

Jumbo ~ A Super Cola

America's First Applied Color Label Soda Bottle

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This study is a spin-off from another study that we completed – the “Glamorous Applied Color Labels” – where we traced the origins of the silk screen process, going all the way back to around CE 221 when the Chinese developed silk screen printing for cloth, and later, between 960-1279 AD, for printing the first paper money. About six-hundred years later, in 1933 and 1934, the silkscreen process was finally adopted by bottle manufacturers, most notably the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. and the Thatcher Mfg. Co. Owens-Illinois called the process Applied Color Lettering, first using the process for soda bottles, and Thatcher called it Pyroglazing – for milk bottles. Although there are no known examples of ACL soda or milk bottles from 1933 (just one prescription bottle), various trade magazines and newspaper articles briefly mentioned the process that year. However, it was not until 1934 that confirmed examples of milk and soda bottles with Applied Color Labels began to enter the marketplace. For more information, see Lockhart & Brown (2019).

The United States in 1934-1935

Before addressing the earliest ACL soda bottles, we need to take a quick look at some of the more memorable events that occurred in the U.S. during those years. No doubt the most notable event of the 1930s was the Great Depression that began in 1929 and would not end until the 1940s. Franklin D. Roosevelt was President, and one of his major achievements was the Social Security Income law, enacted in 1935. For those who could afford the 25-cent admission fee, going to the movies was a great way to temporarily forget the toils of the time and enjoy movies starring Clark Gable, Shirley Temple, and many others.

Television was unavailable until the mid- to late 1940s, and radio was in its hay-day with shows like “Fibber McGee and Molly” (Figure 1) and singers such as a very young Frank Sinatra as well as popular bands like Benny Goodman and Duke Ellington. Not so famous were notorious gangsters like Bonnie and Clyde, John Dillinger, and “Pretty Boy” Floyd, all of whom met tragic deaths in 1934. Meanwhile, the combined influence of the Depression and the



Figure 1 – Fibber McGee & Molly (Freepublic.com)

seemingly never-ending dust storms in the Midwest caused untold numbers of Americans to migrate west to California where they hoped to find the land of milk and honey – but did not. A great picture from the Depression era (Figure 2) was taken by documentary photographer Dorothea Lange



Figure 2 – Coca-Cola nurser (Dorothea Lange)

when she captured a migrant mother with one of her children holding a makeshift nurser made from a Coca Cola bottle. This was the state of the nation when America’s first ACL soda bottles made their debut – and they only cost a nickle.

The Owens-Illinois Glass Co.

In 1929, two of the industry giants – the Owens Bottle Co. and the Illinois Glass Co. – merged to form the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. The Illinois Glass Co. began production in 1873 and gradually grew into a major manufacturer of a general line of bottles and jars. A relative newcomer, the Owens Bottle Manufacturing Co. was an outgrowth of the Owens Automatic Bottle Machine, patented in 1903. The first truly functional fully automatic machine, the invention of Michael J. Owens revised the industry.

Initially, the Owens firm produced machines rather than bottles, granting exclusive licenses to specific factories to manufacture limited bottle types. For example, only the American Bottle Co. was allowed to use the Owens machine for soda and beer bottles, while the Thatcher Mfg. Co. had the license for milk bottles. Gradually, the Owens firm realized its mistake and began producing bottles, finding itself limited by its own policies. Along with building its own plants, the company began buying other glass houses (e.g., the American Bottle Co.) – often to retrieve its ability to make bottles with its own machines! In 1919, Owens reorganized as the Owens Bottle Co.

The 1929 merger created the Owens-Illinois Glass Co., the largest glass firm in the world. For more information, see Briggs (202018) and Lockhart et al. (2016, 2018a, 2018 b, 2018c). Predictably, Owens-Illinois became one of the most prolific innovators in the glass industry, constantly revising methods and developing new ideas. One of those was a new idea in labeling – Applied Color Lettering.

The ACL Process

As noted in the introduction, the silkscreen process had an ancient history, mostly as a method of applying colored drawings (later photographs) to paper. Although inventors played with the idea of adapting the process to glass containers during the late 1920s, it was not until 1934 that the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. created a viable method for applying silk screens to bottles, calling their labels Applied Color Lettering (ACL). About the same time, the Thatcher Mfg. Co. began offering Pyroglazing, their name for the same system – although Thatcher specialized in milk bottles. The Brockway Glass Co. was the first in production (1933) but Brockway targeted the flat surfaces of prescription bottles – an idea that never caught on.

The idea soon spread and was adopted by many glass houses. Eventually offered under a bewildering array of names, its use fairly rapidly became limited primarily to two forms of containers: soda and milk bottles. Although ACL also appeared on a few prescription and beer bottles as well as a small variety of household, liquor, and food bottles, the process never became the standard for any of these. Although some dairies continued to prefer embossed milk bottles, Pyroglazing took over as the norm by 1940 and remained the dominant labeling style until the combination of waxed paper and plastic milk containers dramatically reduced the use of glass during the 1950s and 1960s. But, the most prolific use of ACL appeared on soda bottles. Although Owens-Illinois advertised the process in 1934, it was not until the early 1940s that the system improved to completely dominate soda bottle labeling. Because of the handling of returnable bottles, embossed lettering wore down fairly rapidly, and paper labels soaked off in the typical iced boxes used to sell sodas at stores during the 1920s-1940s. Besides, ACL was attractive and versatile. It could be used for drawings, logos, and a listing of ingredients in fine print. It was the ideal labeling medium for soda bottles. For more information on the process, itself, see Lockhart & Brown (2019).

