

# SEVEN-UP BOTTLES

## ANOTHER LOOK

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In 2005, I wrote an article for *The Soda Fizz* entitled “The Other Side of the Story: A Look at the *Back* of Seven-Up Bottles.” The emphasis, of course, was on *back* labels, when most of us pay attention to the front. Several people, including collectors, archaeologists and eBay sellers, contacted me after the article was published to discuss exceptions that they had, wanted to sell or knew about. I began to realize (yet again!!!) that the game was bigger than I thought!

### History

We need to begin with a brief history of the Seven-Up company. Born in 1868, Charles Leiper Grigg was a salesman for Vess Jones (yes, the same one who started the line of Vess beverages). Griggs invented (the term generally used during that time period) Whistle, an orange soda, which quickly became the top-selling brand offered by Vess (Vess Dry, his ginger ale was a mediocre seller and Whizz, possibly not the best name choice, was a dud – try to find a Whizz bottle around). Eventually, Jones and Grigg had a falling out and Grigg left (Rodengen 1995:79).

In the 1920s, Grigg created another orange drink that he called Howdy. He joined with Edmund G. Ridgeway in 1920 to form the Howdy Company. Howdy (both the drink and company) was a success. Grigg began working on a new drink in 1927 and the Howdy Company introduced Bib-Label Lithiated Lemon Soda in 1929. Fortunately the name was changed to 7-Up Lithiated Lemon-Lime Soda and finally to just Seven-Up before too much damage was done (Rodengen

1995:79-81). The rest, as they say, was history.

### The Mechanics of Change

Before proceeding, it is important that we discuss the mechanics of change – how changes in labeling come about. First, of course, someone has to come up with an idea. Grigg developed a great tasting drink – with a lousy name: Bib-Label Lithiated Lemon Soda. Someone else realized that the name would kill the product and suggested a shortened version: Lithiated Lemon-Lime Soda. Although we don’t know the details, someone else (brilliantly) suggested Seven-Up, and the drink became a success.

The same process occurred with the labels. Early labels described above, but another series of choices – bottle shape, bottle color, type of label (paper, embossed, ACL), shape and design of label, placement of label – had to be made. Paper labels required that all information be on the front, but ACL allowed the splitting of the label, usually with a large logo on the front and information on the back. As ideas changed the back label (and, to a lesser extent, the front one) changed.

But the story does not end with design. Regardless of who originated the design, it had to funnel through the company for approval – and designs usually emanated directly from the main company. The company then test marketed the new design by sending it to one or two franchises (usually close by) to see if the public would react favorably

to the change. Assuming the reaction was positive, the new design would be sent to all franchises. Most franchises adopted each of the new ideas (i.e., design changes) as soon as their existing bottle supplies ran out. Some franchises, however, were resistant to *some* new ideas but liked other ones. As a result, there are some interesting exceptions to virtually all of the design changes that I will be discussing.

### Bottles

When looking at Seven-Up bottles, two things stand out immediately: color and shape. Virtually everyone is familiar with the forest green color of the typical Seven-Up bottles, and most serious collectors also know that some of the early ones were made in amber as well. The amber bottles, only used between 1929 and at least 1938, are found in three shapes: 1) a generic, unembossed, 12-ounce, very typical bottle (**Figure 1**); 2) the also typical 7-ounce bottle embossed with “u7p” on the shoulder (**Figure 2**, left); and 3) a squat bottle, similar to the malt beverage bottles used early in the century (**Figure 3**).

The forest green bottles only appeared in two shapes (the generic 7- or 12-ounce containers and the typical “7-UP” soda bottle shape), but they were made in many sizes. Initially, the green bottles were made in the 7-ounce size only. A 12-ounce size became available ca. 1954, with a quart available about the same time. I have been unable to find a reference to any 10-ounce bottles. Later, of course, 16-ounce and other sizes became available.

