



COCA-COLA

A COLLECTOR'S GUIDE TO NEW AND VINTAGE
COCA-COLA MEMORABILIA



Randy Schaeffer and Bill Bateman

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Dedicated to our parents
Evelyn A. and William H. Bateman
and Lucille C. and Stewart E. Schaeffer

A QUINTET BOOK

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INTRODUCTION

For more than a century, Coca-Cola has been an integral part of American life. From its humble beginnings in 1886 in Atlanta, Georgia, to its current status as the world's pre-eminent soft drink, Coca-Cola has been heavily advertised using virtually every trick in the adman's repertoire. Long before today's mass media, The Coca-Cola Company used millions of promotional items to advertise and sell their product to the masses. These items ranged from utilitarian merchandising items such as bottles and coolers to traditional and familiar advertising items such as signs and print advertisements; from point-of-purchase items such as trays and calendars to complimentary novelties such as toys and bookmarks.

These items form the basis for today's collections of Coca-Cola memorabilia. Part of the charm of these items for the collector is that their original purpose was to promote the sale of Coca-Cola, not to be collected. Naturally, many of the older items have not survived for today's collectors. Hence, rarity plays a role in the evaluation of Coca-Cola collectibles. Another factor is the condition of the material that has survived. A third factor used to evaluate Coca-Cola collectibles is the desirability of the items themselves. For example, objects that show pictorial artwork are usually more highly prized than those which do not.

Unlike other collecting areas that may be somewhat one-dimensional, Coca-Cola collectibles literally span the full range of artifacts manufactured to merchandise and advertise consumer products since the 1880s. In retrospect, The Coca-Cola Company was not a merchandising and advertising genius. They simply merchandised and advertised by all means available, keeping the things that worked and eliminating those that did not. Their wisdom was the foresight to advertise Coca-Cola aggressively, even when profits were small and the market was soft.

LEFT Cardboard sign, 1901, 8-inch diameter. This sign, complete with brass frame and chain for hanging, shows stage actress Hilda Clark. This artwork is called "Hilda Clark with the Roses."

RIGHT Metal tray, 1900, 9 5/8-inch diameter. Featuring Hilda Clark, this tray has a border decorated with cola nuts and coca leaves. Because four different poses of Hilda Clark were used for Coca-Cola advertising, this one has been named "Hilda Clark with a Glass" to distinguish it from the other three.



ABOVE Trade card, 1894, $3\frac{7}{8} \times 5\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Usually larger than business cards, trade cards were distributed to prospective

customers by company salesmen. The reverse side of this example carries sales figures for 1892 and 1893.



In addition to the wide variety and great numbers of articles produced, there are two more reasons why so many Coca-Cola items have survived. The articles used to advertise Coca-Cola were usually made of the best-quality materials. For example, it cost The Coca-Cola Company \$5,000 just for the dies needed to produce a self-framed metal sign featuring "Betty," the Coca-Cola girl for 1914. The attractiveness of these items also accounts in part for the high survival rate, since many people saved these items at the time. The result for the collector is a rich variety of memorabilia unparalleled by any other consumer product.

In the area of "antique advertising," Coca-Cola items are regarded as the premier collectibles and invariably command the highest prices.



ABOVE Metal sign, 1914, $30\frac{3}{4} \times 41$ inches. One of the largest metal Coca-Cola signs for indoor use, this self-framed sign was manufactured by the Passaic

Metal Ware Company. The same "Betty" artwork was used on the trays and calendars for 1914.

The considerable interest in collecting older items has created a secondary level of new collectible items especially for sale to collectors as well as to the general public. At first The Coca-Cola Company discouraged such efforts, but now through licensing agreements with various manufacturers, the Company helps to identify images and items that may be produced. New items using old artwork fall into two categories: those that closely imitate old items are called reproductions, and those that do not are called fantasy items. Since many of these new things appear older than they actually are, collectors not only have to be knowledgeable about older items, but also about reproduction and fantasy items.

As The Coca-Cola Company expanded its activities to more than 195 countries around the world, they have individualized the advertising approach to the countries in which Coca-Cola is sold. The result has been a whole new class of collectibles, with the Coca-Cola advertising appearing in a multitude of non-English languages. Not only are the many languages distinctive, but the pieces themselves are often unique to a specific country. Such items are especially prized when the artwork reflects the culture of the native country, rather than merely being an imitation of advertising used in the United States. No matter what country they hail from, most Coca-Cola collectors eagerly add foreign Coca-Cola items to their collections when they have the opportunity. For many, part of the excitement of finding foreign items comes from being part of a collecting hobby that is not limited by international borders.

Although it has become an international product, Coca-Cola is regarded worldwide as the quintessential icon of American life. Coca-Cola collectibles hold a mirror to America's past and present: its customs, values, tastes, obsessions, pleasures, and troubles. For many people, collecting the advertising in use when they were growing up allows them to recapture simpler times. For others, the advertising of Coca-Cola exemplifies the dream of a better way of life.

RIGHT Cardboard cutout, 1926, 18 inches high. The boy vendor shown in this artwork would have been a familiar sight at ballparks in the 1920s. It was also produced in a nearly life-sized version.

RIGHT Cardboard cutout, 1929, 31 inches wide. This sign is the centerpiece of the five-piece "Nasturtium" festoon, which would have been used to decorate the backbar of a soda fountain.

BELOW RIGHT Cardboard sign, 1933, 10 1/4 x 19 3/4 inches. During the 1930s, signs such as this one were used to promote drinking Coca-Cola at mealtimes. Called a hanger, this sign is die-cut and folded, thereby giving it a three-dimensional effect.



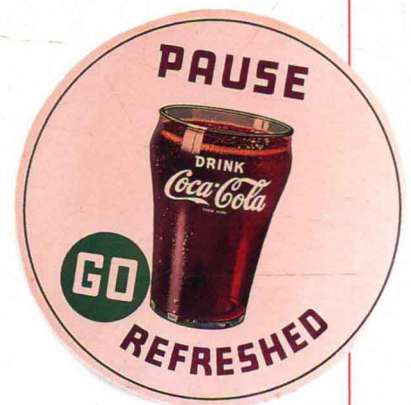


ABOVE Paper poster, 1947, 16 × 27 inches. Although this sign was printed in the United States, the

language is Dutch, indicating that it was meant for export to the Netherlands.



LEFT Calendar, 1953, 16 × 33 inches. One of a series of Boy Scout calendars illustrated by Norman Rockwell, this calendar was distributed by the Greenwood, Mississippi, Coca-Cola bottler.



ABOVE Disk, 1942, 9-inch diameter. Manufactured by the Permanent Sign & Display Company of Reading, Pennsylvania, this sign was made by covering a metal disk with paper on which the advertising had been printed. For durability, the sign was covered with plastic.

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