A Brief History of Carbonated Soft Drinks

Even though the primary focus of this article is about the first Applied Color Label (ACL) soda bottle made in the United States – a process introduced by the soft drink industry in 1934 – we feel it will benefit the reader to include this brief history of soft drinks to better understand what led to the adoption of Applied Color Labels. The first so called soft drink to be sold commercially occurred in the 17th century when the Compagnie de Limonadiers was formed in Paris in 1676 where vendors carried tanks on their backs to dispense cups of lemonade – and these backpack tanks eventually evolved into bottles (Figure 3).



Figure 3 – Limonadier 1676
(*Boston Globe* 4/28/2017)

However, those first commercially sold beverage was lemonade – not carbonated. The development of effervescence or carbonation took many years to perfect and included experimentation by a variety of chemists and scientists, such as Jan Baptista van Helmont (Flemish), Gabriel Venel (French), Joseph Black (British), and Robert Boyle (Anglo-Irish), along with many others. But it was an Englishman named Joseph Priestly who is now considered the grandfather of the soft drink industry. In 1772, he invented a small carbonating apparatus that injected fixed air into water. Shortly afterwards, another Englishman, Thomas Henry, used Priestly's invention to introduce the first fully carbonated water, which was sealed and stored in wooden barrels.

However, a onetime Swiss jeweler, Jacob Scheppe, was the first person to produce a fully carbonated mineral water around 1793. Scheppe continued to experiment with various types of mineral water and, around 1820, started adding flavors such as ginger and lemon. About that time, he began bottling his products and is considered the first to do so. Bottled Scheppe's ginger ale began being imported to the United States around 1850 and was first produced in the U.S. around 1875. Hence, Scheppe's ginger ale is generally considered the first bottled soft drink to be sold in the United States, with Vernor's ginger ale a close second in 1866 – although some historians question the 1866 date and believe that 1880 is more likely.

This brings us to what is considered by many as the first Cola ever produced and sold in the United States.

According to numerous sources, America's first cola was developed by a Brooklyn, New York, syrup manufacturer named Henry Downes. In 1881, he developed a soft drink that he named and trademarked as Imperial Inca Coca (Figure 4). However, despite the claim about its being the

first cola, the beverage did not use the word Cola, but did use the word Coca. According to his 1962 book, *Twelve Full Ounces*, primarily the history of Pepsi-Cola, author Milward W. Martin reinforced the claim by inferring that all colas also include coca, supporting his claim that Imperial Inca Coca was the world's first cola.



Figure 4 – Inca Coca ad (Martin 1962)

Originally, the Cola nut (also spelled Kola) was the basis for all cola drinks. These also contained heavy sugar and caffeine (and still do) as well as a variety of other ingredients. Eventually, formulas changed, and most colas today no longer have the cola nut as their bases. Colas did not become the dominant soft drinks in the U.S. until John Pemberton invented Coca-Cola (named for the nut) in 1886 (Wikipedia 2020).

The Good Grape and Mar-vel Mysteries

Before presenting the early history of the Seminole Flavor Company, the authors would like to point out that during the course of our research we discovered a number of previously unknown facts that will call into question some of the earlier published accounts. Rather than a case by case analysis of the differing reports, we have elected to share our findings as they were discovered in the following record. In the following account, we will discuss the origin of the Good Grape soft drink and the Good Grape Co., as well as the connection of Charles D. Little and Joseph S. Foster with the brand. But, possibly most important of all, we will discuss the true origin of Mar-Vel, a soft drink that was not a cola but a non-carbonated chocolate drink made from milk.

Charles Davis Little was born in Forsyth, Georgia in 1887. In the late 1900s, he worked as a page for the Georgia State Senate where he delivered newspapers – as well as having various other duties. During this time, he met Thaddeus Cornelius Parker. Parker lived in

Macon, Georgia, at the time and maintained an office where he managed his various business interests. One of those businesses was the Railway News Co., established in 1885. At one time, he was co-owner of the Munger & Parker general merchandise store, also in Macon. Some of his other business interests included a fruit shipping operation based in Florida, as well as numerous soft drink bottling plants scattered throughout the southeast – the most notable of which were several Coca-Cola bottling plants.

One of C.D. Little’s first jobs with Parker was that of a salesman for Parker’s fruit shipping operation. From there, Little advanced to become one of Parker’s auditors for the Railway News Co. During that tenure, Little became interested in the bottling of soft drinks. In 1914, at the age of 27, and under the guidance of T.C. Parker, Little opened a Chero-Cola bottling plant in Rome, Georgia (Figure 5). The Chero-Cola plant in Rome would be the first of many that Little would establish throughout the southeast during the next forty-plus years. In 1916, Little moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee, where he opened another Chero-Cola plant, the city’s first franchise for the brand.

Born in Americus, Georgia, in 1890, Joseph Shaffer Foster became a confidant of Little. As a young man, Foster moved to Valdosta, Georgia, where he entered the hotel business (Figure 6). It was in Valdosta where Foster and Little first met. In 1907, Foster moved to Macon, Georgia, to work for the Parker Railway News Co., where Little was working at the time. Foster and Little developed a friendship that would last their entire lives. Foster continued to work for the Parker News Co. in Macon until 1919. At that time, he left Parker News and moved to Huntsville, Alabama, where he teamed up with Little to open a Chero Cola bottling plant, with Little as president and Foster as manager. It is in Huntsville that our narrative becomes not only more interesting, but important from a historical perspective.



