“	“ “
“ 30	38 00	“	“ “
“ 32	39 00	“	“ “

6, 7, 8, 12, and 16 oz. sizes are plate mould.

Special discount on Olympia Flask. Correspondence invited in reference to this elegant Flask and samples will be gladly furnished on request.

Figure 5c-3 – Olympia flask advertised in Illinois Glass Co. 1906 catalog

founder Edward Levis) applied for a “Design for a Bottle” on July 18, 1898, and received Design Patent No. 29,170 on August 9, less than a month later. The patent drawing clearly illustrated the type of flask used by Petit (Figure 5c-4).

Aside from a brief mention in the *El Paso Herald* of January 29, 1910, and a single bar token offered on



Figure 5c-5 – Café Francasise token (eBay)

eBay (Figure 5c-5), I have found no details about C. Riva Petit. It is obvious that he was in business at Juárez, and 1910 fits the period when the Olympia flasks were popular. Since Petit was *not* mentioned by Langston (1974) in his Prohibition study, Petit’s Café Francaise was probably closed by the time the American boom hit Juárez.

DESIGN.
No. 29,170. Patented Aug. 9, 1898.
R. H. LEVIS.
BOTTLE.
Application filed July 18, 1898.

Fig. I.

Fig. II.

Attest:
S. P. Alvander,
Notary Public

Inventor:
Robert H. Levis
by *Thos. W. Pitt* 1898

Figure 5c-4 – Levis 1898 patent

Central Café

At least two bottles have survived from the Central Café. One, almost certainly the older, was a José Cuervo tequila miniature flask. Each face had 12 vertical ribs, and the front and back labels were pasted directly onto them with no flattened labeling area. The flask was topped by a continuous-thread finish, closed by a gold-colored, rolled-steel cap with a green mescal bush painted on it (Figure 5c-6). The base was embossed by the Circle-VM monogram of Vidriera Monterrey, Mexico’s largest bottle manufacturer. Both numbers were so poorly embossed as to render them unreadable. Unfortunately, we know little about the mark. It was probably in use by the 1920s¹ and was still being applied at least as late as 1982 (Emhart 1982:50).



Figure 5c-6 – Top of José Cuervo flask used by Central Café

The front label was the original one from José Cuervo, as, apparently, was the much planer one on the back. Although the front label was partly obliterated, it was clearly the José Cuervo brand. Both the back label (partly obscured by the label from Central Café) and the cap indicate that the manufacturing firm was Tequila Cuervo, S.A. at Tequila, Jal. (Jalisco).

Atop the back label, an employee had pasted a label from the café. Shaped like a purple creamer bottle, the label bragged “Central Café / Famous for Service / JUAREZ, MEX.” above a couple dancing. Below the dancers was “MEXICAN DI[NNERS] / Our Sp[eciality] / S.G. Gonz[alez, Prop.]” (Figure 5c-7). The label partly obscured the one from José Cuervo, and the lower right portion was torn away. This bottle was almost certainly from the heyday of the Prohibition era, when Gonzalez was the proud owner.



Figure 5c-7 – José Cuervo flask used by Central Café

¹ Vidriera Monterrey opened in 1909 and installed Owens Automatic Bottle Machines the following year. However, because of the Mexican Revolution, the plant virtually ceased operation until 1918 (Vitro 2003).



Figure 5c-8 – Central Café bar bottle (eBay)

A second bottle was offered on an eBay auction. This was a round, colorless liquor bottle with a two-part “brandy” finish (Figure 5c-8). The central motif – in black and red ACL – was a woman dancing with a fan. Below the figure, in black-outlined white ACL letters, was “CENTRAL CAFE / JUAREZ / MEXICO” (Figure 5c-9). This was almost certainly a “bar” bottle, made to be reused as a display item behind the bar. Since ACL was not initiated on beverage bottles until 1934, the bottle was definitely post Prohibition. However, the quality of the ACL suggests at least the 1940s – if not a decade later.



Figure 5c-9 – Central Café bar bottle label (eBay)

Bottles from Distilleries

Each of the Juárez distilleries bottled whiskey, usually more than one type or brand. However, I have not discovered any other type of alcohol that was bottled by any of these plants. As noted in the history section (Chapter 5a), two of these distilleries were quite successful and continued to produce whiskey well into the 1960s. All but one of the plants used paper labels on its bottles.

Pulque and Jim Schoolfield

Although Jim Schoolfield distilled whiskey as well as the milder pulque, there is no historical indication that he actually bottled any type of drink. He sold his beverages only at his own saloon. Langston (1974:220-221) was unclear about the time period when Schoolfield operated.

DM Distillery Co.

As noted in Chapter 5a, J.W. Campbell opened a distillery at Juárez in 1904 and sold it to a Mr. Pigg prior to World War I. Frank O. Mackey and Luis Domínguez purchased the firm, and Louis J. Morris added capital shortly afterwards in 1923. The business was renamed DM Distillery Co., S.A. about this time – certainly *by* 1923. Morris sold his interest to Julián Gómez in the late 1920s. The plant remained open until at least 1975.

