

Coke Has Wealth Of History

By Teresa Simmons
Post Managing Editor

When you pick up a bottle of Coca-Cola you're not only handling a delicious soft drink but before you is also a wealth of history dating back to 1886.

Legend has it that in 1886 Dr. John S. Pemberton, a pharmacist and druggist first produced the Coca-Cola Syrup in a three-legged pot in his backyard. On May 1 of the same year the new product was placed on sale for 5 cents as a soda fountain drink. This first sale was in Atlanta, Ga. at the Jacob's Pharmacy.

Dr. Pemberton had a partner, Frank M. Robinson who suggested the name Coca-Cola and penned it in the script of the day, the flowing Spencerian. The first newspaper to run an ad for Coca-Cola was the Atlanta Journal on May 29, 1886. It stated, "Try the new and popular soda fountain drink. Coca-Cola is Delicious and Refreshing."

For the first eight months of the drink's life sales averaged 13 per day. Today the product sales more than 165,000,000 drinks a day.)

During that first year sales of Coca-Cola were mostly made in Atlanta. In 1887 Dr. Pemberton decided to expand his product beyond the Southern realm. He did so, but in the midst of ill health he sold two-thirds of the business interest to two of his Atlanta friends for \$1,200. This included the sole right to manufacture the syrup.

Four months before his death on August 16, 1888, Dr. Pemberton and his son Charles accepted \$500 for all remaining rights to the product. Asa G. Candler was the purchaser. He eventually acquired

complete control. He figured that total ownership had cost him \$2,300.

With a flair for merchandising by 1892 Candler had increased sales nearly ten-fold. Along with his brother Attorney John S. Candler, F.M. Robinson and two other friends, the interest was formed into a Georgia Corporation with a capital stock of \$100,000.

Coca-Cola was registered in the United States Patent Office on January 31, 1893. The same year the first dividend was paid to stockholders at \$20 per share, which amounted to 20 percent of book value of the share stock.

No doubt Candler's gross use of advertising gave favorable recognition to the logo of Coca-Cola. He gave away thousands of complimentary tickets for free glasses of the drink. He carried on consistent promotion programs such as giving away souvenir fans, calendars, clocks, urns and countless novelties.

While Candler concentrated on increasing soda fountain sales, others like Joseph A. Biedenharn in Vicksburg, Miss. had other ideas. Impressed with the demand of the drink Biedenharn installed a bottling machinery in the rear of the store and began to take bottles of Coca-Cola around to plantations and lumber camps. He became the first man to put Coca-Cola in bottles.

The same year the first syrup branch manufacturing plant was opened in Dallas, Texas. The next year branch plants were opened in Chicago and Los Angeles. Three years after Candler had purchased sole ownership of the company. In, 1895, he

announced in his annual report to stockholders that "Coca-Cola is now drunk in every state and territory in the United States."

The large scale bottling of Coca-Cola was made possible by Benjamin F. Thomas and Joseph B. Whitehead. They secured from Candler in 1899 the exclusive rights to bottle and sell Coca-Cola in practically the entire United States. The first bottling plant under this contract was opened in Chattanooga, in 1899, and the second in Atlanta, the following year.

In 30 years the first two plants had increased to 1,000. Ninety-five percent was locally owned and operated. The development of modern, high speed bottling machinery and efficient transportation over paved highways, reduced this number by 1973 through consolidations and mergers to 750 plants in the U.S.

By 1900 Coca-Cola was served at a soda fountain in London for the first time. A this time Cuba and Puerto Rico also enjoyed the taste.

The unique shape design and contour of the Coca-Cola bottle was granted registration as a trademark by the U.S. Patent Office in 1960. The bottle thus joined the two other trademarks, Coca-Cola, registered in 1893 and Coke first used on labels in 1941 and registered in 1945.

In 1919 the Coca-Cola company was sold by the Candler interest to Ernest Woodruff, an Atlanta Banker and a group he has organized for \$25,000,000. Common stock was put on public sale for \$40 a share.

Robert Winship Woodruff, son of Ernest was elected president of the Coca-Cola company in

1923. At 33 years of age he envisioned an international drink. In 1926 he gave tangible form to his vision by organizing a Foreign Sales Department, later to become a subsidiary, The Coca-Cola Export Corporation. His leadership carried Coca-Cola to the outposts of civilization.

Also with the assistance of leading bottlers, his management defined quality standards to apply to every phase of the bottling operation.

Renewed advertising and marketing force were thrown behind the bottle. An easy to carry case with six bottles was formed in 1923. By the end of 1928, five years after Woodruff became president, the sale of Coca-Cola in bottles had increased 65 per cent. For the first time bottle sales exceeded sales at the soda fountain.

To meet consumer demand bottles of Coke was produced in 10, 12, 32, and 48 ounce sizes. Another new container, no-deposit, no returnable bottles was introduced in 1961. Then a plasti-shield bottle was introduced.

Woodruff's leadership through the years has brought the product to unrivaled heights. He retired as an officer in 1955 but continued to give leadership to the business as a Director and Chairman of the Board's Finance Committee.

(Facts from "The Chronicle of Coca-Cola since 1886.")




Dennis McElrath has been employed at Coca-Cola for the past three years. He is full serviceman and fills and installs coolers. McElrath is a Charlottean.

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