



THE BOTTLE

**A History of Returnable Bottles
in the United States
with Quick Reference Guide**

**By:
Doug McCoy**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction:	1
Chapter 1: Early Coca-Cola Bottles 1894-1916	2
1894-1900's Hutchinson Bottle.....	2
1900-1916 Straight Sided Bottle	3
Chapter 2: Embossed Contour or Hobbleskirt 1916-1967	6
1915 Patent Bottle.....	7
Christmas Bottle.....	7
Patent-D Bottle.....	8
6 Ounce U.S. Patent Bottle	8
6 ½ Ounce U.S. Patent Bottle and King Size U.S. Patent Bottle ..	8
Chapter 3: Applied Color Label (ACL) 1955-1990's.....	11
1955 Transition Bottle	11
1961 ACL Style	12
1963 ACL Style	13
1965 ACL Style	13
1968 ACL Style	13
1972 ACL Style-Red & White Label.....	14
1985 ACL CLASSIC Style.....	16
1976 ACL Style-Metric	16
Chapter 4: Glossary of Terms	18
Quick Reference Guide to Embossed Bottles	25
1894-1900's Hutchinson Bottle.....	26
1900-1916 Straight Sided Bottle	27
1916-1927 Nov 16, 1915 Patent Bottle.....	30
1927-1938 Dec 25, 1923 Patent Bottle	32
1938-1951 Patent D-105529 Bottle.....	38
1951-1958 6 Ounce U.S. PATENT OFFICE Bottle	39
1957-1967 U.S. PATENT OFFICE Bottle	40
Quick Reference Guide to Applied Color Label Bottles	43
1955-1961 Transition Bottle.....	44
1961-1963 ACL Bottle	48
1963-1965 ACL Bottle	52
1965-1968 ACL Bottle	56
1968-1990's ACL Bottle	60
1972-1990's ACL Bottle.....	69
1976-1990's ACL Metric Bottle.....	77
1985 ACL CLASSIC Bottle	86

Introduction

It was my Grandfather who introduced me to collecting bottles, but my Father helped me find my first Coca-Cola bottle when I was 11 years old. I still have that bottle in my collection, a Patent D from Canton, Ohio. Ever since then I have been fascinated with the Coca-Cola bottle.

This book began as a simple 'Quick Reference Guide' to keep track of my collection. I wanted to collect every style of returnable bottle that Coca-Cola used in the United States. The Five Embossed Coca-Cola bottles (1915, 1923, Patent D, 6 Ounce and 6 ½ Ounce) had already been categorized. The 1955 ACL Transition style bottle had also been named by collectors. However, the Applied Color Label (ACL) bottles from 1961 to the 1990's tend to be lumped together and not much has been written about them.

As I began looking for the ACL bottles, I knew I had to come up with names and a way to identify them. I began to work on a reference guide for my family to use and to catalog what bottles I already had. I realized the guide was an immense help. My family uses the reference guide to find bottles for me when they travel, and they have found some great and rare bottles. I continued to add as much information as I could find. I felt that if this guide could help them learn about collecting bottles, it would benefit others, too. Once I had the Quick Reference Guide completed, I began to record the story behind the bottles themselves, like the 8 Ounce Lexington, North Carolina bottle, the 36 Ounce and the bottle referred to as 'The Bomb'. I have always been fascinated with history, and the stories behind the bottles are interesting and ones you don't often hear. I hope it helps the seasoned collector as well as the beginner.

I have collected bottles for close to 40 years and have gathered history and information from fellow bottle collectors, glass-manufacturing companies and from the bottling industry, what I have learned has been combined in this book for a comprehensive and informative guide. I could not have found all of this information on the internet alone. The internet is good for finding some information on bottles, but it does not replace the hands-on learning experience available at Antique Bottle Shows, The Coca-Cola Collectors Club, and Club Conventions. I have gained knowledge at every gathering and seem to always find something that I have not seen before to add to my collection. Not to mention the friendships made with fellow collectors.

