

Here's the Scoop on new Koca Nolas

by Charles David Head

Koca Nola was a hit in the Deep South during the first part of the 20th century and proof of that statement exists in newly discovered bottles of the beverage in Georgia, Mississippi and North Carolina.

Responses to my appeals for new information in the Summer issue of *Bottles & Extras* have been gratifying, to say the least. Let's take a look at the "new" stuff first:

John Johnston of Brundidge, Ala., found an advertisement in the March 16, 1909 issue of *The Headland (Ala.) Post*. The ad reads, "DRINK KOCA NOLA/ DELICIOUS! DOPELESS! Manufactured by the Headland Bottling Works." No embossed examples of Koca Nola from this locale have surfaced yet, but who knows? I'd love to hear from anyone finding an example. Thanks again, Mr. Johnston.

Robert Wagner of Jackson, Miss., sent in a photo of a broken example embossed CRYSTAL SPRING BOTTLING WKS. / Koca Nola (in script) / CRYSTAL SPRING, MISS. The correct name of the town is CRYSTAL SPRINGS, according to Mr. Wagner. The company had a franchise to market the soda sometime between 1907 and 1909. Several clear crowntop bottles exist. ROOT, the mark of the Root Glass Co., of Terre Haute, Ind., is embossed on the base. The bottle also is listed in James McClure's book, "Mississippi's Antique Bottles and Jugs." Because of its rarity, I would value one at \$125 to \$175. Thanks so much, Mr. Wagner.



Above: Yancey's Bottling Works, Koca Nola, Milledgeville, Ga.

Left: Crystal Spring Bottling Wks., Koca Nola, Crystal Spring, Miss.

Literally hundreds of Yancey's Bottling Works bottles from Milledgeville, Ga., have been dug over the years, but Steve Jobe of Cordele, Ga., has gone everyone one better. His is embossed YANCEY'S BOTTLING WORKS / Koca Nola (in script) / MILLEDGEVILLE, GA. Apparently Yancey's received their franchise between 1907-09 and it must not have done well. So far, only that lone example has been found. Since this is a unique bottle, I'd value it in the \$125 to \$175 range. The Milledgeville bottle's base is embossed with a small "c" within a diamond, a mark of a glasshouse no one has been able to identify. Thanks goes to Mr. Jobe for sharing the bottle with us.

While checking out a forgotten box of bottles he'd had in his possession for a few years, Carl Barnett of Douglas, Ga., found a clear crowntop embossed KOCA NOLA / BOTTLING WORKS / Koca Nola (in script) / GASTONIA, N.C. That surprised him and me, too! The franchise probably was awarded during the company's heydays of 1907-09. Mr. Barnett is the co-author (with Ken Nease of Claxton, Ga.) of the book, *Georgia's Early Embossed Crown Top Sodas*. That's still available from the authors, 1211 St. Andrews Dr., Douglas, GA 31533 for \$43.90, including shipping and handling.

Carl also learned of another possible Georgia bottle after reading the Talbot County history book. A story dated Aug. 23, 1906 noted that the Talbotton Bottling Company "was bottling real Coca-Cola after a period of bottling Coca (sic) Nola." Carl thinks the company may have bottled Koca Nola in its own bottles and used paper labels, although there is a possibility that embossed bottles exist.



He gets my thanks for sharing this information.

Now we come to a mystery of sorts.

There are several bottles embossed B.I. TAYLOR & CO. / Koca Nola (in script) / BAGLEY, GA., in existence. The problem: Where's Bagley? It can't be found on any early maps, or in records at the Atlanta History Center, or in the 1904 Georgia Gazetteer which lists dozens of towns not in existence today. Steve Jobe, who discovered the Milledgeville bottle listed above, raised that question.

There is a possibility that the bottle should be embossed BAXLEY, the Appling County seat, because the town had a Baxley Bottling Works during the early 1900s. However, a thorough check of the town's early charters of incorporation and the Microfilm files of *The News Banner* of Baxley from 1907 to 1909 revealed nothing. No records showing a B.I. Taylor in Baxley were found. Few small-town bottlers incorporated and even fewer advertised, preferring to sell by word of mouth. Readers who might have a clue about this mystery are urged to contact the people listed at the bottom of this story.