Old Crow

An eBay auction offered a postcard that advertised what appeared to be a pre-Prohibition flask of Old Crow whiskey – that was made in the U.S.A. The text below the picture advised, “A REMINDER OF THE OLD DAYS JUAREZ, MEXICO” (Figure 5c-10). This suggests that the postcard advertised one of the bottles of whiskey that was transported to Juárez just prior to the sealing of the border (see Chapter 5a).

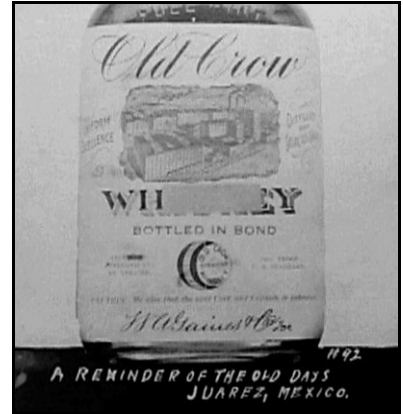


Figure 5c-10 – U.S. Old Crow on Juárez postcard (eBay)



Figure 5c-11 – Old Crow flask – D.M. Distillery

Old Crow was probably the original brand offered by the DM Distillery. The only example I have found was a pint bottle embossed “FULL PINT” on the label-side shoulder, with a two-part “brandy” finish – for a cork (Figure 5c-11). The base was embossed with an interesting logo that appears to be a cross with an extra, smaller crossbar (Figure 5c-12). I have been unable to determine which manufacturer used the mark.

The gold-outlined, rectangular label was yellow in color and covered most of one side of the flask. At the top, the label stated “JUAREZ WHISKEY (arch – black letters) / AGED IN WOOD (red) / OLD CROW (slight upward slant – black)” above a drawing of a wizened crow. Below the crow was “Hand Made (stylized letters) / BOURBON / WHISKEY (horizontal – all black letters).”



Figure 5c-12 – base of Old Crow flask

The bottom of the label contained the distillers information: “DISTILLADO Y EMBOTELLADO POR / DISTILLED AND BOTTLED BY / D.M. DISTILLERY CO., S.A. / JUAREZ, CHIHUAHUA, MEXICO / SUCCESSORS TO KENTUCKY DISTILLERY CO. / M. IND. RGTDA NO. 24844 01 14 DE ENERO DE 1925.² “BOTTLED IN 1923 & 24 / TO EXPORT ONLY” was stamped diagonally across the label in open, stylized, red print.

This adds distinctly to our knowledge of the firm. First, it bottled Old Crow in 1923 and 1924 and sold the whiskey for export only in 1925. The huge question is: export to *where*? The obvious country would be north of the border, but the U.S. was already in Prohibition – and had been for three years when the labels were stamped! It is entirely possible, of course, that the labels were a smoke screen to cover smuggling the whiskey into El Paso – and north – or for some form of illegal sale in Juárez.

The relationship between the Kentucky Distillery, D.M. Distillery Co., and the Old Crow brand is unclear and may never have been written. During the 1830s, James Crow, a Scottish immigrant, began distilling Old Crow at Frankfort, Kentucky. W.A. Gaines & Co. acquired the name after Crow died in 1856. Since the name had not been legally registered, a dispute over the name was finally settled in 1915 – in favor of Gaines (Wikipedia 2012).

Although there was a Kentucky Distillery Co. at Frankfort (the home of Old Crow and of Gaines & Co.), I have been unable to discover any history for the plant. It may have evolved from W.A. Gaines & Co., thus owning the Old Crow brand. Since the Juárez label stated that D.M. Distillery Co. was “Successors to Kentucky Distillery Co.,” it is likely that the distillery, doomed by Prohibition, shipped its existing stock to Juárez, and merged with the D.M. Distillery Co. However, the Juárez firm apparently allowed the brand to lapse after the supply ran out and began distilling a brand of its own – Straight American.

Straight American

As noted above, D.M. Distillery Co. apparently discontinued sales of Old Crow in 1926 and adopted Straight American as a replacement. It may be that the predominantly Mexican management wanted its own brand – rather than an American hand-me-down – although that is

² Marca Industrial Registrada – Trademark No. 24844, January 14, 1925.

pure speculation. According to the early labels, D.M. Distillery registered on May 11, 1926 – although I do not know whether that refers to the company or the brand.

I have been able to determine five variations of Straight American bottles, although there were probably additional later changes (Table 5c-1). This determination is based on finish styles, closures, and label changes – with some dating verified by date codes. Unfortunately, the date codes used by Mexican bottle makers are less well researched than those from American glass houses.