So, grab this book and head out to a bottle show, club event or the local antique store and discover some hidden treasures!

Happy Collecting!

Chapter 1:

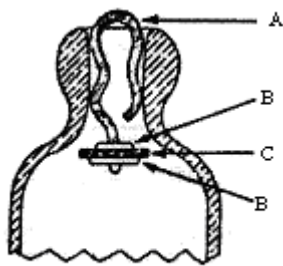
Early Coca-Cola Bottles

1894-1916

1894-1900's Hutchinson Bottle

When John Pemberton invented the Coca-Cola formula in 1886, he saw its future as being a soda fountain drink and being sold in pharmacies. At that time, bottling technology was not advanced enough for carbonated beverages to stay fresh for any length of time.

All of that changed in 1879 when W.H. Hutchinson of Chicago, Illinois, invented the Hutchinson Stopper. It became the most widely used closure for Soda bottles from 1880 to 1905. Collectors also refer to this style as a "Hutch" bottle or "Coke Hutch" if it has Coca-Cola embossed on it.



- A) Spring wire stem with
- B) two metal plates and
- C) rubber gasket in between them.

After bottle was filled, the spring wire stem was pulled up tight against shoulders of bottle to form a tight seal.

HUTCHINSON

The Hutchinson stopper was not a perfect design. The bottles had to be hand filled and could only keep a drink fresh for approximately 10 days. The bottles had to be packed upside down in a wooden case with the necks extending through holes in a false bottom of the crate. This prevented the seal from accidentally being broken. Any pressure on the wire loop would cause the bottle to open. The wire stem could not be removed from the bottle, making it difficult to clean. By 1910, it was outlawed for use because of sanitary reasons.

Although, no one had been authorized to sell Coca-Cola in bottles, a few people started bottling it using the Hutchinson bottle.

In 1894, a candy company operator Joseph August Biedenharn of Vicksburg, Mississippi bottled Coca-Cola in a Hutchinson style bottle. Soda drinks at that time were only available at drug stores and soda fountains. Bottling would allow Biedenharn to expand and bring Coca-Cola to the public in a more convenient manner. He could take bottles of Coca-Cola to the lumber camps and plantations along the river. These first bottles were not embossed with Coca-Cola and utilized a paper label.

Holmes and Barber of Valdosta, Georgia, bottled Coca-Cola in 1897. The bottles they used were not embossed with Coca-Cola; they also used paper labels to identify the product in the Hutchinson bottle. They bottled many different flavored sodas as well.

Biedenharn, Holmes and Barber all saw a market for a bottled beverage. Not only could it be transported to picnics but also it could be taken to people in the country to be

enjoyed in their homes. If a Pharmacy or Soda Fountain were closed, you could not enjoy a cold drink.



On July 21, 1899, two lawyers from Chattanooga, Tennessee, Benjamin F. Thomas and Joseph B. Whitehead, decided to see if they could get permission to bottle Coca-Cola. They spoke to Asa Candler, President of the Coca-Cola Company. Candler felt that the market for bottling the drink was not a profitable business and sold the bottling rights to them for \$1.00.

In 1899, Thomas opened the first bottling plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He was also the first bottler to use the Hutchinson bottle embossed with Coca-Cola. Three different styles of bottles were used. One was unmarked and utilized a paper label, the second style was embossed with Coca-Cola in script on the shoulder, and the third style had Coca-Cola in script around the base.

In 1902, the Birmingham, Alabama, Coca-Cola Bottling Plant began using the Hutchinson bottle and it was used until early 1905.

The Bessemer, Alabama, plant also used the Hutchinson bottle from 1899 to approximately 1903.

In 1900, Joseph Whitehead opened a bottling plant in Atlanta, Georgia. It was originally named Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company. In 1901, the name of the company changed to The Coca-Cola Bottling Company.