### Front Labels

#### Paper

Simultaneously, Seven-Up was undergoing a series of changes in labels. Initially, all bottles wore paper labels, and it is likely that the early bottles were all generic. The paper labels, themselves,



**Figure 2:** Amber 7-ounce bottle.



**Figure 1:** Amber 12-ounce generic bottle.

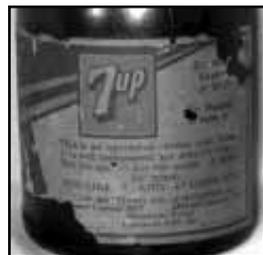
**Figure 3:** Amber Squat 7-ounce bottle.



**Figure 4:** Lithiated Lemon Soda paper label #1.



**Figure 5:** Lithiated Lemon Soda paper label #2.



**Figure 6:** 7-Up paper label.

underwent a transformation. At this writing, I have only found five examples of paper-label bottles, but these came in four different configurations. Two are Lithiated Lemon Soda labels, and the other two are 7-Up. All have the “slenderizing” lady or “bubble girl” (a silhouette of a young woman with arms up stretched) to the left, and all have eight bubbles in the red-orange shield (Figures 1 and 4-6). Paper-label bottles remained in use until at least 1938.

**ACL**

Applied Color Lettering was introduced by the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. in 1934 and was quickly copied by the leading soda bottle manufacturers. The earliest, probably experimental ACL Seven-Up bottle had a white label and was made in 1935 by the Huntington, West Virginia factory of Owens-Illinois. The bottle was marked: “7 up / ALKALINE REACTION / THE GAS PURIFIERS” below the “up” and a bold underline beneath it all (Figure 7).

Apparently, the test market for the Alkaline Reaction bottle was not positive, and the company seems to have returned to a reliance on paper labels in 1936, although one amber bottle was probably made during that year. This amber bottle does not fit the typical pattern and may have just been a prototype bottle. Instead of the typical red-orange shield with a white “7up” and white ACL swim-suit lady and outline, this bottle had a white shield with the lady and outline in what may have been red (Figure 2). Hopefully, I will eventually see the base of one of these and find out just what year it was made.

Typically, however, the next stage began in 1937. The “slenderizing” lady lost her word (slenderizing) and acquired a swim suit. The shield was red-orange, and everything else in ACL was white. Like the paper label, the shield contained eight bubbles (Figure 8). During 1938, someone noticed that eight bubbles did not match well with Seven-up. As a result, the labels from 1938 on contained seven bubbles (Figure 9). With one exception, this configuration and color scheme remained in use



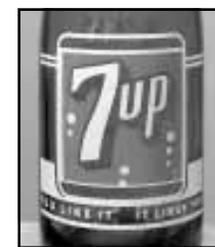
**Figure 7:** Alkaline Reaction bottle – 1935.



**Figure 8:** 8-bubble swim-suit label.



**Figure 9:** 7-Bubble swimsuit label.



**Figure 11:** Shield label – no swimsuit.



**Figure 12:** Embossed neck label “u7p”



**Figure 13:** Embossed neck label “7up”



**Figure 14:** ACL neck label

until 1953. The exception occurred during World War II, but the exact dates have not been published that I know of. The swim suit bottle lost its red-orange shield – probably, sometime between 1942 and 1945 (Figure 10). The red pigment was saved for war use. With peace, the red-orange shield returned.

The final change we will deal with in this article involved the loss of the swimsuit lady or “bubble girl.” The new label had extra lines around the shield and the words “YOU LIKE IT IT LIKES YOU” below. This label was in use from 1953 to at least 1968 (Figure 11).

**Neck Labels**

Only one paper-labeled bottle had an accompanying neck label (actually placed on the shoulder). Although the only photo I have is too indistinct to read (Figure 1), I can describe the original. The label was a white, horizontally rectangle shape with an 8-bubble red-orange shield in the center. The designation, REG. U. S. PAT. OFF. appeared in very fine print below the “up.” On each side of the logo was a grey arrow pointing toward the center. The left arrow contained white lettering with the message, “You Deserve/the Original,” the right counterpart continued, “That’s Your/Assurance.”