Table 5c-1 – Variations of Straight American Bottles and Flasks

Finish	Closures	Basemarks	Dating
2-part brandy	Flanged cork; aluminum tear-strip cover	<I>; 55 Triangle T 26; <0>	100 Proof; Highest Quality Like Truth; Successors to Kentucky Distillery Co.; 11 de Mayo 1926; 6 or 7 lines in lower rectangle [Variation 1 – ca. 1926-ca. 1930]
prob. 2-part brandy	Flanged cork; aluminum tear-strip cover; plastic or foil seal over shot glass on quart	<0> / 8 (plant & date codes missing)	gold medals; 31 de Marzo 1932; 6 lines; no 43°; 0.047 1/3 LITRO and 1/10 PINT embossed on back of miniature [Variation 2 – ca. 1932-ca. 1934]
2-part brandy; short top ring	Flanged cork; plastic cover	7 <0> 2 / 1.; 2 Circle-MV 7; 4 Circle-MV 6	6 lines and medals on paper label; no 43°; embossed Juarez Whiskey / Straight American / D.M. Distillery Co. / S.A. [Variation 3 – ca. 1932-ca. 1936]
prob. CT	aluminum tamper-proof cap or rolled steel screw cap	unknown	7 lines; medals; no 43°; Bourbon Extra; neck label – EXTRA [Variation 4 – ca. 1937-ca. 1938]
CT; 2-part brandy	rolled steel screw cap; aluminum tamper-proof cap; flanged cork	6 Circle-MV 6; 9 Circle-MV 4; 56-44 / 7 <0>	Whiskey Genuino Destilado; 43° G.L.; 7 lines; gold medals; crescent shoulder label (quart) [Variation 5 – ca. 1939-1950s?]

* The term “43° G.L.” means degrees Gay-Lussac (after the French chemist Joseph Louis Gay-Lussac) – or 43% alcohol by volume. This translates to 86 proof – as was written on some of the earlier labels (Wikipedia 2012).

Variation 1 – 100 PROOF

These are almost certainly the oldest bottles used for Straight American. My sample consists of only three bottles: two miniature (1/10th pint) flasks and a pint flask. One miniature and the pint flask were topped with two-part “brandy”



Figure 5c-13 – Finish of first Straight American flasks

finishes that were likely sealed by flanged corks.³ The other, offered at an eBay auction, almost certainly had the same finish, but it was concealed by an aluminum cover with a tear-strip around its center that formed a tamper-proof or pilfer-proof seal over the cork.

A seal on the top of the aluminum cover has “U.S. COPYRIGHT 1929 BY D.M. DISTILLERY CO., S.A. / JUAREZ, MEXICO” in a gold ring around a red ball that has “MACKEY & GOMEZ” around “STRAIGHT / AMERICAN / WHISKEY.” A second decal – this time rectangular – around the side of the cover stated “D.M. DISTILLER CO. S.A. / BOLETA DE REGISTO C. NUM. 1 / C. JUAREZ, CHIH.” The seal – and, probably, the cover – thus could not have been used prior to 1929 (Figure 5c-13).

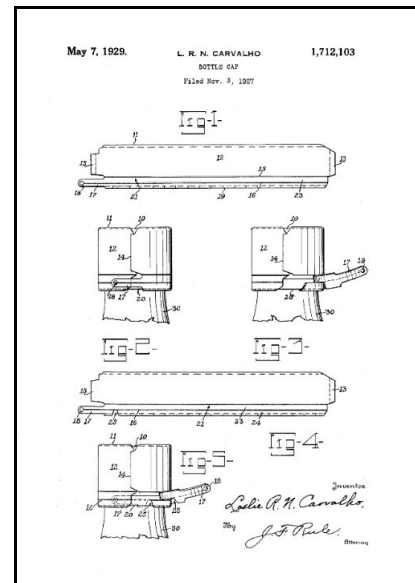


Figure 5c-14 – Carvalho’s 1929 sealing closure patent

The earliest patent for a tear-strip cover that I have been able to find could have hit the market by 1927. Leslie R.N. Carvalho applied for a patent for a “Bottle Cap” on November 3, 1927. He received Patent No. 1,712,103 on May 7, 1929, and assigned it to the Closure Service Co., Toledo, Ohio. Carvalho noted in his patent that “tear-off or rip strips” were already known for use on the skirts of caps (Figure 5c-14).

³ Charles Hammer used the term “flanged cork” in his 1939 patent, No. 2,175,350. The corks consisted of a typical plug that fit into the throat of the bottle, with a flange or circular flat rim at the top to provide a grasping surface for removing the cork without a cork screw. The corks were T-shaped in profile view. Judging by the partial flanges remaining on corks in some bottles, these broke off fairly easily.

