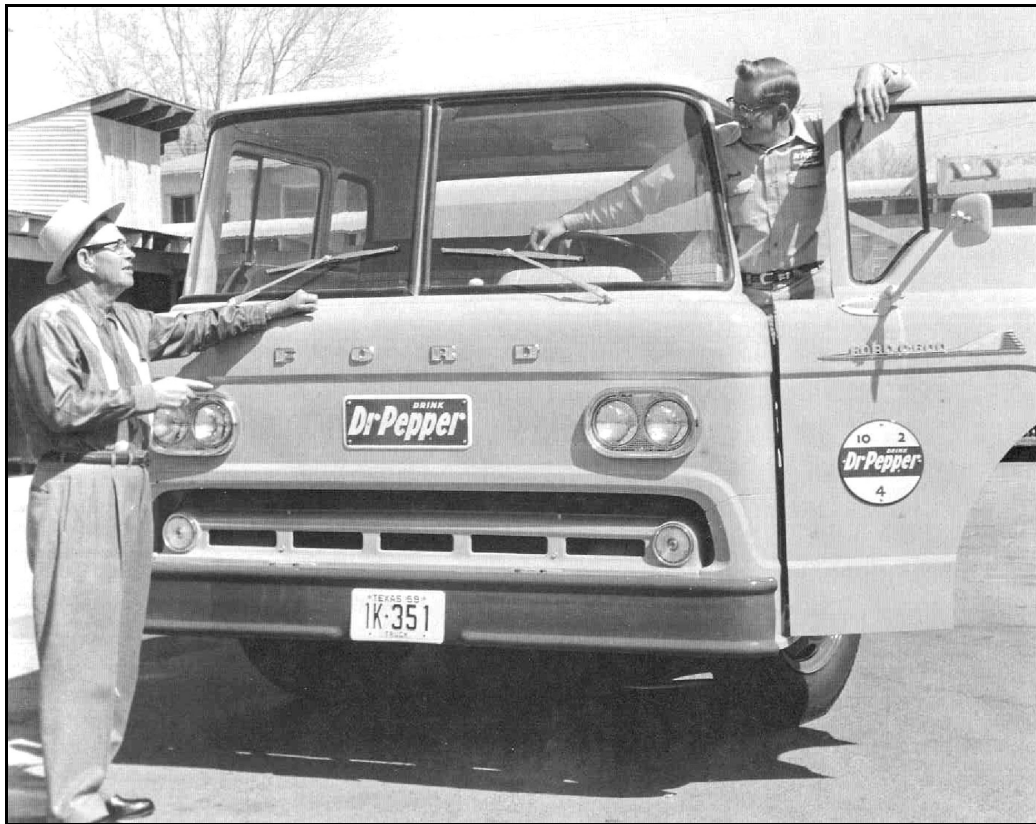


# Bottles on the Border: The History and Bottles of the Soft Drink Industry in El Paso, Texas, 1881-2000



John Yowel (standing) with son “Dub” (in truck), 1959 (Courtesy of Joe W. Yowell)

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Chapter 11c



## Chapter 11c

### Later Dr Pepper Companies

#### Barq's Dr Pepper Bottling Co. (1957-1976)

##### History<sup>1</sup>

In 1957, the Yowells bought the Dr Pepper franchise, changing the name to Barq's Dr Pepper Bottling Co. The defunct Dr Pepper plant on Highway 80 was abandoned in favor of the Barq's 1315 West Main Dr. location, closer to the center of town (Figures 11c-1 & chapter cover page). John Yowell had a stroke in 1960 that left him partially paralyzed and confined to a wheelchair. He died in 1967, leaving his wife, Marion, and son, Joe, to run the operation (EPCD 1957-1967).

