



As a boy growing up in rural Maryland, I couldn't wait to go see this classic Yul Brenner movie with my neighborhood buddies.

And to pay our way in, we did what we had to - we picked up Coke bottles along the county roads near our homes returning them to the Foodland to collect the 2-cents deposit per bottle.

(By the way, 50 bottles would be enough to pay for admission, a drink and either popcorn or a box of JuJubees.) Little did I know then that, one day, finding Coke bottles in Alabama could be such a challenge!

As a resident of Alabama since mid-1972, I caught the bottle-collecting bug after I found my first straight-sided Coke.

I was hooked after visiting with a local couple that had an extensive bottle collection - primarily of local Birmingham area bottles plus a concentration on Hutchinsons of all types (50-state Hutchinsons, picture Hutchinsons and colored Hutchinsons). Hutchinsons were the hot collectible bottles in the 1970s.

So naturally, I liked Hutchinsons...and still do!

As a newcomer to Alabama, I thought collecting the different Hutchinsons from across the state would be a noble endeavor. Little did I realize that 28 years later, I would still be chasing after some I didn't have, and I

have over 300 different examples!

The real challenge for Hutchinson collectors here in Alabama is to get all of the known Hutchinson Coca-Cola bottles from the state, and yeah, you guessed it, there are seven different Alabama cities and towns with Hutch Cokes, called "The Magnificent Seven"!

These seven are considered to be the Holy Grail of Alabama Hutchinson bottles. These early Hutchinsons came from bottling plants in Birmingham, Bessemer, Jasper, Gadsden, Anniston, Talladega and Tuskegee.

I have all except the Talladega example. I once had a chance at one, but failed to close the deal...something I sometimes regret!

I've been very lucky over the years by having the good fortune of digging one of these rarities and acquiring others through trades and outright purchases.

Most have come from within the borders of the state, but one came from the state of Washington!

My dug example came from a once-in-a-lifetime dig in Walker County, Alabama. A buddy and I dug seven Jasper Cokes, plus a bonus of two more from Birmingham, and 77 other Alabama Hutchinsons, all from the same very small hole!!

Looking at each town, the bottles can be categorized like this:

**Birmingham** - Often called the classiest of the Hutch Cokes because it sports the full Spencerian-script Coca-Cola, measuring nearly 1-inch tall by 3-inches wide.

Both Root Glass Company and D.O. Cunningham Glass Works produced these bottles. Based on my experience, there are approximately equal numbers from each glass house known. In all, there are an estimated 75 to 100 known examples.

**Bessemer** - This bottle features the classic script embossing in an oval slug plate. Not as flashy as the Birmingham Coke, but certainly much more rare!

This bottle was produced by the Chattanooga Glass Company in Tennessee. There are approximately 20 to 25 known examples.



**Jasper** - This bottle features the same classic script embossing in an oval slug plate as found on the Bessemer bottles, which makes sense because the same person founded both bottling plants. Also produced by the Chattanooga Glass Company, there are approximately 20 known examples in existence.

**Gadsden** - Featuring small block letter embossing around the base, the Gadsden Coke ranks as among the plainest "Plain Jane" Hutch Cokes. It must have had a mighty fine label! The same proprietor established the Coke plants in Gadsden, Anniston and Talladega, hence they all bear a similar appearance.

The bottle is marked from Root Glass Company. There are approximately 15 to 20 known examples.

**Anniston** - Again featuring the block letter embossing around the base, the Anniston Coke has slightly larger lettering than the Gadsden bottles and are thought to have been produced by Root Glass Co. It's still very much a "plain Jane" bottle. There are approximately 20 known examples.

**Talladega** - The last of the trio featuring block lettering around the base, the Talladega bottles are slightly taller than the Gadsden or Anniston examples. There are approximately 12-15 reported examples. The glass works producing the Talladega bottle is not known.

**Tuskegee** - Having the nicest example of block lettering from the state, the Tuskegee Coke features an oval slug plate. It's the only Hutch Coke within or outside of

Alabama with a mug base.

The bottle actually comes with two embossing variations, Coca-Cola Bottling Works and Coca-Cola Bottling Co.

The "Co." variation is the hardest to find, but both are rare. The base is glass house marked "R.G.Co" Together, there are approximately 20 known examples. As to value, the script examples typically command a higher price than the block-lettered examples.

Among the three script Hutch Cokes, the Bessemer would bring the most today at \$3,000 to \$4,000 (dug condition, minimal wear, no damage) closely followed by the Jasper at \$2,500 to \$3,500.

The Birmingham Cokes typically trade for \$1,850 - \$2,500. Truly attic-found mint examples would fetch a 20%+ premium over these estimates.

The block-lettered examples from



Tuskogee

Gadsden, Anniston and Talladega have a smaller following of collectors seeking one but they still command substantial prices. Most will trade for \$1,500 to \$2,500 (again, dug condition, minimal wear, no damage) when available.

The two Tuskegee variations will typically trade in the \$2,500 to \$3,000 range when available. Exceptional examples will command premiums above these prices.

As with any rare and sought after bottles, there are damaged and repaired examples available in the marketplace. Obviously, damaged and repaired items do not command the price levels as described above.

For instance, even with a replaced top, any of these might trade in the \$750 to

\$1,500 range, depending on its overall appearance.

I once sold a Bessemer Coke for \$100 that was so severely cracked that I required the buyer to meet me half way between our hometowns, as I was convinced it would never survive shipping.

Are there more Alabama towns with Hutch Cokes? Probably so. I base this on historical references to several Coca-Cola bottling plants being in business during the time when Hutchinson bottles were commonly used.

Finding an eighth town would make my article "The Magnificent Eight"...but now that just doesn't have the same ring to it, does it?

*About the Author* - Tom Lines began collecting Alabama soda bottles in 1975. He has published "Alabama's Pre-Crown Top Drink Bottles, An Illustrated Guide to Known Variations" in 1986. Tom resides in Birmingham, AL and can be reached at P.O.Box 382831 Birmingham, AL 35238 or by E-mail: [tlines@resourceemt.com](mailto:tlines@resourceemt.com).

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**8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.**

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