The 1935 “Alkaline Reaction” bottle had no neck label. The first embossed neck labels appeared during the paper-label era, although probably not earlier than ca. 1936. The earliest style had the “7” between “u” and “p” (Figure 12) These were phased out by 1937, when the more conventional “7up” was embossed on the neck (Figure 13).

By the end of 1937, the embossed “7up” had been replaced by a white shield with “7up” and eight bubbles stenciled through the white and a line above and below the shield. This was, of course, quickly reduced to seven bubbles (Figure 14). Interestingly, the seven-bubble shield sometimes appears with an eight-bubble label! When the front label changed in 1953, the neck label remained the same. On quart bottles, however, the words “YOU / LIKE / IT” were placed to the left of the neck label, with “IT / LIKES / YOU” on the right, and the entire label “slid” down to the shoulder (Figure 15). One larger bottle was marked the same, but it had a shoulder label that was identical to the body label (including



**Figure 10:** White ACL war label.



Fig. 15: ACL neck label on quart bottle.

the red/orange color for the shield) and “1 PINT 12 FL. OZ.” below the logo (Figure 16). In general, all forms of the neck label were placed on both sides of the neck.

**Back Labels**

Part of this section will be a review for those who read the initial article, so I will not go into as much detail (except on the new additions). I only addressed the seven-ounce, forest green bottles in the first article, the same labels appeared during the same time periods on amber bottles as well. Neither the paper-label bottles nor the “Alkaline Reaction” experimental bottle had back labels, so we can eliminate those from this discussion. However, readers and eBay sellers have added two new back labels.



Fig. 16: ACL neck label on one pint, 12-ounce bottle.

**The 1936 Label**

The only trouble with creating any classification system is that there will almost certainly be later discoveries. Since I used Labels #1-#6 in my last article, I do not want to change those now. However, the amber bottle that was probably used in 1936 has a different label – one that was surely a bridge between the Alkaline Reaction label (or the paper Lithiated Lemon-Lime Soda label) and the 7-Up labels. The 1936 back label stated: “A COOLER OFF / A FRESHER UP / KEEPS YOU / ALKALINE / SETTLES THE STOMACH” – with a line separated by an elongated diamond in the center and “CONTENTS 7 FL. OZS.” below. This obviously set the precedence for the line with the diamond, used until about 1948. Since this was the first back label (to my current knowledge), I have called it #A (Figure 17).

**The 1937 Change**

An unusual back label appeared on an 8-bubble bottle with the “u7p” neck embossing. In an apparent attempt at humor, possibly the earliest 1937 label retained “A COOLER OFF / A FRESHER UP” with “SETTLES THE STOMACH” below but added “TAKES THE OUCH / OUT OF GROUCH.” Below that was “CONTENTS 7 FL. OZS.” (Figure 18) This label is very rare and was probably only used on one test market.

The next 1937 label (#1) kept “A COOLER OFF / A FRESHER UP” but moved away from alkalinity. The emphasis became the idea of a soft drink instead of a medicine. It



Fig. 17: Back label #A – on 7-ounce amber bottle.



Figure 18: Rare back label.



Figure 19: Back label #1.

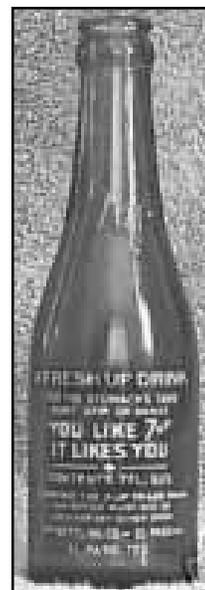


Figure 20: Back label #1a.

added “FOR THE SOTMACH’S SAKE / DON’T SHAKE OR STIR / YOU LIKE 7up / IT LIKES YOU / line with diamond / CONTENTS 7 FL. OZS. / CARRYING THE 7-UP TRADEMARK / THIS BOTTLE MUST / NOT BE USED FOR / ANY OTHER DRINK” (Figure 19). A slight variation (#1a) used four lines for the “THIS BOTTLE . . .” message, instead of three. It is likely that the difference was a result of a change in manufacturer, rather than an intentional alteration (Figure 20).