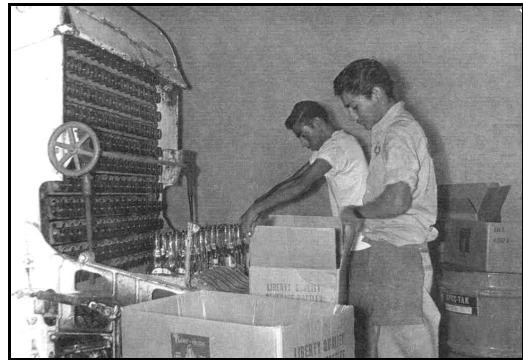


Figure 11c-1 – Unpacking Dr Pepper bottles made by Liberty Glass Co. in 1958 (Courtesy of Joe W. Yowell)

Joe W. “Dub” Yowell, born in 1931 and raised in the bottling business, took on ever greater responsibilities. The company obtained Squirt and Dad's Root Beer from Empire in 1969 and were selling Dr Pepper and Lipton's Iced Tea in cans by 1970 (Figure 11c-2). The firm continued to grow and expand. At the company's peak, Barq's trucks ran from Van Horn, Texas, in the east to Lordsburg, New Mexico, in the west and northward into Silver City, Alamogordo, and Ruidoso. To keep up with the business, Yowell installed warehouses in Van Horn, Silver City, and Alamogordo (EPCD 1957-1976; EPTD 1970).

It was too much territory and brought unwanted problems to Yowell. During World War II, one truck failed to come back from the New Mexico route. The sheriff at Truth or Consequences called Yowell to tell him that the truck was sitting on its break drums in an alley. The driver had sold all the drinks and even the truck tires, then fled the state (Yowell's

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise cited, most of this information came from a series of interviews with “Dub” Yowell.

predecessor had experienced similar troubles—see above). That was enough for Yowell. The income from the additional territory no longer exceeded the cost in frustration. In the late 1960s, he turned over most of the New Mexico Dr Pepper business to Joe W. Wolslager of the Coca-Cola Co. of San Angelo, Texas.



Figure 11c-2 –Leisure time at a convention - (left to right) Joe W. “Dub” Yowell; Bob Ranselm (Barq’s Sales Manager); Jim Larabel (Pepsi-Cola, El Paso); and the unidentified manager of Pepsi-Cola in Las Cruces (Courtesy of Joe W. Yowell)

Bottles

Barq’s Flavors – 12 Ounce

For continuity, the bottles used by the Barq’s Dr Pepper Bottling Co. were addressed in Chapter 11b. At this point, I have recorded two 12-ounce Barq’s bottles, one from 1960, the other probably from the early 1960s – both of which still had the local city/state designation. However, both bottles were still marked “BARQ’S BOTTLING CO. / EL PASO, TEXAS.” Why Yowell continued to use the old name is unknown. The reason may be as simple as forgetting to tell the glass house to change the name.

Barq’s Flavors – 16-ounce

Barq’s also used at least two 18-ounce bottles. These were made in the same specialty style as the 12-ounce and smaller bottles and were embossed with the same patent number. The bottles were made in at least two sub-variations used at El Paso. Although both were the same capacity, one was marked ONE PINT / 2 OZS. on the neck (Figure 11c-3), the other 18 oz.

**Method of Manufacture:** Machine

**Color:** Colorless

**Size (in cm.):** 29.5 (h); 6.6 (d)

**Primary Labeling Style:** White and Blue ACL

**Finish:** Crown

**Capacity:** 18 oz.

**Overall Bottle Design:** Cylindrical with swelled neck (similar to beer bottles, supposedly to allow for foam expansion); body and neck embossed with orange peel design

**Front Description**

**Neck:** White ACL - ONE PINT / 2 OZS.18 OZ.

**Shoulder:** Embossed with offset checkerboard design extending into body with inset at upper body embossed with CONT. 18 FL. OZS.

