

# The Holy Grail of Chero-Colas

HOLY GRAIL: “An object that is sought after for its great significance” – *Webster’s Dictionary*

By Bill Baab



Restored “Drink Chero-Cola There’s None So Good” sign

Allen Woodall, owner of a museum in Columbus, Georgia with displays of products, most of which originated in that west Georgia city on the banks of the Chattahoochee River, checked out an eBay posting and could not believe what he saw.

The multi-themed museum owned by Woodall, 87, a super collector most of his life, includes a relic-filled Chero-Cola area as well as sections devoted to Royal Crown Cola. Another soft drink “born” in his hometown.

So when the amber Chero-Cola from Perry, Florida, popped onto his computer screen, Woodall just knew he had to have it on display with many other bottles that held that early 20th-century soft drink. So he bravely waited until the last day before submitting his bid, which turned out to be the winner.

The best part of this story is that the find was documented by Johnnie Fletcher of Mustang, Oklahoma, in a digging story in the Oklahoma Bottle & Relic Club newsletter, *Oklahoma Territory News*. Its title was *Digging St. Joseph* and was published in the December 2000 issue. Here are excerpts from Fletcher’s story. (He and his friends had filled up one privy and started digging another):

“The first bottles we had were machine-made screw tops, but the 7-foot-deep hole got older the deeper we dug. The relics in the bottom two feet were of 1910-1918 vintage. There were lots of plain catsups, unembossed drug stores, beer bottles, whiskies, etc. We also got two machine-made Hund & Eger (St. Joseph,

Missouri) crown top sodas, a glass basket complete with handle, three or four broken teapots (and one whole), three Dr. Miles’ Restorative Nervines, a fancy glass dish and a fancy glass top (they didn’t match), an amber Chero-Cola Bottle from Perry, Fla, several fruit jars, a Duffy’s Malt Whiskey and a cobalt shoe polish.”

“Chero-Mike” Elling, another Chero-Cola collector from Tennessee, also was astounded by Woodall’s acquisition. On his website (cheromike@prodigy.net) on June 9, he writes:

“Allen Woodall Jr., celebrated owner of the Lunch Box Museum in Columbus, Georgia, the birthplace of Chero-Cola, NEHI and Royal Crown in 1905, has won the rare Perry, Florida amber Chero-Cola bottle on eBay. Coming with the provenance to guarantee that it was recovered from a privy dig in the year 2000, the bottle has been called THE HOLY GRAIL of soda bottles. It is the only one known in mint condition!”

“Allen says he is still on the market for a 1915 Chero-Cola calendar and Rolf Armstrong’s celebrated NEHI pilot-girl calendar of 1931,” said Elling, himself an authority on Chero-Cola. But Allen recently acquired that ’15 calendar and is now interested in obtaining any earlier Chero-Cola calendars.

Fletcher, now deceased, was inducted into the Federation of Historical Bottle Collectors Hall of Fame in 2009.

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Allen Woodall gives the "thumbs-up" to his new amber Chero-Cola bottle.



Various photographs of the amber Chero-Cola bottle.