Figure 5 – C.D. Little (*Chattanooga News* 3/29/1919)



Figure 6 – J.S. Foster (*Chattanooga Daily Times* 3/5/1945)

At Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 1922, we find the emergence of another soft drink called Good Grape. This raises some additional controversy because it calls into question who created the brand, as well as the origin of the Good Grape Co. that produced it. Every Internet account we could find about Good Grape and the Good Grape Co. claimed that C.D. Little and J.S. Foster developed the drink. However, while researching the company's history, we discovered that neither Little nor Foster was listed among the incorporators in the original charter application that was filed on October 11, 1922. The actual incorporators were Marcus S. Woods, F.L. Underwood, I.M. Strong, Paul H. Winn, and J.L. Faust (sometimes spelled Foust). The most notable of these individuals was Marcus Shaffer Woods. Born in 1885, he was a well known citizen in Chattanooga in the 1920s and had numerous business interests.

The earliest ad we could find for Good Grape from Chattanooga or elsewhere was from the October 23, 1922, edition of the *Chattanooga News* – and showed M.S. Woods as President of the Good Grape Co. (Figure 7). Again, there was no mention of either Little or Foster. It was not until the spring of 1923 that Good Grape was bottled and sold by the Chero-Cola Bottling Co. in Chattanooga. It would be easy to assume this was when Little became connected with Good Grape, but Little had sold his Chero-Cola plant in Chattanooga in September of 1922. The purchasers were listed as C.F. Borden, S.A. Christian, and E.W. Christian. As stated above, Little opened this particular Chero-Cola plant in 1916 and owned the business until 1922. On September 15, 1922, the *Chattanooga News* stated that Little intended to remain in Chattanooga after selling Chero-Cola and make it his headquarters to look after his other bottling plants and business interest scattered throughout the southeast. In 1928, Little created the Seminole Fruit Flavor Co., discussed below.



Figure 7 – 1922 Good Grape ad (*Chattanooga News* 10/23/1922)

In 1923 the owners of the Good Grape Co. introduced a fictional mascot called Cap'n Grapejack, a cartoonish character in a pirate outfit who appeared in numerous ads and was popular with children (Figure 8). Good Grape marketed its bottles in 1922 and 1923 with paper



Figure 8 – Cap'n Grapejack ad
(Chattanooga News 5/9/1923)

labels, first introducing its embossed deco or specialty bottle in 1924 (see below). Good Grape paper labels depicted a popular landmark in the Chattanooga area called Umbrella Rock (Figure 9). The actual rock was located on Lookout Mountain, – a state park – as well as a small town by the same name (Figure 10). It was also in 1923 that Good Grape was first bottled by the Chero-Cola bottling plant in Huntsville, Alabama – owned by C.D. Little and managed by J.S. Foster. This 1923 Huntsville connection is the earliest plausible date we have found



Figure 9 – Good Grape
(Chattanooga News 10/23/1922)

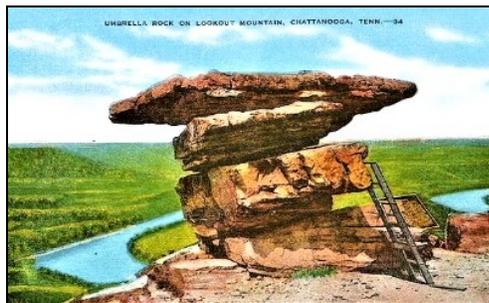


Figure 10 – Umbrella Rock (eBay)

that associates Little and Foster with the Good Grape soft drink or the Good Grape Co. However, this does not necessarily mean that Little and Foster were owners of Good Grape at that time.

This brings us to 1924 and the introduction of the Good Grape deco or specialty style soda bottle. It was designed

and patented by Marcus S. Woods. Woods applied for his patent on January 24, 1924, and received Design Patent No. 64,803 on June 3 of that year – a number usually embossed on the heels of the bottles (Figure 11). Woods assigned the patent to the Good Grape Co. of Chattanooga, Tennessee. Typically, when a person assigned a patent to a company, he or she worked for that firm – although there were exceptions.

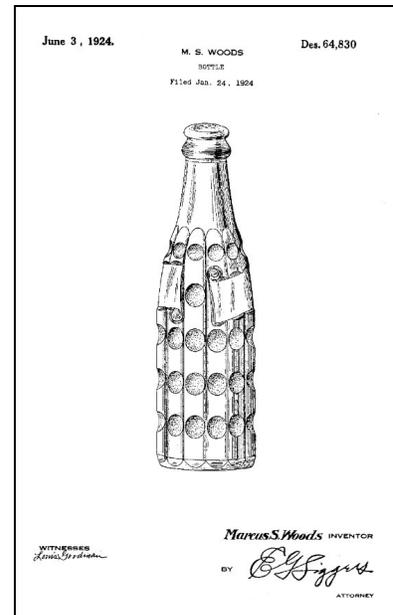


Figure 11 – Woods 1925 patent

A slight digression is appropriate at this point. Around 1927, Marcus S. Woods developed a soft drink in Chattanooga called Hi-Peak Cola (Figure 12). It was sold in New Mexico and Arizona but not in Chattanooga or elsewhere in the Southeast that we could find. It was short-lived because it apparently did not sell and was discontinued. However, the brand had no apparent connection with Jumbo Cola.

