

May 10, 1997

## Hosmer Mountain Soda Arrives in Soda City (Part Three of Four)

**William Clark's daughter sits atop the delivery wagon around 1914. At that time Hosmer Mountain Soda Company only bottled soda water; flavored water came in 1916.**



The Hosmer Mountain Soda Company was organized in 1916, as the "Hosmer Mountain Spring Bottling Works," by William Elijah Clark (1878-1951), a "Yankee of the old school." Clark was born in Heron, Connecticut. He arrived in Willimantic and worked as a clerk at a grocery store on Church Street. From 1905 he began investing in real estate, and purchased a lot just north of reservoir road from Charles Young.

This land contained the spring which eventually led to the birth of the Hosmer Mountain Soda Company.

The Hosmer "name" derives from a Stephen Hosmer of Columbia, Connecticut who purchased land in Willimantic containing the "mountain" in 1800, and farmed it. His son, James D. Hosmer (1796-1889), was a well known local resident and farmer. He was born in Columbia, and came to Willimantic as a young boy when his father purchased the Willimantic property. Stephen Hosmer built a house at the foot of the hill, on the old Columbia turnpike, which later became known as Pleasant Street. James Hosmer also built a house on the farm.

In 1912 William Clark purchased a house, 215 Mountain Street, adjacent to the spring, and started dealing as a spring water salesman, bottling the water from the Hosmer Mountain Spring. He was also working at the same site as an automobile dealer in partnership with his brother George. After George Clark relocated to Holyoke, Mass., in 1915, William Clark concentrated his efforts on manufacturing flavored soda water from Hosmer Mountain springwater. The first ad for the new company appeared in the 1916 Willimantic City Directory, and stressed the fact that the company's high grade beverages were manufactured from "pure spring water." Ginger ale was a speciality. All flavors were sold in 8, 16 and 24 oz bottles.

In February, 1917, the building on Mountain street, where Clark stored his water, soda and his new Ford delivery truck, burnt to the ground. The fire was ignited by an overheated stove which Clark kept lit to stop his bottles of spring water from freezing. Clark salvaged little from the debris, but he was well insured and received \$816 for the building, \$800 for the contents and \$445 for his delivery truck. The city's fire department stated that Clark's entire bottling factory would have been destroyed, had it not been

for the speed of their new Buick fire truck.

Clark continued in the soda business until June, 1923, having made enough money to move on into the real estate business, and to buy a house, 394 Pleasant Street. He sold the Hosmer Mountain business to Abraham L. Beller (1889-1976). Unconfirmed reports state that William Clark continued to use the Hosmer spring water at his new house, until Abe Beller filled the supply route in with concrete! Clark invested his soda pop profits in real estate around Windham County. One of his largest transactions was the purchase of the vacant Eagle Company textile mills in Eagleville after the collapse of the cotton producing company in 1932.

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