

# LIVERMORE SODA WORKS



Livermore Soda Works Circa 1910

## LIVERMORE SODA WORKS

by Larry Mauch

Livermore Enterprise

April 8, 1876

"Soda-Mr. Wallis was out in a very handsome new wagon, with a spanking looking team the other day. The lettering on the side read "Livermore Soda Works." We learn that the manufactory will open in the building next to the Norfolk Stable."

This marked the beginning of a business that was to operate in Livermore for 110 years. It had a

little difficulty finding a home at first as there were three different locations listed in the paper in one week, apparently buying the wagon was the easy part. But by the end of April, the Soda Works was in business on L Street between First and Second Streets, selling Soda Water, Sarsaparilla, Ginger Ale, etc.

By 1880 the soda works was operated by the Gardemeyer brothers and had expanded its services to portions of San Joaquin and Contra Costa Counties.

"Messrs. Gardemeyer Bros. have one wagon running constantly, and supplying all the small towns within



Circa 1905

twenty-five miles, and are, besides, shipping large quantities of their wares, by rail. They have now upward of 2000 dozen of soda and cider bottles in use in their business, and are yet obliged to be constantly enlarging the number, to fill orders."

It appears every time the soda works changed hands the location changed. By 1884 the Sanborn insurance map showed the location as the corner of Oak and Livermore Avenue. And by 1887, when E. Berg and J. Berg were the proprietors, the location had moved across the street to the corner of Chestnut and Livermore Avenue.

The Livermore Echo in April of 1889 indicated competition had arrived; a C.C. Taylor started making his own "Star" soda water. He, too, was located on Livermore Avenue, next to Gardella's liquor store. He also offered "a new drink called

Fru-i-miz, which is destined to be very popular." Apparently the business didn't last long as there is no mention of Mr. Taylor or "Fru-i-miz" after September of that year.

Coincidentally in September of 1889, the Berg's sold the Livermore Soda Works to Fred Menken from Oakland. He apparently moved the business back across Livermore Avenue, two doors down from the previous location on the corner of Oak street. The following year the "Livermore Echo" reported that a carload of soda water had been shipped to points in the San Joaquin valley. "This is the largest shipment of soda yet made from Livermore."

Julius Jacobs was the driver for Fred Menken (he probably came with Fred Menken from Oakland). In 1894 he was thrown from the soda wagon near Sunol and seriously "bruised" when the team of horses ran away. Around 1895 he purchased the



Julius Jacobs

business and moved it across town. He built a wooden building, several sheds and a barn on land he had purchased in the middle of the block on K Street, between 6th and 7th Streets. Sometime later he ordered seltzer bottles with his name and the business name etched on the side. He probably was also the first to order the Hutchinson bottles with "Livermore Soda Works - Livermore Cal." embossed on the side. (Hutchinson is a type of bottle with a wire and rubber stopper, commonly used until about 1912 for soda water. see photo).

In August of 1897, Mr. Jacobs was hospitalized with a fractured leg when his wagon was struck by the Southern Pacific train while switching cars at the depot. The wagon was "reduced to a scattered lot of bits and splinters". Mr. Jacobs sued the S.P. for \$20,000, but the case was thrown out of court several years later.

In 1902 Julius Jacobs moved to Santa Cruz and opened a soda works there with a partner,

Adolph Von Thun. Both Julius Jacobs and his partner were killed in 1905 when a pressurized tank exploded while they were filling bottles in Santa Cruz. His widow later returned to Livermore to live.

Warren Lamb purchased the business in 1902, but continued to lease the building from Mr. Jacobs. In 1903 Warren Lamb also became the distributor for Union Ice, combining it with the soda works (see photo of wagon). Warren Lamb operated both businesses until 1910. During that time Mr. Lamb ordered a few Hutchinson bottles for the soda water with a lamb embossed, as his logo, on the side. But most of the bottles he had embossed were a crown top, similar to those still used by beverage companies today. (They are called crown tops because the metal cap looks like a crown.)

The Soda Works also became the headquarters for a local baseball team. Warren Lamb, Ernest Uttendorfer, and George Tubbs all were members of the team. Ernest Uttendorfer later took charge of the bottling department at the soda works and George Tubbs was in charge of deliveries.



Seltzer bottle

In 1910 Warren Lamb sold a third ownership to each George Tubbs and Ernest Uttendorfer. Later in 1914, Mr. Lamb moved to Tracy and operated a soda works there until his death in 1926.

The soda works won an award at the Panama Exposition for its Ginger Ale in 1915, while under the ownership of Mr. Tubbs and Mr. Uttendorfer.

1921 saw Mr. Uttendorfer sell his interest to George Tubbs and move to Turlock where he opened another soda works. Later, he was to become Mayor of Turlock as well. Meanwhile George Tubbs expanded the plant on K Street and continued to operate it until he sold out in 1926 to Harold Anderson and John Bettencourt.

A new building was constructed on land owned by the Anderson's around the corner on 6th Street in 1930. About that time the name was also changed to "The Livermore Beverage Company". And in 1937, Clarence Nickerson became business manager for the company .

During this time George Tubbs operated a distillery in Alviso, served on the city council and became Mayor of Livermore in 1935.

In 1960, Bob and Warren Anderson took over the Beverage Company and continued to bottle soda water there until 1966. In the early 1960s the Beverage Company's insurance company was concerned about the danger of filling the seltzer bottles under high pressure because of the danger of exploding. Most of the seltzer bottles were destroyed in order to salvage the metal tops, which were sold along with the bottling machine to a salvage company in San Jose. The bottling machine was cut up and sold for its scrap metal value.

In 1985, tragedy struck when the entire building and contents were destroyed by fire. The business never reopened.

There are 5 different seltzer bottles associated with the Livermore Soda Works and 12 different Huthinson and crown top bottles. Most of these bottles are very difficult to find today.



Hutchinson                  Crown top  
Livermore soda bottles