**Other Swimsuit Labels**

The other label changes are fully described in the 2005 article (Lockhart 2005), and photos of the labels are included in this article, so I will not go through all the details for each label. I will, however, discuss the changes. Label #2 was used from 1938 to 1944. This changed two things: 1) “A COOLER OFF / A FRESHER UP” became “A FRESH UP / DRINK”; and 2) “7up” became “IT” in the slogan “YOU LIKE IT / IT LIKES YOU” (Figure 21).

Label #3 placed “Fresh Up” in script surrounded by quotation marks. It also added the contents information “CONTAINS CARBONATED WATER / SUGAR, CITRIC ACID, LITHIA AND / SODA CITRATES. FLAVOR DERIVED / FROM LEMON AND LIME OILS” in place of the “stomach’s sake” jingle. Finally, the trademark section was reduced in size to two lines (Figure 22). This label was used from 1940 to ca. 1946. There is a gap in our knowledge between 1946 and 1949, so we do not know exactly when the use of this label ceased. Like Label #1, Label #3 also has a variation.

A bottle from Clovis, New Mexico, does not fit the pattern. Although the ACL on the reverse appears to be a variation of back label #3 (with only the addition of a line and diamond between IT LIKES YOU and the contents information), the date code on the base indicates that the bottle was made in 1956! Bottles and back labels of this kind should have been discontinued a decade earlier. Unless the base was mis-engraved, with a “5” stamped in place of a “4,” the bottle does not make sense. It is highly unlikely that the Seven-Up Bottling Co. of Clovis would have commissioned a glass house to manufacture a decade-old design (Figure 23).

Even a change to “46” does not make intuitive sense. Label

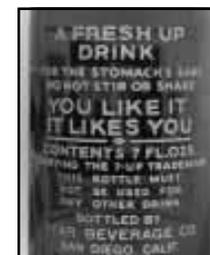


Figure 21: Back label #2.



Figure 22: Back label #3.



Figure 23: Back label #3a.





Pete Schulz also noted a similar example (**Figure 29**) which appears to have an “I” date code (which makes no sense at all). If the code is really a “1,” it does not fit the rest of the dating scheme. As a transition, this bottle should fall in the 1938 range. A final bottle also had “8 bubbles on the main label but only 7 bubbles on the shoulder shield” and the #3 back label variation. This is probably another 1938 transition bottle. I should have asked for photos.

### Discussion and Conclusions

This has actually been a study about detail. By examining bottles for minute differences, we can open up a whole new world of variations. Seven-Up bottles, as an example, had embossing on heels, bases, and necks, all with variations. While the front labels remained relatively constant over time, the back labels showed notable variation, and I doubt that we have seen all examples, yet! A study of paper labels will probably open up still more variation to explore. If you have any variations, different model numbers, or new combinations that do not fit the patterns I have described, I encourage you to write, call, or E-mail me. I respond best to E-mails, but I will do my best to return calls or letters.

**Figure 29**

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### Photos

I took some of these photos, some were sent to me and I copied some from eBay. Thus, these are of mixed quality. They are the best that I currently possess.

### Acknowledgments

Numerous readers of the last article E-mailed or called me, including Gary Mauer, Pete Schulz, Gregory L. Dewbrew, Joe T. Williamson, Ron Murry and Barton Weeks. All of these folks contributed interesting bottles and labels. My gratitude to you all. My apologies if I left anyone out. In addition, my thanks to anonymous eBay sellers who inadvertently furnished photos for this article.

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