The miniature in my collection was embossed “1/10 Pt” on the shoulder and the Diamond-I logo on the base (Figures 5c-15 & 5c-16). The Diamond-I mark was used by the Illinois Glass Co. from 1915 to 1929. The eBay flask was embossed “0.047 1/3 LITRO” on the back shoulder and “1/10 PINT” on the back heel. The base had the <0>



Figure 5c-15 – 1/10th Pint on early Straight American miniature flask



Figure 5c-16 – Base with Diamond-I logo

Owens-Illinois logo, but the numbers were illegible in the photos. The flask, however, could not have been made prior to late 1929. The pint bottle was embossed “FULL PINT” on the shoulder and “55 / {T-in-an-inverted-triangle} / 26” on the base (Figure 5c-17). The Triangle-T logo was used by the Turner Brothers, then Turner Glass Co. from ca. 1910 to 1930. The flask was almost certainly made in 1926.



Figure 5c-17 – Base with Inverted-Triangle-T logo

Each flask had a white label that was rectangular in shape and was divided into two sections, each outlined with a gold border. At the top of the upper (larger) section, “JUAREZ WHISKEY” in a slight arch was just above a red seal and blue ribbon with “100 / PROOF” in white letters. Next was “STRAIGHT (slight inverted arch) / AMERICAN (with letters descending in size to the ‘R’ then ascending again),” above a field scene with a large sheaf of grain and a bushel-basket of corn cobs in the center. The scene was followed by “BOURBON (white letters in a blue scroll) / AGED IN WOOD (red) / *HIGHEST QUALITY / LIKE TRUTH – COMMENDS ITSELF* (blue italics)”



Figure 5c-18 – First style of Straight American paper label

(Figure 5c-18).

The lower (smaller) rectangle was labeled “DESTILADO Y EMBOTELLADO POR / DISTILLED AND BOTTLED BY / D.M. DISTILLERY CO., S.A. / JUAREZ, CHIHUAHUA, MEXICO. / {SUCCESSORS TO / SUCESTORES DE} KENTUCKY DISTILLERY CO. / M. IND. HCTDA NO. 25717 EL 11 de MAYO de 1926 (all in blue ink).” The bottle with the aluminum tear-strip cover had a seventh line “COPYRIGHT IN U.S. 1928 BY D.M. DISTILLERY, S.A., C. JUAREZ, MEXICO.” Important characteristics for dating these early labels include “100 PROOF,” the Highest Quality slogan, the “Successors to” on the lower section of the label, and the 1926 registration.

The labels were almost certainly initiated at some point during 1926, probably close to May 11. They likely continued in use until at least 1930, possibly until 1932. There may have been a sub-variation about 1930 that retained the 1926 date on the label but added the gold medals described for Variation 2. Unless one of these surfaces, we will never know for sure. The finish and/or cork is virtually non-diagnostic. The same two-part “brandy” finish/closure was used on some Straight American bottles until at least the 1940s.

Variation 2 – Medallo de Oro

This label style is represented by two examples in my sample. One is a miniature (1/10th pint) flask with an aluminum tear-strip cover – probably over a flanged cork on a two-part “brandy” finish. The cover is identical to the one described on the miniature flask in Variation 1. The Variation 2 flask is embossed “0.047 1/3 LITRO” on the back shoulder and “1/10 PINT” on the back heel (Figure 5c-19). The base was embossed “<0> / 8.” The flask was made by the Owens-Illinois Glass Co., although the typical date and plant codes are missing. This *may* indicate that the glass house made the flask in 1929, when the firm was new.



Figure 5c-19 – Back embossing on shoulder & heel of Variation 2 flask

The second example was a cylindrical quart bottle painted on a small serving tray. The top of the bottle was concealed by a foil or plastic cover, but the shape appears to be an inverted shot glass over what was probably a flanged cork closure on a two-part “brandy” finish (Figure 5c-20). Local tradition indicates that aluminum shot glasses were sold as part of the quart



Figure 5c-20 – Variation 2 quart bottle on single-serving tray

bottles. I have one of the shot glasses (separate from a container) that has the same “MACKEY & GOMEZ” seal – including the 1929 copyright date – described on two miniature above (Figure 5c-21).



Figure 5c-21 – Aluminum shot glass with “MACKEY & GOMEZ” seal

The tray also states, below the bottle, “Establecidos / Desde 1909” [established since 1909] – with both lines in inverted arches. This date *may* indicate 1909 as year the Pigg purchased the distillery from Campbell. Less likely – but still possible – 1909 may represent the date when Pigg sold the plant to Mackey and Domínguez.

The second labels followed the same general configuration as the earlier ones – two rectangles outlined with gold borders. The upper rectangle had “JUAREZ WHISKEY” in a slight arch above two gold medals (actually front and back of the same medal) laced on a blue ribbon. Tiny letters above the medals announced: “PREMIADO CON MEDALLA DE ORO / EN” with “SEVILLA, ESPANA 1929-1930” below [winning the gold medal in Sevilla, Spain]. The firm received the medal for its whiskey at the Ibero-American Exposition, Seville, Spain – although I have been unable to find whether the award was actually presented in 1929 or 1930.

