

Who Remembers...Manhattan Superior Beverages & Whistle Bottling Company?

Whistle Bottle Company, 1923 in Washington, D.C. Photo by Shorpy.

One of the more popular “Who Remembers...?” articles we share is the one on Virginia Dare. I think that one of the reasons people are so fond of it is that for many it’s something within their or our memory. Something we’ve had personal experience with, since it wasn’t *that* long ago that the soda was around.

While researching that article I came across quite the number of beer and soda companies and bottling companies, that had a presence at one time or another in the city’s history. In addition, many people shared anecdotes and made comments about some of these other companies. Many of these I had never heard about.

So, dive into research again I did in an attempt to uncover what I could. While I don’t personally have experience with some of these, I figured there would be many who did and could share even more anecdotes and/or fill in the holes. That alone would make it worth researching and writing up.

One that was mentioned quite a bit, was Manhattan Soda or Manhattan Superior Beverages. I really struggled to find much of anything. There was either very little mention or the search results turned up too many unrelated hits. Once I learned that the soda was bottled by two New Bedford Companies, the Whistle Bottle Company and the Manhattan Bottling Company, I found much more substantial information.

The unfortunate part is that there was a lot of information on

a Whistle Bottle Company, but it was hard to tell if it was *the* Whistle Bottle Company involved with New Bedford. There were Whistle Bottle Companies in Pennsylvania, Delaware, Seattle, and New York. There was even a Whistle Bottle Company of Massachusetts, and a Whistle Bottle Company of Worcester, MA. I've included some vintage images of these companies in the photo album below.

Were these all affiliated with one another? Were they separate and just coincidentally named? Were they separate business entities but all owned different family members? It was simply hard to pinpoint anything concrete in terms of whether these were all related or not. There was however, some information on the specific companies in New Bedford.

The Whistle Bottle Company was located at 252-262 Coggeshall Street where Honey Dew and Papa John's are today. The company opened its doors in the late 1930s, circa 1937-1938 and one of its lines was Manhattan Superior Beverages, initially carbonated water, but eventually fruit flavors. This was one of six bottling companies in New Bedford in the late 1930s and record books declare a Jose Mendes as the owner, manager and resident. He started a family-owned company called Jose Mendes & Bros. The family owned and operated the company through the 40s and 50s. In 1960, they sold the entire company and facilities to Manhattan Bottling Company.

It is unclear how long Manhattan Bottling Company ran the show, but it seems it didn't take long for them to sell it to Atlas Electric Motors, Inc. perhaps within the year. There doesn't seem to be a connection to any of the other companies that sprouted up in other states. Since they were contemporaneous, it may be the case that they were all related, but there is just not enough information available.

Of course, in the spirit of these articles, this is where *you* come in. Do you or someone you know, have anything to share on Whistle or Manhattan Bottling Companies? Manhattan Superior

Beverages? Jose Mendes & Bros.? The Mendes family? Please comment and let us know.

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