**Body:** A white border with blue backgrounds at top and bottom. Within the blue background was the word, DRINK, followed by Barq's (upwardly slanted script in the colorless background) / TRADE MARK REG. (upwardly slanted in the colorless background) and, IT'S GOOD in the lower blue section / ONE PINT 2 OZS. (white – below the rectangular label)

**Back Description**

**Neck:** Same as front

**Shoulder:** Same as front but embossed: DESIGN PAT. D-98026 with Barq's (script) / REG. below – in the upper-body section

**Body:** White ACL - CONTENTS ONE PINT 2 OZS. / PROPERTY OF / BARQ'S BOTTLING CO. / EL PASO, TEXAS

**Base:** Embossed - 1460 / © 66 / 3 with stippling on entire base

**Manufacturer:** Chattanooga Glass Co. (1925-present)

**Dating:** [mid-1960s] Both 18-ounce examples I have seen were made in 1966. It is possible that 1966 was the only year Barq's tried this size. Sixteen-ounce bottles were first used in El Paso in the early 1960s (ca. 1962) by Vess and 3-V Cola. Other bottlers soon followed suit. These bottles are unusual, however, because most franchises had ceased placing bottler's names on the bottles by ca. 1960.

**Collection(s):** Author's collection.



Figure 11c-3 – Larger size Barq's bottle – ONE PINT 2 OZ

*Variations:*

1. Described above
2. Although these two bottles supposedly had the same capacity, the 18-ounce variation was slightly taller, measuring 29.7 cm. in height and 6.5-6.6 cm. in diameter. The bottle was otherwise perfectly identical to Variation 1 in configuration and embossing, except for a 1 in the mold code position instead of a 3. The major differences were in the ACL portion. The neck was embossed 18 OZ. on both sides. The front label was the same but with no volume designation under the rectangle. Below the back embossing, the ACL proclaimed CONTENTS 18 FL. OZS. but was otherwise the same (Figure 11c-4).

Two bottles with exactly the same design but different ACL, made during the *same* year – by the *same* glass house – for the *same* bottling plant, are unusual, to say the least! At a guess – and this is only speculation – I would say that the 18 oz. variation was tried first, without any notable increase in sales. Since 18 looks very similar to 16, Yowell may have thought that the drinking public did not realize the bottle held an extra two ounces. The ONE PINT / 2 OZS. variation emphasized the additional two ounces. Of course, the opposite is possible. A sizeable portion of the population may not have realized that ONE PINT was the same as 16 OZ., a designation on all the 16-ounce bottles.

Dr Pepper – ACL

Briefly (1954-55), Dr Pepper used a transition bottle with a clock face in red and white ACL on the bottle neck. The rest of the bottle contained the debossed labeling noted above. These bottles are extremely rare (Mildred G. Walker, personal communication). In June, 1955, the company introduced the first bottles entirely decorated with enameled labels. These Georgia



Figure 11c-4 – Larger size Barq's bottle – 18 OZ

Green containers showed a white bottle cap on both shoulder and body front. A red slanted bar stretched across the cap with the words Dr Pepper in white slanted block letters and ® under the third “P.” Above the bar was printed 10 drink 2 in red, with 4 below the bar. These bottles were used between 1955 and 1960 but, like their predecessor, are extremely rare and may never have actually seen use in most jurisdictions (Ellis 1979:193, 201, 205, 258, 259).



Figure 11c-6 – Dr Pepper bottle with broad letters – introduced in 1971

It is unlikely that either of these transition bottles were used at El Paso. In Chapter 11a, I recorded one of the green debossed bottles with a date code for 1957. This was almost certainly the last bottle ordered by the Dr Pepper Bottling Co. before Barq’s acquired the franchise. Barq’s almost certainly continued to fill the older bottles until they wore out.

In 1958, the company selected a style it called “bounce lettering” to distinguish their third ACL bottle configuration. The lettering was so named because the third “p” was “bounced” up to a slightly higher position than the other two (Figure 11c-5). Although the new style was introduced in 1958, the logo was not used until 1960. The style continued until 1971 (Ellis 1979:205, 260).