Below the medals was “STRAIGHT (slight inverted arch) / AMERICAN (with letters descending in size to the ‘R’ then ascending again),” above a field scene with a large sheaf of grain and a bushel-basket filled with cobs of corn in the center. The scene was followed by “BOURBON (white letters in a blue scroll) / AÑEJADO EN BARILLES / AGED IN WOOD (blue letters). Along the left side of the upper rectangle (read holding the flask with the finish to the left) was stamped “ACEPTADO D.S.P. REGISTRO No. 199 / HECHO EN MEXICO” with

“PARTIDO LERDO No. 100 / C. JUAREZ, CHIH.” along the right side.⁴ These were obviously added as an afterthought and stamped rather than imprinted as part of the original label.

The lower rectangle (all black letters) stated:
 “DESTILADO Y EMBOTELLADO POR / DISTILLED AND BOTTLED BY / D.M. DISTILLERY CO. S. A. / JUAREZ, CHIHUAHUA, MEXICO. / M. IND. RGTD. No. 32021 el 31 de MARZO de 1932 / COPYRIGHT IN U.S. 1932 BY D.M. DISTILLERY CO., S.A., JUAREZ, MEXICO.” (Figure 5c-22). Although the cover and the bottle could have been made earlier, the label was printed at some point in 1932 or later. This variation was probably used for only a couple of years, possibly from 1932 to 1934, although it may have overlapped with Variation 3. Important characteristics include the gold medals, 31 de MARZO de 1932 date, and the six-line lower rectangle.



Figure 5c-22 – Variation 2 label with stamped address information

Variation 3 – Embossing on Back – 6 Lines on Lower Rectangle

My sample for this variation consists of three flasks. The first is a half-pint flask with a two-part “brandy” finish – although the top “ring” is shorter than the typical brandy finish. The back of the flask was embossed “JUAREZ WHISKEY (horizontal – shoulder) / STRAIGHT (slight inverted arch) / AMERICAN (with letters descending in size to the ‘R’ then ascending again – all in center of body) / D.M. DISTILLERY CO. / S.A. (both horizontal at heel).” The base was embossed “7 <0> 2 / 1” (Figure 5c-23). The bottle was made at Plant No. 7 (Alton, Illinois) of the Owens-



Figure 5c-23 – Base of Variation 3 half-pint flask

⁴ D.S.P. indicated Departamento Salud Publica – roughly the equivalent of the U.S. Patent Office. Partido Lerdo No. 100 was the street address in Ciudad Juárez.

Illinois Glass Co. in 1932.⁵ The paper label was identical to the one in Variation 2, except that it lacked the stamped information on the sides (Figure 5c-24).



Figure 5c-24 – Variation 3 paper label

The second example was a quarter pint flask with the same embossing but no paper label (Figure 5c-25). The base was embossed “2 Circle-VM 7.” The logo – a VM monogram in a circle – was used by Vidriera Monterrey, Monterrey, Mexico, from possibly as early as ca. 1910 to the 1950s or later. On these Mexican bottles, often the top number has been stamped over or peened out and a new code added. It is thus likely that these are date codes. If so, the “2” *may* indicate 1932.

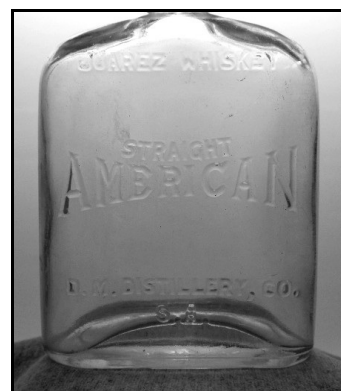


Figure 5c-25 – Back of Variation 3 half-pint flask

The third example was a miniature (1/10th pint) flask with a more normal two-part “brandy” finish, sealed with a flanged cork, covered with red plastic (Figure 5c-26). The process for this type of cover appears to have begun use in 1905 or 1906.



Figure 5c-26 – Two-part “brandy” finish, with flanged cork and plastic cover

On June 13, 1905, Max Engels of Düsseldorf, Germany, applied for a patent for a “Process for Closing or Sealing Apertures.” He received Patent No. 825,116 on July 3, 1906 (Figure 5c-27). The patent called for a cap or band “made from a substance exemplified by celluloid in such a manner that it has the property of altering its dimensions under the influence of heat.” This, then, may have been the first application of shrink-wrapping a seal using plastic. In the case of the whiskey flasks, they would have been corked, followed by applying the sleeve or band of celluloid – which was then heated to conform to the shape of the finish of the flask. Unfortunately, the process was used early enough that it is of no help in dating.

⁵ On most Owens-Illinois bottles, a “2” date code *could* equal 1942 instead. However, on a liquor bottle, the date code would have been two digits by the 1940s.