Our narrative now brings us to the controversial question: What exactly was Mar-vel, and why is it so often referred to as a cola? The word “cola” did not appear in any of the very few ads for the product – including the one placed in the *Huntsville Times* on July 6, 1927 – that stated the drink had “nothing but pure chocolate and the finest grade of certified milk.” The *Times* ad used the slogan “Hot or Cold It Hits the Spot,” noting that the drink was “not carbonated” (Figure 13). “Monte

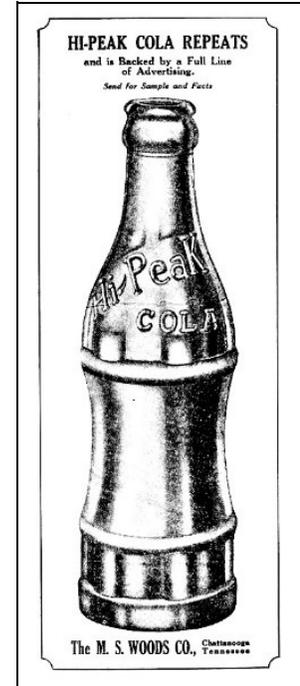


Figure 12 – Hi-Peak Cola ad (eBay)

Huntsville enterprise and fertility of sound ideas has given birth to a great discovery in a marvelous new drink. After many years of strenuous laboratory experiments and tests, that well known citizen of Huntsville—Joe Foster—has succeeded in perfecting what thousands of food and drink experts have failed in—a real honest to goodness milk chocolate drink.

No preservatives are used in this marvelous new food drink—nothing but pure chocolate and the finest grade of certified milk make up its main ingredients. And, *it is not carbonated.* High praise from food and drink experts from all over the United States have been received by Mr. Foster for his discovery of

the Perfect Health-Food Drink

Marvel
REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

Hot or cold it hits the spot

Drink it for your next lunch. Drink it when you need a cooling drink. Drink it when you need a hot drink. Drink it when you are tired and want cheering up. Drink it under any condition. Marvel will never fail to give you marvelous satisfaction.

It's indeed a marvelous health-drink-food. It keeps indefinitely—and is served Hot or Cold. Call for it today at your favorite stand—it's only 5c a bottle.

Manufactured and bottled solely by

Marvel Corporation
J. S. Foster, President.
HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA

MARVEL -- Pure as the breezes from Monte Sano

Figure 13 – Excerpt from 1927 Mar-Vel ad (*Huntsville Times* on 7/6/1927)

Sano” at the bottom of the ad referred to

Monte Sano Mountain located near Huntsville. In Spanish the name means “Mountain of Health.”

An ad in the July 17, 1927, edition of the *Huntsville Times* noted that Mar-Vel was “sold only in that brown glass, gold topped bottle.” Even though we devoted a considerable amount of time searching for a “brown glass” Mar-Vel bottle, we were unable to find one and doubt that one was actually used – *unless* it was a generic bottle with a paper label. The only bottle examples we found were the Double Barrel type, aqua in color, and not “brown.” If examples of the amber

bottles do exist, they must be extremely rare – likely with a paper label. The “gold top” referred to gold foil wrapped around the finish and crown cap. While these foil wraps were more common on expensive champagne and wine bottles (and, occasionally, on premium beer bottles), they are quite unusual on soda bottles.

This leaves us with a conundrum. We have an advertisement for an amber bottle, but all bottles known to collectors were aqua – the embossed specialty or deco bottles. The Mar-Vel bottles were the first of the double barrel bottles (discussed below) that were used from that point on by Little and Foster. The top barrel was embossed “MAR-VEL” with “IT’S” at the constriction and “MARVELOUS” in the lower barrel (Figure 14). There are at least two plausible explanations for this situation.

1. Before most franchisers settled into real power in the early 1940s (with the exception of Coca-Cola, the firm that set the standard for everyone else), each bottler had a great deal of freedom to choose his own bottles. Look at the HUGE range of 7-Up bottles, for example. Only one bottler may have used amber bottles with foil wraps. The others may have used embossed bottles.

2. The amber bottle may have been used first – but only for one order. Adding the foil was an extra – and unnecessary – step that required more time and cost, one that was discontinued once Little designed the double barrel bottle.

The Marvel Corp. advertised the brand with J.S. Foster as president. Mar-vel was only advertised in the *Huntsville Times* for a brief period from July 3, 1927, to April 8, 1928. The Seminole Fruit Flavor Co. received the MAR-VEL trademark (No. 297,700) on March 21, 1930, claiming a first use on June 15, 1926 (Figure 15). We were unable



Figure 14 – Mar-Vel bottle (Tazewell-Orange.com)

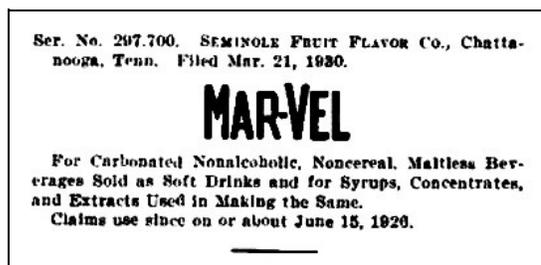


Figure 15 – Mar-Vel trademark

to find any documentation that explains who, when, or how this non-carbonated chocolate soft drink mysteriously morphed into a cola and was somehow misnamed Mar-vel Cola by collectors. Online sources (e.g., Wikipedia 2019), including the website for the Double Cola Co. (Double Cola Company n.d.), claim that Mar-vel Cola was created by C.D. Little and J.S. Foster in 1922 and that it was their first cola. Although the connection with Foster is obvious, we have no explanation for how this non-carbonated chocolate drink “became” a cola in the minds of collectors. In reality, Little and Foster continued on to develop a different line of soft drinks that led to “Jumbo - A Super Cola” and the first Applied Color Label soda bottle.

