

CASCO BEVERAGES

In 1927-28 the former Variety Manufacturing Company plant at 80 Bell Street was converted to a bottling company. From 1928 to 1937, it was home to the Portland (Maine) Coca-Cola Bottling Works, with Arthur S. Ardrey as manager.

In 1931, an enterprising 33-year-old salesman named Manual Levi joined Ardrey. Before long he was manager, and when the bottling of Coca-Cola for southern Maine was shifted to South Portland in 1937, Levi formed Casco Bottling Company and remained on Bell Street.

Casco Bottling was Manual Levi's show for the next 24 years. And he ran it well. "None Better" was Casco's early slogan. The more imaginative "The Thoroughbred of Carbonated Beverages" was used in the 1950s, by which time, Levi was bottling a very full line of 17 flavors.

When Manual Levi passed away in 1961, his wife Lillian took over at Casco's helm. By the late 1960s, in addition to her own line of Casco flavors, Lillian bottled Moxie, Orange Crush and "76" under license.

Lillian Levi ran Casco long after all the other independent bottlers in Portland had gone by the wayside. In 1976, however, she decided it was time to retire. Lillian sold the firm to former postal employee James A. DiPhilippo, who kept Casco afloat but two more years.

Five decades of soft drink manufacturing at 80 Bell Street came to an end in 1978 (although Casco's brand was bottled for a time thereafter in Rochester, New Hampshire).

Today the former bottling works is a trim-looking, grey clapboard, containing four apartments, a laundry and a dog obedience school. The present owner is Dave Smith, who is well aware of the structure's long life as a bottling plant.