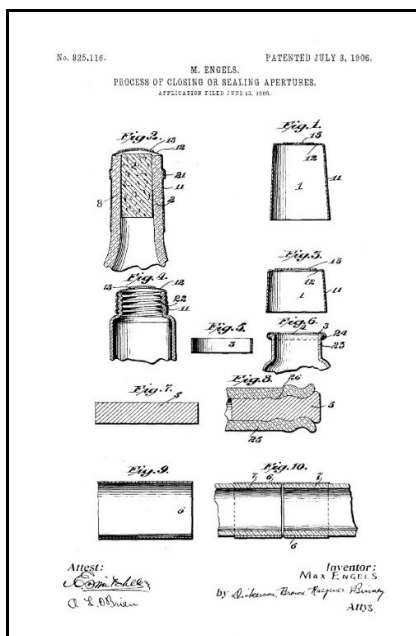


Figure 5c-27 – Engels’s 1906 patent for a plastic seal

Because of the size, the back was only embossed “STRAIGHT / AMERICAN.” The label was identical to the one on the half-pint described above. The base was embossed “4 Circle-VM 6” (Figure 5c-28). As noted above, the “4” may be a date code for 1934, and the bottle was made by Vidriera Monterrey. These bottles and labels were likely used from ca. 1932 until shortly after Repeal – possibly ca. 1936. The most important characteristics are paper labels with gold medals and six lines in the lower rectangles – coupled with “1/4 pint; Bourbon; 6 lines; medals;



Figure 5c-28 – Base with Circle-VM logo

Emb Juarez Whiskey / Straight American / D.M. Distillery Co. / S.A.” embossed on the back of the body.

Variation 4 – 7 Lines on Lower Rectangle

I only know of this variation from two sizes of serving trays and two miniature flasks. One tray was full size, and the other for serving only one or two drinks. Both trays had illustrations of the same bottle (Figure 5c-29). The important features on the illustration are: 1) seven lines on the lower rectangle; 2) a crescent-shaped shoulder label; and 3) an aluminum, tamper-proof seal that almost certainly fit over the finish described for the quart example in Variation 5, below.



Figure 5c-29 – Serving tray with Variation 4 bottle



Figure 5c-30 – Variation 4 miniature flask (Verstappen 2012)

A miniature, illustrated on Paul’s Whisk(e)y Miniature World (2012), had the same label as the bottle on the trays and was topped by a rolled-steel screw cap on a continuous-thread finish. The lid was sealed by two tax stamps crossed over each other (Figure 5c-30), and the back was embossed “STRAIGHT / AMERICAN.” The flask and the bottle illustrated on the trays were almost certainly a transition between Variation 3 and Variation 5. The Gay-Lussac system of labeling alcohol content must have been added shortly thereafter – creating the only real change between Variation 4 and Variation 5.

These roll-on closures (as shown on the tray in Figure 5c-29) apparently appeared about the end of Prohibition. According to Everett (1982:185):

The pilferproof version of the roll-on closure was first produced, commercially, in April of 1933. The American rights to produce the pilferproof closure, under a British patent, had been acquired earlier. Repeal of Prohibition in December of 1933 created a demand for the roll-on closure. The added pilferproof feature provided additional impetus for the sale of RO pilferproof closures in the wine and liquor market. The pilferproof feature minimized the possibility of tampering with product integrity. In this application, there was no need to contain pressure or withstand exposure to elevated temperatures in the packaging process.

I have been unable to find a patent that exactly matches the illustration on the tray, but Emerson Edward Hogg began experimenting with tamper-proof caps by at least November 25, 1930, when he applied for a patent for a “Tamperproof Seal.” He received Patent No. 1,908,245 on May 9, 1933 (Figure 5c-31). This may be the closure referenced by Everett (1982) above.

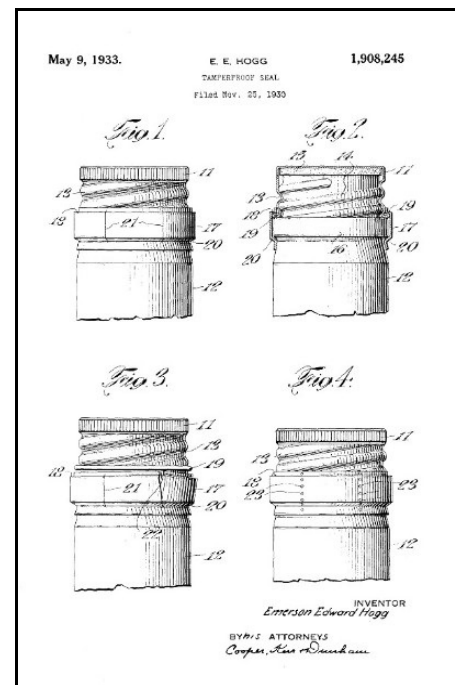


Figure 5c-31 – Hogg’s 1933 tamperproof seal patent

Augustus L. Merolle applied for a patent for a “Receptacle Closure” on November 22, 1933 – shortly after Hogg received his patent. Merolle received Patent No. 2,062,271 for his device on November 24, 1936. The patent drawing is very similar to the tray illustration, although the opening tab is slightly different (Figure 5c-32). It is thus likely that the tray and the bottle type was used during the 1937-1939 period.

