

Collecting Soda Pop Bottles: A Review

By Bill Baab

Ron Fowler of Seattle, Washington credits his parents, Ralph and Ruth Fowler, “for instilling in me the importance of attention to detail,” and that philosophy is reflected in each of the 164 pages of his book, “Collecting Soda Pop Bottles.”

He first published the book in 1984, with a second printing five years later. After finding even more information through research, he decided to expand and rewrite it, self-publishing the third printing through his Seattle History Company in 2006.

This book will be a welcome addition to libraries of collectors, whether they’re longtime or brand new to the hobby.

Fowler is presently known for his efforts in compiling a national listing of Hutchinson bottles, dedicating it to the late Joe Nagy who started the Herculean task many years ago, but died before he could complete it. Fowler picked up where Joe left off and the numbers have reached a mind-boggling 15,000-plus and are climbing.

He opens his book by discussing the psychology of why people collect bottles and then moves on to the various kinds of containers, from the earliest blob top “pop” bottles, to Hutchinsons, stoneware, crown tops and applied color label bottles.

Siphon (a.k.a. seltzer) bottles are examined in depth and bottle design patents discussed in detail. The value and sources of ephemera, notably bottling company letterheads, are listed, with many anecdotes of interest to collectors.

Fowler’s research uncovered lots of information pertinent to bottling companies, uncovering brand names, many of which have disappeared into the mists of time. Afri-Kola, Bludwine, Booze, Caro-Cola, Champtail, Moxie, Plum Yum — well, the listing goes on and on. He also discovered the many flavors of those brands, including Apricot, Birch Beer, Cloudy, Gilt-Edge, Cherry Julo and Lime Julo, to name a few.

The “Cola Wars” during which the chief combatants were Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola, with “camp followers” Koca Nola, Fig Cola, Candy Cola, Gay Ola and other Coca-Cola copycats getting involved, are certain to be of interest to the collector-reader.

For years, origin of the term “pop” has been attributed to a sound made when the heel of the hand was sharply applied to a Hutchinson soda’s loop closure, breaking the seal between it and the effervescent drink inside the bottle. Fowler pooh-poohs that notion in listing his own opinions.

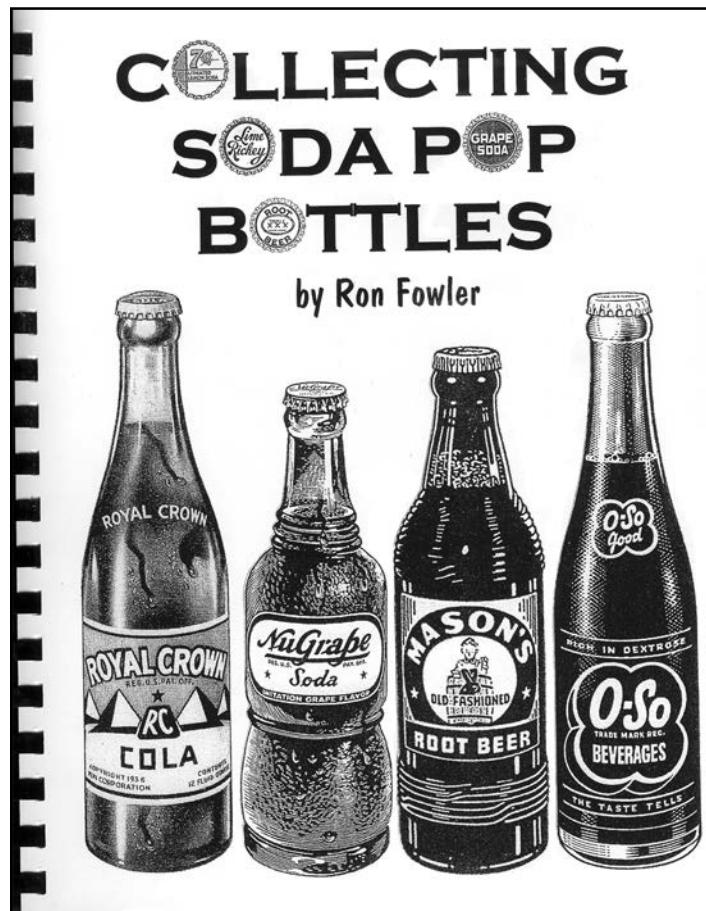
Backgrounds of several major brands, including Moxie, Dr Pepper and Hires’ Root Beer, are contained in this wonderful book. Fowler discusses the value of soft drink franchising and adds a chapter about a Bottling Works Time Capsule. This was the Pioneer Soda Bottling Works of Davenport, Washington where, following the death of one of the principal owners, acquaintances discovered the original (still working) bottling equipment and a vast archives

of labels, letterheads, bottles, caps and other memorabilia.

Final chapter of the book explains how readers can get involved in research and lists the various sources, including city and telephone directories, newspaper Microfilm files and local and state archives.

This is followed by a bibliography of the author’s source books, many out of print, but possibly available through internet searches.

Text of the book is complemented by loads of photos, ads and other illustrations.



COLLECTING SODA POP BOTTLES, by Ron Fowler. 164 well-illustrated pages. \$19.95, including free shipping via U.S. Postal Service Media Mail (Washington state residents add 8.9 percent (\$1.77) sales tax per book. Send personal checks (held until it clears) or money orders to: Ron Fowler, 4518 35th Ave., N.E. Seattle, WA 98105-3002. Satisfaction guaranteed. If you’re not completely satisfied after 10 days, return the book for a full refund.

Other books by Ron Fowler:

Ice-Cola Soda Pop 5¢ - An Illustrated History of Oregon Soda Pop Bottling

Washington Sodas - The Illustrated History of Washington's Soft Drink Industry

The Bottler's Helper: A Practical Encyclopaedia For The Bottler Of Soft Drinks (Originally published 1907, reprinted 1993 by Ron Fowler)

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