

# The Coca-Cola Trail: People, Places Along Road to Success

By Bill Baab

How Coca-Cola became America's soft drink and reached worldwide fame has been recounted in as many million words as there are bubbles in the carbonated beverage.

Now you can travel on its many roads to success via *The Coca-Cola Trail*, a new book by author Larry Jorgensen whose trip along the way revealed previously unrecorded stories from some of the many people involved.

Nearly everyone has heard the story about how Dr. John S. Pemberton developed the drink in Atlanta during the 1880s, how the addition of soda water improved its taste and later how the company removed cocaine from its "Secret Formula."

The drink's popularity took off after it was bottled, making it available to the general public after it had been sold only at soda fountains.

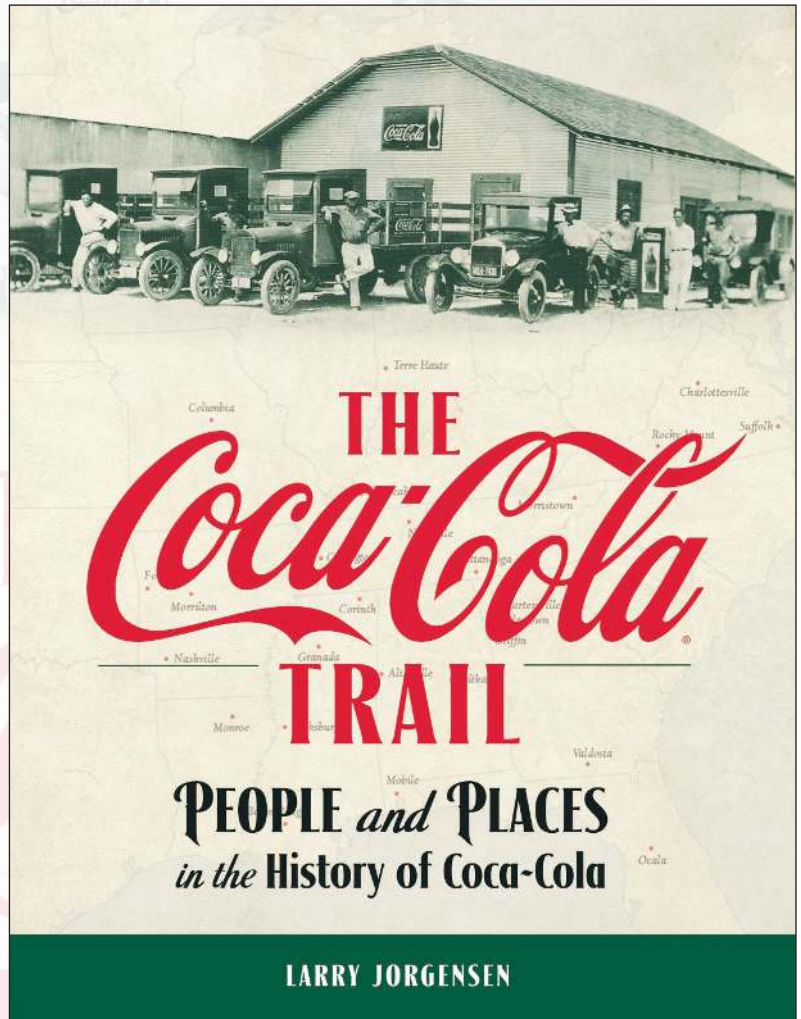
Coca-Cola was first bottled in Vicksburg, Mississippi in 1894 and two years later, a small operation in Valdosta, Georgia became the second.

Let's look at the map outlining the points along The Coca-Cola Trail that became keys to the overall success of the drink. Establishment of Coca-Cola plants was a big deal socially and economically in Small Town USA.

Once a family had gotten involved in a Coca-Cola plant, it was set for life, with future generations keeping the plant operating. Relationships became special between plant management, suppliers, employees and the public forged deep roots never to be forgotten. It all became "The Real Thing."

Everybody has "Coca-Cola memories," including the writer's own dating to his 1940s childhood. "Let's go get a Dope," my father would say, and we'd head to a nearby service station where bottles were lined up inside an ice-filled cooler. Back then, Cokes cost a nickel each. And the term "Dope" could be traced to cocaine that was a part of the drink's early formula.

From the Biedenharn Candy Company's initial bottling of Coca-Cola in Vicksburg, the trail next leads to Monroe, Louisiana and then readers follow it to Chattanooga, Tennessee, Valdosta and the Root Glass Company in Terre Haute, Indiana where in 1915 Coca-Cola bottles changed shape forever. The bulging



middle was modified to accommodate early vending machines.

Another "secret" to the drink's success was the high profile national advertising campaign which helped "sell" the public on the benefits of drinking Coca-Cola.

The author next takes readers all over the map to states in the Southeast, Midwest and Southwest where enthusiastic investors set up bottling plants, many of which are in existence today.

The well-illustrated, 200-plus-page book sells for \$22, but collectors organizations have the option of buying it in bulk orders for \$12 each plus shipping. For more information, contact G L Management, P.O. Box 633, Mansura, LA 71350. Phone number is 1 (337) 591-1937, e-mail is [glmanagement40@gmail.com](mailto:glmanagement40@gmail.com)