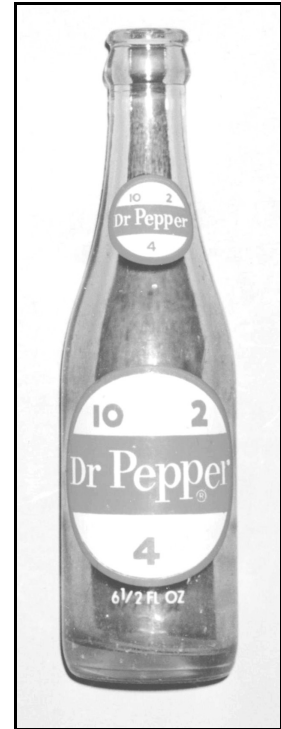


Figure 11c-5 – Dr Pepper bottle with “bounce” letters – introduced in 1958 (Willie Terrazas collection)

Another style, in use from 1971, included broader letters and eliminated the venerable clock that had long dominated Dr Pepper advertising (Figure 11c-6). By 1996, returnable bottles had virtually disappeared from grocery shelves, being replaced almost entirely by cans, plastic containers, and non-returnable glass bottles. A few individual bottlers continue to use returnable bottles that were still available from Vitro Packaging Company of McAllen, Texas. These few, however, represent the last holdouts at the end of more than a century-old tradition of the use of returnable bottles in soft drink packaging. See Table 11a-2 for a chronology of Dr Pepper bottles.

Table 11c-1 - Dr Pepper Bottle Chronology\*

Beginning Date	Description of Bottle Change
1891-ca. 1907	Blob top, round bottom, embossed
1900-10	Crown finish, round bottom
1907-12	Crown finish, machine-made, “King of Beverages” also “Thief” bottle
1923-24	Crown finish, colorless, <u>embossed</u> , “Good for Life,” 3-handed clock
ca. 1930	Colorless, <u>debossed</u> , “Good for Life,” 3-handed clock
1950	Georgia green, debossed, slant block lettering, no period after Dr, no hands on clock
1954-55	same, with ACL clock face on neck
1955	ACL, bottle cap design, slant block lettering
1955	ACL, clock design, no bottle cap, slant block lettering
1960-61	ACL, bounce lettering (3rd “p” “bounced” up)
1971	ACL, broad block lettering in oval, no clock

\* Information from personal communication with Mildred G. Walker, Curator, Dr Pepper Museum

### Dr Pepper Cans

Dr Pepper first marketed 6-ounce, cone-top or crown-cap cans on October 13, 1954, along with 10- and 12-ounce flat-top or punch-top cans. The following year (1955), two cone-top cans in 6- and 12- ounce sizes were offered with the 10-2-4 clock as part of the design. These lasted until the “candy stripe” promotion in 1958 which marked the end of cone-top cans by Dr Pepper (Bates 200b).

One of the major advantages of cone-top cans was that they could be filled by existing bottling equipment rather than an expensive retooling of the line for flat-top cans. Although I have never found a printed reference, and Joe Yowell never mentioned it in his interviews, both



the Dr Pepper Bottling Co. (1950-1956) and Barq's Dr Pepper Bottling Co. (1957-1976) could have canned the beverage in cone-top cans using regular bottling equipment. After 1958, however, canning would have required an entirely new line of equipment.

### Dr Pepper Shell

In 1972, the Dr Pepper Bottling Company used a red shell (case) with white lettering. Each end board was lettered DR PEPPER BOTTLING CO / {10-2-4 clockface to both right and left of hand hole} / EL PASO, TEXAS (Figure 11c-7). The outside of each side board was labeled DRINK / Dr Pepper / ® in broad lettering. The inside of each side board was labeled in red with DRINK / Dr Pepper (bounce lettering) / ® (logo comprising a broken circle with six spokes) / TEMPLE MFG CO / DALLAS, TEX. / 2 - 72. It is interesting that the inside of the shell is labeled with the older lettering style, apparently utilizing old sideboards turned inward (Figure 11c-8).