Jumbo the Elephant

The next soda bottle in our chronology is the so called “deco” or “specialty” bottle that was fully embossed, including the embossed image of an elephant on it as well as “Jumbo Brand” on the shoulder plus “Quality Sugar Beverages” on the lower body. Although there were similar earlier bottles – to be discussed shortly – the one that directly ties in with this particular history was patented by George N. Mas in 1929 and given Design Patent No. 30,861 (Figure 16). He applied for the patent on April 12, 1929, and received his design patent on July 9. Mas, a resident of Washington, D.C., did not assign the patent to anyone. Mas designed and patented at least 40 bottles during the 1920s and 1930s, some of which he assigned to the American Ornamental Bottle Corp. of Lynchburg, Virginia. The only references we could find for the American Ornamental Bottle Corp. were those mentioned in several of the Mas bottle patents. Mas was likely the owner of the firm and used it as a holding company to market his designs.

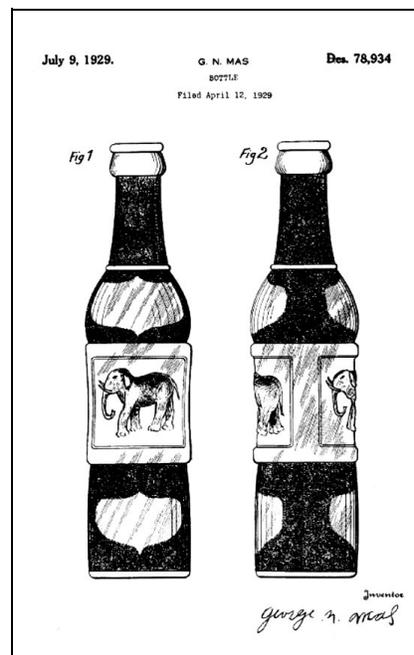


Figure 16 – Mas 1929 patent

As with so many other sections of this study, there is a bit of a mystery surrounding the Jumbo flavor bottle. One of the mysteries we encountered pertains to the name “Jumbo” and where it originated. As near as we could determine, just about every product that used the

Jumbo name and an elephant as a logo originated with an elephant named Jumbo – a popular attraction with the P.T. Barnum circus in the late 1800s (Figure 17). Jumbo was born in Africa in 1860 and died in 1885 after being hit by a freight train in St. Thomas, Ontario, Canada. It was around that same time that several “Jumbo Bottling” companies emerged, the most notable of which were located in Cincinnati, Ohio, around 1900 and New Orleans, Louisiana, about 1910. Examples of those bottles are fairly abundant, with the Cincinnati bottle being the Hutchinson type, and the New Orleans examples being more typical crown-finished soda bottles with straight sides.

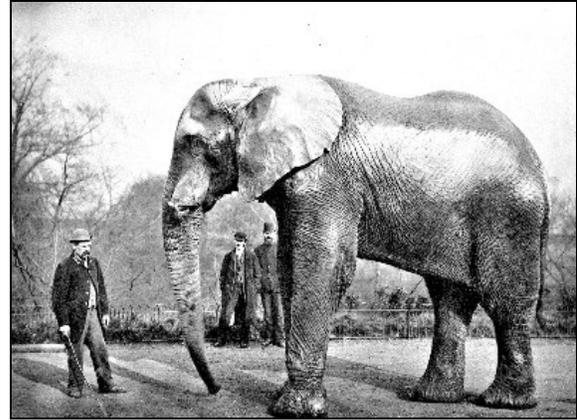


Figure 17 – Jumbo (eBay)

The 1929-patented Jumbo bottle first showed up in advertisements in the spring of 1928, bottled by the Jumbo Bottling Co. at Chattanooga, Tennessee (Figure 18). Even though this was before the bottle itself was patented, a use prior to the receipt of the patent was not uncommon for some bottles during that time. The Jumbo Bottling Co. in Chattanooga was incorporated in April of 1928 and listed J.S. Foster, G.W. Trimbble, J.L. Foust, Knox Smartt, and S.D. Lynch as the incorporators. Some of those individuals were involved with the afore mentioned Good Grape Co., incorporated in Chattanooga in 1922. However, as noted earlier, neither the Good Grape Co. nor the Jumbo Bottling Co. listed C.D. Little as one of the incorporators. Even though it is possible that Little was a “silent” partner, we have found no documentation to support that possibility. Nor does there appear to be any connection with the early 1900s Jumbo Bottling companies or the one that opened in Chattanooga in 1928.

Hey, Everybody!
have you had yours? My what?
your bottle of JUMBO, of course.
Wake up, get wise to the best drink you ever had.

You'll say it is "the best mass society ever saw!"
If you don't believe me try a bottle of JUMBO.
Then you'll say "it's good 'nuff for me!"
Here's How!

It's the juiciest, freshest, best flavored thirst quencher that ever came out of a bottle.
And, boy, how it cleans the blues away!
Here's How!

JUMBO
 "Good 'nuff for me"

Have a JUMBO in your favorite flavor--save the crowns
a happy, go lucky JUMBO Elephant he'll bring you loads of luck!

FREE
How to get a Lucky JUMBO Absolutely Free!
 Just save 50 JUMBO crowns from any JUMBO bottle. Before then to our office or your dealer and let the happy owner of a JUMBO--and his bottle--decide. There are no strings tied in this offer--bring 50 crowns from JUMBO bottles and JUMBO, the elephant, is yours. **START SAVING CROWNS TODAY!**

Save Your Crowns **JUMBO BOTTLING CO.** **Save Your Crowns**
 Phone H. 895 1110 McCallie Ave. Crowns

Figure 18 – Early Jumbo ad (Chattanooga News 4/14/1928)

When the Jumbo brand of fruit flavors was first advertised in Chattanooga, it was described as being available in seven flavors. In 1929, J.S. Foster’s Jumbo Bottling Co. applied for a charter to change its name to the Seminole Bottling Co. Even though Little and Foster had separated to establish their own individual bottling plants around the southeast during the previous decade, they were now teamed up again with plans to expand their bottling interests like never before. Although we will return to Little and Foster, we must first digress for a real curiosity.