Variation 5 – Gay-Lussac Labels

My sample for this variation consists of four examples, each with very different finishes and closures. The smallest two were a miniature flasks (1/10th pint), one with a



Figure 5c-33 – Rolled-steel cap and tax stamp

continuous-thread finish topped by a gold, rolled-steel screw cap. The cap was partly covered with a tax stamp that included a drawing of the Mexican national emblem – an eagle clutching a rattlesnake (Figure 5c-33). The flask was embossed “STRAIGHT / AMERICAN” in the center body (Figure 5c-34). The base was embossed “6 Circle-VM 6.” The “6” could indicate 1936, and the manufacturer was Vidriera Monterrey. An odd feature was a frosted area on the neck and upper shoulder. A second flask (Verstappen 2012) probably had a flanged cork concealed by a black plastic cover (Figure 5c-35), although the flask and label were otherwise identical to the one with the screw cap. The base of the Verstappen flask was not illustrated or described.

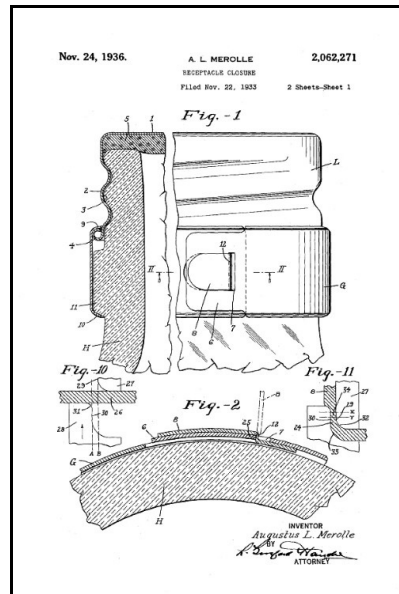


Figure 5c-32 – Merolle’s 1936 tamperproof seal patent

continuous-thread finish topped by a gold, rolled-steel screw cap. The cap was partly covered with a tax stamp that included a drawing of the Mexican national emblem – an eagle clutching a rattlesnake (Figure 5c-33). The flask was embossed “STRAIGHT / AMERICAN” in the center body (Figure 5c-



Figure 5c-34 – Embossing on back of miniature flask (Verstappen 2012)

The upper rectangle of the label was basically the same as the ones described for Variation 2, with a few exceptions. First, “43° G.L.”⁶ was stamped to the left of the medals. Second, the word “BOURBON” was replaced with “WHISKEY GENUINO DESTILADO” [Genuine Distilled Whiskey] in the blue scroll below the field scene. Below that was “Reg. F de C⁷ / DWD 271221 / Reg. 55A No. 199 ‘B’” to the left; “AGED IN WOOD / HECHO EN MEXICO / AÑEJADO EN BARRILLES” in the center; and “0.4735 Lts. / Reg ALCOHOLES F. S.P. 361” to the right.



Figure 5c-35 – Variation 5 miniature flask with black plastic cover (Verstappen 2012)

The lower rectangle stated: “DESTILADO Y EMBOTELLADO POR / DISTILLED AND BOTTLE BY / D.M. DISTILLERY CO., S.A. / PARTIDO LERDO S/N / CD. JUAREZ, CHIHUAHUA, MEXICO / M. IND. REGTDA NO. 32021 EL 31 DE MARZO DE 1932 / COPYRIGHT IN U.S. 1932 BY D.M. DISTILLERY CO., S.A., JUAREZ, MEXICO.” The inclusion of the “Partido Lerdo” added a seventh line to the lower section of the label.

The next size was pint flask with a two-part “brandy” finish and the remnants of a flanged cork. The flask was embossed “FULL PINT” at the shoulder and “56-44 / 7” with <0> sideways to right. The flask was made by the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. in 1944.

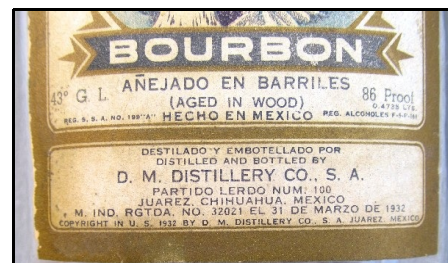


Figure 5c-36 – Variation 5 label from pint flask; note degree mark in left corner of upper rectangle

The upper rectangle of the paper label was very similar to the one on the miniature flask. The scroll below the picture, however, was labeled “BOURBON” and the “43° G.L.” had migrated down below the scroll to the left of “(AGED IN WOOD).” To the right was “86 PROOF” (Figure 5c-36).

⁶ The term “43° G.L.” means degrees Gay-Lussac (after the French chemist Joseph Louis Gay-Lussac) – or 43% alcohol by volume. This translates to 86 proof – as was written on some of the earlier labels (Wikipedia 2012).

⁷ Registro Federale de Causantes or taxpayer identification number.



Figure 5c-37 – Quart bottle with Variation 5 label

The lower rectangle was almost identical to the miniature, except that the fourth line was “PARTIDO LERDO NUM 100.”