Figure 11c-7 – End view of a 1972 Dr Pepper shell

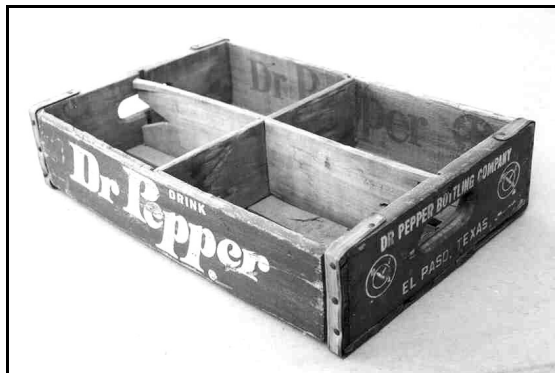


Figure 11c-8 – Side view of a 1972 Dr Pepper shell, showing internal letters

The wooden shell was made from two sideboards ca. 1 cm. thick, three base boards ca. 1.0 cm. thick, and two end boards ca. 1.9 cm. thick. The boards were held together with two 1.5 cm. thick steel bands connecting the base and side boards to the end boards with nails. The interior of the shell was divided by two boards (ca. 0.7 cm. thick) into four even areas to contain sixpack cartons of bottles. All measurements of wood vary slightly because of warping and wear.

### Dietetic Dr Pepper and Diet Dr Pepper

Dietetic Dr Pepper was introduced in 1962, first in twelve-ounce cans, later (1963) in six-and-a-half-, ten-, and twelve-ounce returnable bottles. The bottle shape was unique. From the heel, the body pinched in slightly, then extended vertically upward to a point just below the shoulder. At that point, the sides dipped sharply in to form a horizontal countersunk ring around

the bottle. A gradually sloping shoulder and neck then led up to the finish. The name, Dr Pepper, with the ® under the third “P” was superimposed on a white oval above the word “dietetic” in white script flanked by two diamonds. Below, on the shoulder, was the message ARTIFICIALLY SWEETENED / LOW CALORIE / SUGAR FREE. A second, larger white oval and logo appeared on the front body cradled into a light blue rectangle. A downward-pointing white-and-blue chevron rested on the rectangle above the word, dietetic, in white script (Ellis 1979:214-215).

In August of 1963, Dietetic Dr Pepper became available in a twenty-six-ounce bottle. The term, dietetic, however, had been causing confusion among the public, many of whom mistook the term to mean that the drink was for diabetics. The problem was solved later that year by changing the name to Diet Dr Pepper (Figure 11c-9). The drink remained in the same bottle, but with the name, diet, in script above the Dr Pepper logo, where, dietetic, had been below it. The words SUGAR FREE were also removed from the shoulder label (Ellis 1979:217).

Another new name accompanied the last major change in packaging. In May, 1971, the drink became Sugar Free Dr Pepper and was available in twelve-ounce cans, ten-ounce returnable bottles, and a variety of non-returnable containers. This time, the returnable container was changed to a straight-sided bottle with a slight indentation made up of several horizontal embossed rings where the previous bottle had the deeper groove. The new bottle had wider lettering and a new color scheme. The shoulder label was still a horizontal oval, but now the oval was blue within a white ring. Wide letters proclaimed Dr Pepper with the usual ® still in its place below the third “P” and SUGAR FREE in white block letters above. The identical logo was enameled on the body front with CONTAINS ARTIFICIALLY SWEETENED CARBONATED BEVERAGE/10 FL. OZ. in white letters below (Ellis 1979:230-231).

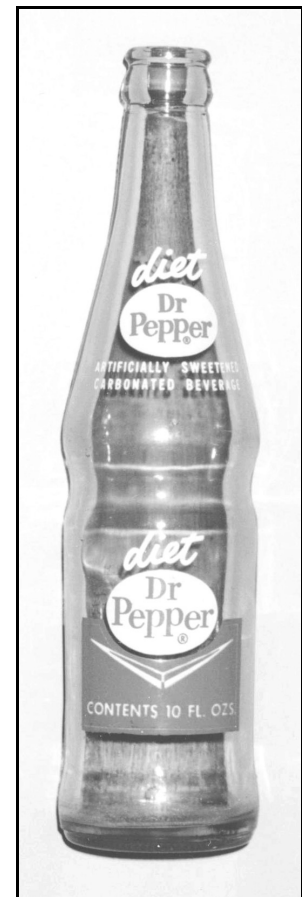


Figure 11c -9 – Diet Dr Pepper (Willie Terrazas collection)

A newcomer to the scene, available only in non-returnable bottles and cans was a Caffeine-Free Dr Pepper, know as Pepper Free. Pepper Free was available in both sugar-free and sugar-sweetened versions and came in Styrofoam-insulated containers. Ironically, Dr Pepper was originally advertised as caffeine-free in 1885, but caffeine was later added to compete with other drinks (Ellis 1979 24).