One of our research questions was: Where did J.S. Foster come up with the name for the Jumbo Bottling Co. he established in Chattanooga in 1928. As discussed above, Foster lived in and operated a Chero Cola bottling plant in Huntsville, Alabama, between 1919 and 1928. Huntsville was also where Foster organized the Marvel Corp. to market his chocolate drink. Huntsville is home to numerous caves and caverns, one of which is called Shelta Cavern. There was and still is a massive stalagmite in Shelta Cavern known as the “Jumbo” stalagmite. We were unable to find a picture of the stalagmite, but it was described as being at least ten feet tall and about fifteen feet wide, resembling a circus elephant with a blanket draped over it. Portions of Shelta Cave were converted to a Speakeasy, with dance floor, during Prohibition. There seems little doubt that Foster would have been familiar with Shelta Cavern, and likely visited it from time to time – possibly selecting this noted feature as a fitting name for a soft drink.

The Double Barrel Bottles

The Double Barrel bottles are a study unto themselves and will require a more extensive examination in the future. The primary reason for including these bottles in our study is because they were a stepping-stone that led to the introduction of the Jumbo - A Super Cola ACL bottle that was in itself a Double Barrel variation (discussed in detail below).

The Seminole Fruit Flavor Co. coined the term “Double Barrel,” using the term in their ads as early as 1928. The term refers to the bottle’s design that resembles two wooden barrels, one stacked atop of the other. It was designed by C.D. Little who

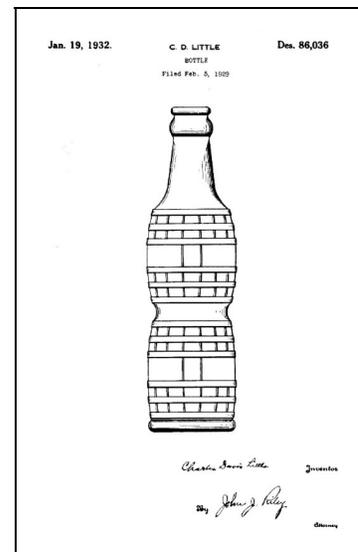


Figure 19 – Little 1932 patent

filed for a patent on February 5, 1929, and was granted Design Patent No. 86,036 on June 19, 1932 (Figure 19). The patent number was embossed on the bases of some of the bottles. Even though the patent document did not list Little as assigning the patent to any particular company, the address it showed was the same as the Seminole Fruit Flavor Co., located at 16 East Fourteenth Street, Chattanooga. The Double Barrel bottle is another example of a soda bottle entering the marketplace before it was officially patented (Figure 20).

Because of the limited number of these bottles we were able to examine, mostly from eBay and other online sites, properly dating them became a challenge. Part of the challenge was the lack of good pictures showing manufacturer's marks and date codes on the bottle bases. However, the majority of the examples with good photos and/or reliable descriptions had a Circle-C logo embossed on the base.



Figure 21 – Circle-C logo (eBay)

The Circle-C mark indicates that the bottle was made by the Chattanooga Glass Co., Chattanooga, Tennessee (Figure 21). The firm began using the Circle-C mark in 1927. However, the first Double Barrel bottles probably were produced no earlier than the incorporation of the Seminole Fruit Flavor Co. of Chattanooga on March 6, 1928 – headed by C.D. Little, designer and patentee the Double Barrel bottle.

The earliest ads to depict illustrations of the Double Barrel bottle were from the spring of 1929 (Figure 22). It was during that same time period that the Seminole Fruit Flavor Co. embarked on a multi-state campaign to promote the firm and its line of various fruit flavored soft drinks. The company conducted the campaign by way of a bus

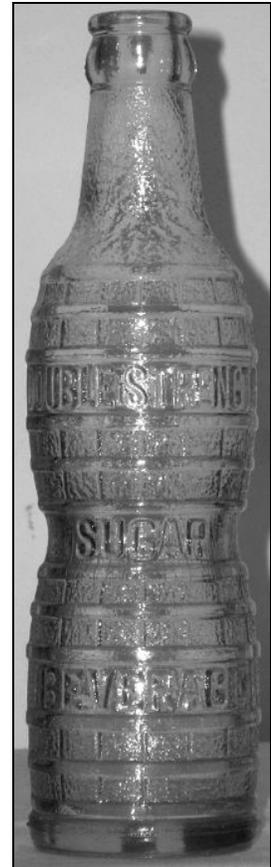


Figure 20 – Double Barrel bottle (eBay)

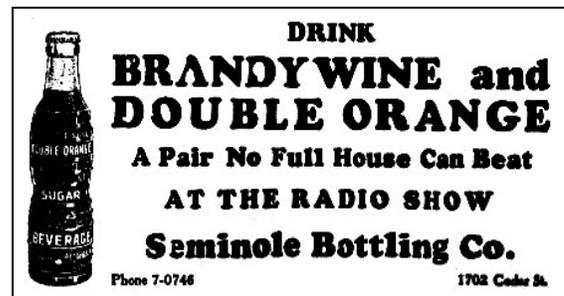


Figure 22 – Double-barrel bottle ad (*Nashville Tennessean* 9/1/1929)

tour that often included C.D. Little and numerous staff members, as well as other soft drink executives involved with the newly formed firm. One of their advertising slogans used at the time was “A Pair No Full House Can Beat.” The use of the word “Pair” in their ads and promotional material was a direct reference to the two brands they promoted during their bus tours – Brandywine and Double Orange. Names such as Double Strength, came later.

