

# How a Common *Coca-Cola* Bottle Became a Historic Relic of the Past

By Bill Baab, Southern Region Editor

To collectors of antique bottles, a Coca-Cola hobbleskirt bottle from the 1950s doesn't attract much attention in 2009. It's still a half-century away from becoming a true antique and its numbers are in the millions, the supply far exceeding the demand.

However, what if the bottle played a role in the travels of an ex-President of the United States? Would the bottle attain some value if its contents had quenched the thirst of, say, Harry S. Truman?

In 1953, during the summer following his departure from the White House (following the inauguration of Dwight D. Eisenhower), Truman and his wife, Bess, embarked on a cross-country road trip in a new Chrysler. No Secret Service agents accompanied them; they considered themselves ordinary Americans doing what other ordinary Americans liked to do – travel.

They stopped for gasoline at a Frederick, Maryland Gulf station whose manager, Carroll Kehne, was a devout Democrat. Truman went inside the station and said, "The Boss (Bess) wants a glass of water and I'd love a Coke."

When Truman finished the Coke, Kehne saved the empty bottle, later inscribing it "This Bottle Used by Harry S. Truman June 21, 1953. Carroll H. Kehne Gulf Service Station 400 West Patrick St., Frederick, Md."

Kehne died in 1994 and his son found the bottle among his effects. Carroll Kehne Jr., donated the bottle to the Historical Society of Frederick County.

This anecdote and many others are contained in a wonderful little book, "Harry Truman's Excellent Adventure. The True Story of a Great American Road Trip," by Matthew Algeo. It was published by the Chicago Review Press and sells for \$24.95 in the U.S., \$27.95 in Canada.



It is available at bookstores everywhere and through the Independent Publishers Group, 814 No. Franklin St., Chicago IL 60610.

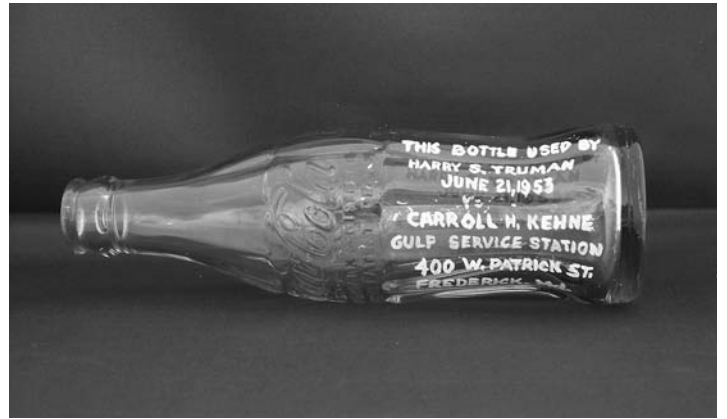


Photo by the Matthew Algeo, courtesy of the Historical Society of Frederick County, Maryland



**HARRY TRUMAN'S**  
*Excellent Adventure*  
The True Story of a Great American Road Trip

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