### Pommac

Dr Pepper distributed Pommac, a Swedish import, from 1963 to 1969 (Figure 11c-10). The drink had a tangy taste and was originally packaged in six-and-a-half- and ten-ounce bottles. It was initially marketed as a diet drink but was later converted to a sugared beverage. Although Pommac had been popular in Europe for more than forty years, it took a while for people to become accustomed to the taste, so sales were slow. When sales remained stagnant after six years, Dr Pepper discontinued the product (Ellis 1979:216-217).

### Dad's Root Beer

At some point, Yowell franchised Dad's Root Beer. This brand had been carried by the Empire Bottling Co. (1956-1969) by at least 1964. The drink was probably picked up by Barq's after Empire closed – long after local bottler designations had been dropped. For information on the smaller “Junior” size Dad's bottles, see the section on the Empire Bottling Co.

### Big Red

Big Red was originally introduced as Sun Tang Red Creme Soda in 1937. The product did not find its way to El Paso, however, until the 1970s, when it was bottled by the Dr Pepper Bottling Co. I have been unable to locate an example in a returnable bottle. It is possible that the parent company dropped returnables from their line in favor of cans and non-returnable packages prior to the product's entry into El Paso.

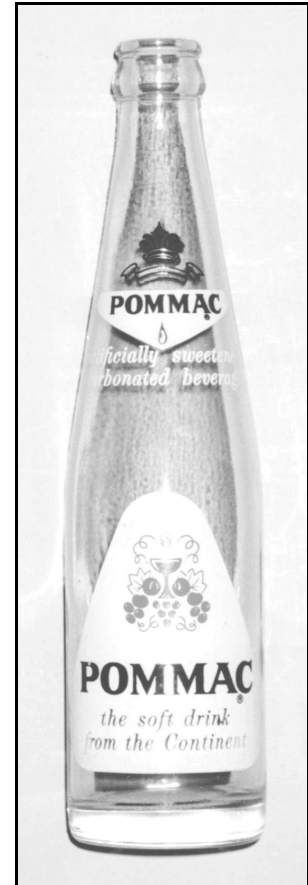


Figure 11c-10 – Pommac, a Swedish import (Willie Terrazas collection)

## Dr Pepper Bottling Co. (1977-1980)

### History

In 1977, Marion and Joe Yowell dropped the word “Barq’s” from the company name and discontinued Barq’s products. Joe Yowell suffered a heart attack on March 17, 1975. He remembered his father’s stroke and death and knew it was time to get out. In 1980, the Yowells accepted a proposition from the Magnolia Coca-Cola Bottling Co. to purchase their franchises and bottling equipment.

In April 1980, Sam Dell’Olio, representing Magnolia, took charge of the Dr Pepper Bottling Company assets, although not the physical bottling plant. New operations took place at the Magnolia plant, and twelve of Dr Pepper’s eighteen former employees accepted positions with the new owner. The sale gave Magnolia control over Dr Pepper, Big Red, Lipton Tea, Dad’s Root Beer, and Squirt – brands formerly bottled by the Yowell family. According to Dub Yowell, Magnolia now had control of 60% of the soft drink business in El Paso. The sale marked the end of forty-one years – from Barq’s to Dr Pepper – of a family-owned business

Joe Yowell and his wife, the former Irma Ramirez from El Paso, enjoyed retirement. As of 1998, they still own the property on 1315 West Main Dr. which is now occupied by Biodyne Chemicals. Joe’s mother, Marion, died in August 1994 at the age of 86. Yowell admitted in 1998 that he still missed her – a lot. Still, he remained calmly philosophical about the fluctuations of the soft-drink business. Sitting in his comfortable El Paso living room, he recalled, “We made a lot of money – and we lost a lot of money.” Not a bad life to look back on.