Another promotional ploy they put to use during their bus tours throughout the southeast during 1928-1929 was the addition of a spokesperson named Chief Little Big Bear (sometimes referred to as Chief Little Bear) who was described as a full-blooded Seminole Indian and said to have lost both parents in the battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876 – a wildly inaccurate claim since the Seminole tribe was located in Florida – certainly *not* anywhere near the Big Horn Mountains of Montana. The victorious tribes involved in the battle were the Lakota, Northern Cheyenne, and Arapaho.

As near as we could determine, the earliest of the so-called Double Barrel bottles was the 6½ ounce bottle embossed “MAR-VEL IT’S MARVELOUS” on the front (see Figure 14). Unfortunately, that particular bottle seems to have been made exclusively by the Chattanooga Glass Co., bottles notoriously difficult to date because the glass house refused to use date codes other than those specifically required by Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola, and occasional others – although (as mentioned above), the Circle-C logo was first introduced in 1927. A somewhat confusing aspect about the Mar-Vel bottle is that it was the only Double Barrel style bottle that was made in the 6½ ounce size. All of the other Double Barrel bottles held 7½ ounces.

Some examples of the 6½ ounce Mar-Vel bottles had the words “MAR-VEL IT’S MARVELOUS” altered or peened out of original bottle molds to be replaced with the words “DOUBLE GRAPE” embossed on the center portion of the bottle (Figure 23). On some of the Mar-Vel bottles, you can still see parts of the words Mar-Vel, as well as peen marks where the mold was obviously altered. The brief advertising period mentioned above – from July 3, 1927, to April 8,



Figure 23 – Double-Grape - peened out Mar-Vel (eBay)

1928 – and the dearth of surviving bottles suggest that the Mar-Vel chocolate drink, developed by J.S. Foster in Huntsville in 1927-1928, was a total flop, so the mold changes altered the otherwise useless bottles to accommodate the Double Grape flavor. It also should be noted that the Mar-Vel bottles were the only type of Double Barrel bottles that did not have the words “SUGAR BEVERAGES” embossed on them. All of the other Double Barrel bottles, such as Double Orange, Brandywine, Double Strength, etc., were embossed with the words “SUGAR BEVERAGES.” As mentioned above, Mar-Vel was a milk-based chocolate drink – not a carbonated soda.



Figure 24 – Double Flavors ad (*Scott County Journal* 8/31/1939)



Figure 25 – Bottle caps (eBay)

There is virtually no doubt that the Double Strength Sugar Beverage bottle was generic with the flavors identified by the cap (Figure 24). Those flavors included Double Orange, Double Grape, Double Lemon, Double Root Beer, Double Ginger Ale, and possibly a few others (Figure 25). Even though the 7½-ounce Double Strength bottles were similar in many ways to the 6½-ounce Mar-Vel bottles, they differed not only in the contents they held, but the Double Strength bottles had a textured surface, what some collectors call an orange-peel texture (Figure 26). Most of the

Double Strength bottles we examined were embossed on the base with “DESIGN PAT. NO, 86036” – Little’s 1932 patent discussed above (see Figure 19). Although he used the bottle design prior to the receipt of the patent (notably for the Mar-Vel bottles), he could not apply the patent number to the bottles until after the patent process was complete in 1932.



Figure 26 – Double-barrel bottles (eBay)

Another distinctive feature of the Double Strength bottle is the vertical embossing – giving it the wooden barrel look – was much more pronounced than that of the Mar-Vel bottle. However, the riddle does not end there. Even though we could not find a single advertisement that specifically used the words Double Strength Sugar Beverage, an ad from the July 25, 1929, edition of the *Elizabethon Star*, Elizabethon, Tennessee, had illustrations of the Double Orange Sugar Beverage bottle, as well as an illustration of a Brandy Wine Sugar Beverage bottle (Figure 27). The ad noted that the drink “Contains Pure Fruit Juices – Double Strength” – a reference to the sugar content. This could very well be the origin for the Double Strength bottles that followed. We were unable to find a Double Orange bottle similar to those illustrated in the ads and suspect that none was ever produced. The drink was almost certainly bottled in the Double Strength containers.



Figure 27 – Double-strength ad (*Elizabethon Star* 7/25/29)

The ca. 1935 Owens-Illinois Glass Company catalog also illustrated the Double Strength bottle (Figure 28). The page was titled “Licensed Patented Sodas” and listed the bottle as having mold number G-905, 7½ ounce, and 8⅞ inches in height. The discovery of the bottle in the Owens-Illinois catalog led to a search for other Double Strength bottles by that manufacturer, disclosing several examples, the latest of which had a date code for 1945, along with the word “Duraglas” embossed on the base. Duraglas was introduced in 1940 and was a glass hardening treatment patented by Owens-Illinois that same year.