Several Coca-Cola bottlers began to use the Hutchinson bottle as well, some with Coca-Cola in block letters as well as the Coca-Cola in script lettering. There is thought to be at least 10 bottlers from Alabama, Georgia and Tennessee that utilized the Hutch bottle.

1900-1916 Straight Sided Bottle

In 1891, a man by the name of William Painter came up with an ingenious design for a bottle cap, the crown cork and seal. It was so well designed that it is still in use today with very little change. This expanded the bottling market of sodas. Beginning in 1900 Coca-Cola bottlers were quick to change over from the inefficient Hutchinson bottle to this new style of bottle. Although an initial investment was required for new bottling equipment, it paid for itself with the amount of Coca-Cola they could now bottle and distribute.

The style of bottle used during this time period is often referred to by collectors as Straight Sided or SS for short because of its simple straight wall design.

Although all of the bottles from this time period used Coca-Cola in script on the bottle, not all the bottles were the same. Each bottler was responsible for designing and ordering his own bottles. In 1909, there were 379 bottling plants scattered across the U.S. In fact, this is the time that Coca-Cola Bottlers used so many different style bottles that they ended up creating a marketing headache. There were no consistencies in the location of Coca-Cola in script and the bottle varied in size; different bottlers used 6 Ounce, 6 ½ Ounce, 7 Ounce and even larger sizes. Various colors of glass were used as well. It caused consumer confusion with product identification. It also allowed the competitors to take advantage of this confusion and to promote their drinks using similarly designed logos and brand names.



Colors used in the bottles varied from clear glass, amber or brown, ice blue, light green and an aqua. At this time, the bottles were made by using a mold for the lower half of the bottle and having to create the neck of the bottle by hand, using a hand held mold. This process is referred to as applied lip.

City markings became very important to the local bottler. Because it was costly for a Bottling plant to constantly order more bottles, the City/State marking helped get the bottle back to the correct bottling plant.

The Straight Sided bottle underwent many changes in its lifetime.

- a) 1900-1905 Base Rectangular Slug Plate Script
- b) 1902-1915 Base Script
- c) 1900-1910 Mid Body Script
- d) 1900-1905 Center Slug Plate Script
- e) 1901-1910 Arrow (Amber and clear glass) Bottle
- f) 1900-1910 Amber Bottle
- g) 1910-1916 Shoulder Script

The first bottles from 1900 to 1905 mainly used a Base rectangular slug plate script. A slug plate was a removable plate used inside the bottle mold that allowed the Bottle manufacturing companies to change logos or City/State markings. You can tell a slug plate has been used by the recessed area created around the name.

By 1902, some bottlers began using a Base Script version. Similar to the Slug plate, this bottle had a specific mold made for the Coca-Cola in script and the City/State. This bottle was in use until 1915.

Some bottling plants in the early 1900's chose to use a brown or amber colored bottle.

By 1910, Coca-Cola realized they had a problem with the inconsistencies of their bottle design. These 'Pirates of Business', as they were referred to by the Coca-Cola Company, were cashing in on the similarity of their product. Koca Nola, My Coca Co, Celery Cola, Rye Ola, Nerv Ola, and Chero Cola were just some of the companies that popped up with similar packaging and product names. At this time, the Coca-Cola Company tried to come up with a design that all bottlers would use and that would allow the consumer to know they had the "Real Thing" in their hand. They designed a Shoulder Script bottle that also utilized the paper Diamond Label. The bottle was in use from 1910 until around 1918. It had Coca-Cola in script around the shoulder of the bottle and City/State along the heel/base. Some bottlers even ordered the Diamond Label embossed on the bottle.

The paper Diamond Label was utilized to help distinguish the real Coca-Cola bottle from the other soda bottles available. However, it wasn't long until even the Diamond Label began to be copied by other soda companies.

One Coca-Cola Bottler, Vernor Springs Water Co. of Greenville, South Carolina chose to use the Straight Sided bottle until the mid 1940's. Other bottlers were eager for a new design to help end the confusion.