The final example was a quart-sized, cylindrical bottle with an interesting finish (Figure 5c-37). The finish had continuous threads above two rings – the middle ring thick and squared. This was almost certainly made for an early tamper-proof aluminum cap (Figure 5c-38). The bottle had embossed rings at shoulder and heel, with “STRAIGHT / AMERICAN” in the center body and “D.M. DISTILLERY CO. / S.A.” at the heel. The neck had a Texas tax stamp (but no date) and a crescent-shaped shoulder label with a large “6” in the center, with “AÑEJADO / EN / BARRILES” to the left, and “AGED / IN / WOOD” (Figures 5c-



Figure 5c-38 – Finish for roll-on tamperproof cap; quart bottle



Figure 5c-39 – Texas tax stamp on bottle neck

39 & 5c-40). The base was embossed “9 / Circle-MV / 4” – made by Vidriera Monterrey, possibly in 1939 or 1949 (Figure 5c-41). Aside from the size, the label was identical with the one on the miniature – including “43° G.L.” to the left of the medals.



Figure 5c-40 – Crescent shoulder label

The finish was likely made for one of Charles Hammer’s patents. Hammer had been designing bottle closures since at least 1912 and had patented no less than 21 caps by the time he originated the one probably used on the Variation 5 quart bottle. On



Figure 5c-41 – Base with Circle-VM logo

July 21, 1937, Hammer applied for a patent for a “container cap or closure” and received Patent No. 2,175,350 on October 10, 1939 (Figure 5c-42). Hammer claimed this cap would “prevent tampering” without “objectionable tear-off strips or score lines.” Hammer’s original patent was for both the design and the method of making the cap. The patent office divided the patent into two parts, causing Hammer to reapply for the method on June 1, 1939. He received Patent No. 2,191,989 for the “Method of Making Container Caps or Closures” on February 27, 1940.

Significant features of this last variation are the gold medals, seven lines on the lower rectangle, Whiskey Genuino Destilado on the label, crescent shoulder label on the quart size, various types of embossing on backs of the bottles, and – most importantly – 43° G.L. These labels began use ca. 1939 and continued probably into the 1950s or later. I have not seen or studies any of the later labels – from the 1950s-1970s period.

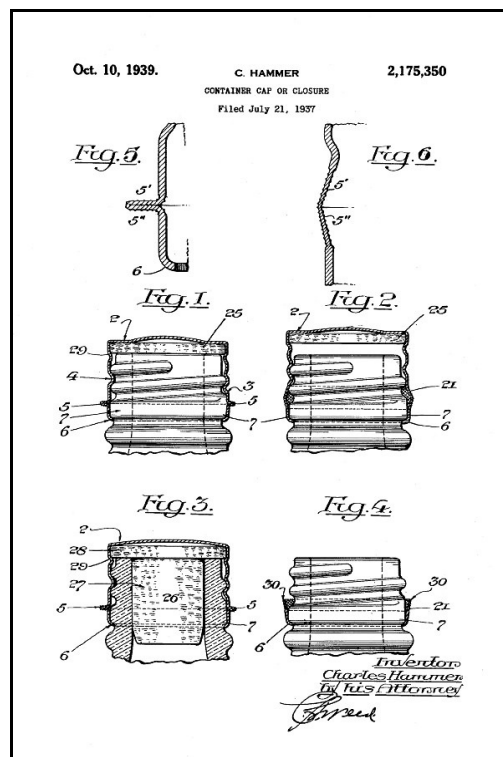


Figure 5c-42 – Hammer’s 1939 patent

Discussion and Conclusions

Although I have only discovered a few miniature bottles and one flask with markings that identified them as being used in bars or night clubs, it is *very* likely that most of those establishments used such containers. In some cases, it is probable that local distilleries made special orders for the local clubs, and applied special labels directly to the bottles for them – although I have not found any of those.

Almost as rare is the single embossed bottle from C. Rivas Petit. As noted above, the flask was almost certainly pre-Prohibition. The most common or most likely process was embodied by the Central Café with its use of its own labels, pasted atop the José Cuervo label. These would have been fast, easy, and good advertising.

The earliest distillery liquor bottles were unmarked, had paper labels that have

deteriorated, or I have not discovered them yet. Since the few made prior to U.S. Prohibition would *only* have been sold locally in Juárez, they are much less likely to appear in typical U.S. collector venues.

There are probably more variations in bottles and/or paper labels for the Straight American brand. As noted above, there may have been a slightly different label in use between 1930 and 1932. Conversely, D.M. Distillery may have had so many labels already printed that the first “gold medal” label was not needed until 1932. Hopefully, other examples will surface in the future.

Similarly, there should be at least one more label change during the post-1940 period. I suspect, however, that more recent labels will show little change. It is possible that the distillery ceased production at some point and the firm or a distributor continued to advertise and sell remaining stock for several years.

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