

Record breaking prices for Coca-Cola Prototype Bottle and original sketch

The FOHBC was pleased to speak with Brad Dean (grandson of Earl L. Dean) who informed us of the auction of their original 1915 Coca-Cola Prototype Contour Bottle and Concept Sketch that were being auctioned off individually during Julien's Auctions "Icons & Idols Rock-N-Roll & Sports" event on Saturday, December 3, at Julien's Auctions in Los Angeles. The two (2) lots were described as follows:

A pencil on paper concept sketch of the 1915 contour Coca-Cola prototype bottle by Earl R. Dean. Due to a looming deadline, this is the only concept sketch of the "contour" Coca-Cola bottle ever made; it was sketched just hours before Dean produced the first prototype bottles. Looking for design inspiration, Dean went to the local library to search for images of the coca plant and kola nut, the two key ingredients believed to be in Coca-Cola. While looking up these ingredients in the encyclopedia and finding very little to inspire a design, Dean instead stumbled upon an image of a cacao pod. Intrigued by its vertical grooves, it would become the inspiration for his design. The sketch originally consisted of both a front and back-side view of the bottle. The patent attorney, who needed only one side of the bottle to send to Washington, cut the paper in half, taking with him only the back-side view. It is believed that this other half of the drawing no longer exists. 13 1/2 by 16 inches, framed Provenance from the Estate of Earl R. Dean.



**The 1915 Coca-Cola Prototype Contour Bottle.**

In 1915, when most beverages were packaged in generic, straight-sided bottles and bottlers worried that Coca-Cola was easily confused with imitators, Benjamin Thomas, co-founder of the Coca-Cola Bottling Company, came up with a solution. He stated, "We need a bottle which a person can recognize as a Coca-Cola bottle when he feels it in the dark." In response, Coca-Cola launched a competition among bottle suppliers to come up with a distinctive design.

During the 1916 Bottlers Convention, and among several other design entries, Dean's contour design would be voted the winner. The prototype never made it to production since its middle diameter was larger than its base, making it unstable on conveyor belts. Dean resolved this issue by making the necessary alterations needed for the design to go into production.

The contour bottle was so successful that it became the standard for the Coca-Cola brand. It was also the first bottle design to be granted trademark status by the United States Patent Office. The only other known example of this bottle is owned by the Coca-Cola Company. Bottle reads "Coca-Cola Trade-mark Registered." Additional embossing of Coca-Cola can be found on the bottom of the bottle. 7 1/2 inches. Provenance from the Estate of Earl R. Dean.

The Coca-Cola bottle sold for \$240,000 and the concept sketch for \$228,000.

