



Early Georgia Sodas - The Bottles & Proprietors Atlanta, Augusta, Columbus, Macon, Savannah & Valdosta

By David Kyle Rakes and Ferdinand Meyer V

A Review by Bill Baab

After becoming involved in the hobby of collecting antique bottles more than 50 years ago, my curiosity was piqued by large numbers of 19th-century sodas, whiskies, patent medicines, pharmacies, and mineral waters I'd excavated from a 19th-century landfill on the outskirts of Augusta, Georgia. Many were embossed not only with the names of the contents but also those of the proprietors, many of whom were members of prominent Augusta families.

So I started doing research and found it hard going during those pre-Internet days. Few reference books existed and my earliest gleanings came from bound files of *The Augusta Chronicle* (established in 1785) and the *Augusta Herald* (established in 1890). I also was lucky to be able to contact and interview extant members of families whose 19th-century ancestors were involved in various businesses requiring specially designed and blown glass bottles.

Fast forward from 1969 to the present day. Our hobby continues to attract newcomers, some of whom have become talented researchers whose efforts have resulted in well-written magazine articles and stories and found between the covers of the occasional book. Enter David Kyle Rakes and Ferdinand Meyer V. Each shares a love for the antique glass forms known as bottles. Their formidable backgrounds are posted on page 6 of their book *Early Georgia Sodas*. David has become a superior researcher, while Ferdinand leads the research and design component for the FOHBC Virtual Museum of Historical Bottles & Glass. The hobby has also benefited from his involvement with the Federation of Historical Bottle Collectors when he served six years as its president. He continues to be active on the board of directors. The book's covers, front and back, and interior content reflect Ferdinand's world-class talents

as a designer.

A few years ago, David's interests in collecting antique bottles turned to the colorful category of soda water bottles, especially those sold in the South from the 1840s through the 1880s. He began his research determined to not only identify the varieties of bottles but to uncover the backgrounds of the proprietors who developed and sold the tasty carbonated beverages to a thirsty public.

Some years back, David became friends with Mike Newman of Martinez, Georgia near Augusta. Newman built a fabulous antique bottle collection including dozens of early Southern sodas of which the book's readers can catch a glimpse on a two-page spread in the back. Readers also will be treated to the large full-color images of the featured sodas, thanks to Newman's photographic expertise. All complement David's descriptions of the proprietors, each traced from births to marriages to families to deaths to burials.

This 124-page perfect-bound book, contains a helpful glossary and index, and measures 8.5 x 11 inches. The cost is \$50 per book plus \$4 shipping and may be ordered from David Kyle Rakes, P.O. Box 2706, Belleview, Florida 34421.

In this reviewer's humble opinion, "*Early Georgia Sodas*" will become the go-to book for collectors. The colorful examples of bottles have continued to attract both new and longtime members of the antique bottle hobby.



Example layout spreads within *Early Georgia Sodas - The Bottles & Proprietors*