The good folks at the Pulaski County Historical Society sent me a listing for the Koca Nola Bottling Company of Kentucky from the 1908 Somerset City Directory. The company was listed as being located on Third Street and managed by Sam Denham. None of the society members had seen a Somerset Koca Nola until I sent them photos of my bottle. I thank them for their interest because every little bit helps.

My good friend, Harry Evans, of Jasper, Tenn., was scanning the internet the other day and found a Koca Nola advertisement from the 1906 Jacksonville (Fla.) City Directory. It lists the Koca Nola Company as being located on Palm and Forest streets. The ad hyphenates Koca-Nola, the first time I'd seen it spelled like that. Thanks to Mr. Evans for sharing.

Ms. Irene Baker of Huntsville, Tenn., sent me two documents of interest. One is a Koca Nola letterhead from the Keen Bottling Company's branch in South Pittsburg, Tenn., indicating it was up and running in 1906, a year earlier than I'd figured. They marketed Koca Nola until 1909 when they replaced it with Rye-Ola.

The letter is intriguing as well. Willard Keen is admonishing his brother, A.Y., not to drink too much Koca Nola, "and in fact I do not believe too much of the carbonated beverages is good for you. You will have to be careful about what you eat and drink if you have good health there." I really appreciate Ms. Baker's contributions.

Should any reader have information on Koca Nola franchises not listed, they can write to me at the address listed below, or contact Bill Baab. Even the smallest tidbit of information will be appreciated. Bill also collects Koca Nolas and has been instrumental in helping me research the company history. His expertise is being used to edit my upcoming book, "A Head's Up on Koca Nola," and all information received will be credited to the appropriate people.

JACKSONVILLE, CITY DIRECTORY.

Be Sure And

Try Koca-Nola

IT HAS NO EQUAL.

Manufactured By

Koca-Nola Company,

Palm and Forest Sts. Phone 627.

Koca-Nola ad from the 1906 Jacksonville City Dir.

J. M. KEEN, President. A. Y. KEEN, Sec'y & Treas.

KEEN BOTTLING CO

(NOT INCORPORATED)

KOCA NOLA,
CASCADE GINGER ALE,
ROOT BEER,
AND ALL FLAVORS
OF POP. ❄️

TRADE MARK Koca Nola

BOTTLED BY ALL
KINDS OF
Carbonated Beverages

South Pittsburg, Tenn., April 9 1906

Charles David Head
23549-001 Atlanta FCI
601 McDonough Blvd., S.E.
Atlanta, GA 30315

Bill Baab
2352 Devere St.,
Augusta, GA 30904
Ph: (706) 736-8097
E-mail: riverswamper@comcast.net.

Continued from page 4.

According to *American Glass* by George and Helen McKearin, the Spring Garden Glass Works was established in 1850 and was operating in 1880. After 1855, however, the company failed and the factory was bought by Baker Brothers & Company, owners of the Baltimore Glass Works. The company began making bottles and flasks and, according to the McKearins, was still operating in 1905.

Unfortunately, no mention of the flask is in the Gate City Guard history book, but since "The Cartridge Box" was in existence only during 1880, it can be surmised that an unknown number of the flasks were manufactured in time for the celebration.

The Gate City Guard was established on January 8, 1857 and named after Atlanta,

then known by the nickname, "The Gate City." According to the Old Guard history covering 1858-1917 and chronicled by Henry Clay Freeman, the company never exceeded 80 privates "exclusive of commissioned and non-commissioned officers."

Guard uniforms were dark blue with dark epaulettes and trimmings edged in gold. Hats were of the French shako type, black with drooping white plumes. The service uniform was gray.

The company was on call from civil authorities at all times, once assisting the Fulton County sheriff in guarding a soon-to-be-hanged prisoner whose friends reportedly were going to attempt a rescue. The Guard also patrolled the streets around

a neighborhood where buildings had been set ablaze, according to the history published as a 1964 reprint.

Some members of the company fought for the South during the Civil War, others according to their consciences did not. The company reorganized after the war.

Other decades of the Old Guard history were written by Cator Woodford (1917-33) and Frank W. Harrison, Frank A. Kopfe and James C. Wise (1933-63).

Readers knowing more details about the special flasks are urged to contact this author, who is the Southern Region editor for the federation. His e-mail and street addresses are listed in the regional reports.

Thanks to Tom Lines and Ken Nease for contributing to this article.