The 1945 bottle was also embossed “WILLISTON, FLA.” on the base. Although we conducted a search to see if we could find something to explain the 1945 Williston connection, the only thing we were able to determine is that there was a Coca-Cola bottling plant located there at the time, possibly the

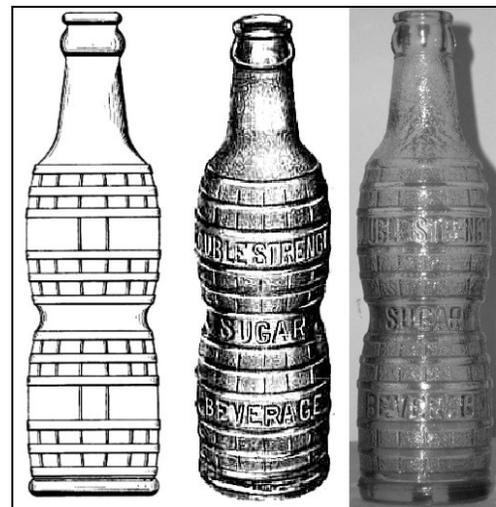


Figure 28 – Double-strength bottles

bottler responsible for the Double Strength bottle in question. We found a single example of a Double Strength bottle that was made by the Laurens Glass Works, and embossed on the base with their LGW logo. However, the bottle lacked any form of date code, so we could not determine the year of manufacture.

Brandy Wine bottles (sometimes spelled Brandywine) were somewhat different from the typical “Double” containers – the majority of them were emerald green in color, although a few were made of aqua glass (see Figure 26). Because they are rare, we found few base photos, but we suspect they were made by the Chattanooga Glass Co. The illustration of the Double Orange bottle in the Owens-Illinois catalog depicted the orange peel texture (noted earlier); whereas, every Brandy Wine bottle we found was not textured and was very similar to the non-textured Mar-Vel bottles.

Jumbo – A Super Cola

As mentioned in the previous segment, the Jumbo - A Super Cola ACL bottle was a variation of the Double Barrel bottles, except that it involved a new design and new patent by C.D. Little in 1934. Although similar to the earlier design, the new bottle differed in that the embossed rings on the shoulder were eliminated and replaced by a smooth surface. Also eliminated from the new patent was any remnants of the barrel, replaced by more embossed rings. In yellow ACL, the bottle’s labeling area proclaimed “JUMBO (slight arch) / A SUPER COLA (horizontal)” (Figures 29 & 30).

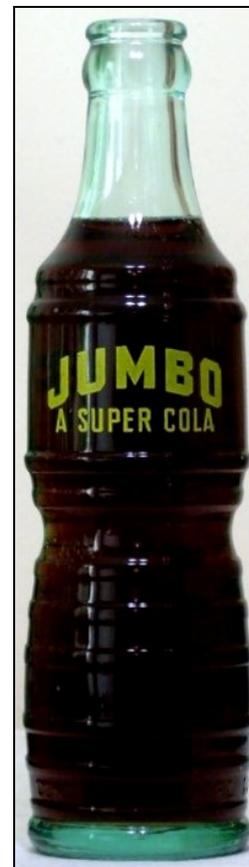


Figure 29 – Jumbo bottle (Tazewell-Orange.com)

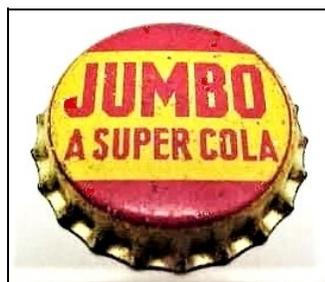


Figure 30 – Jumbo cap (eBay)

It was almost as if Little designed the new bottle knowing it would be used to accommodate an Applied Color Label. Although we were unable to find any documentation to support this hypothesis, it seems more than a coincidence that Little would design a totally new bottle when he already had the earlier Double Barrel bottles at his disposal and could easily have altered them to be used for the Jumbo Cola ACL bottle.

Regardless of whether Little intentionally designed the new bottle for an ACL application, the patent was filed on February 23, 1934, and assigned patent No. 92,098 on April 24, 1934 (Figure 31). The patent number appears on the heel of every Jumbo Cola bottle we examined. Additionally, every bottle in our study was produced by the Owens Illinois Glass Co., the first of which was embossed on the base with the Owens-Illinois logo, the single digit 4, a date code for 1934. The new bottles were advertised and distributed at least as late as 1937, although the only Owens-Illinois date codes we have seen were for 1934 and 1935. It is highly probable that enough of the new bottles were produced in 1934 and 1935 to account for those used as late as 1937.

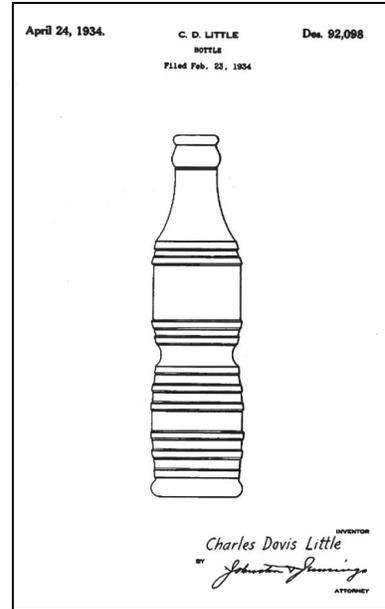


Figure 31 – Little 1934 patent

Little assigned his patent to the Seminole Flavor Co. of Chattanooga, Tennessee, incorporated on January 29, 1932, when they dropped the word “Fruit” from their earlier charter established in 1928. The 1932 Seminole Flavor Co. partnership included C.D. Little, Mae S. Little (his wife), J.S. Foster, F.L. Underwood, and J.L. Faust.

Unlike the 1928-1929 campaign that involved bus tours to promote Brandywine and Double Orange, the 1934 campaign relied almost exclusively on newspaper articles and ads to promote Jumbo Cola. The earliest article we were able to find appeared in the *Tennessean*, a Nashville newspaper, on May 15, 1934, bottled by the Brandywine Bottling Co. of that city (Figure 32). The latest ad appeared in the *Marion Times* of Marion, Alabama, on June 17, 1937, and the drink was bottled by the Jumbo Cola Bottling Co. See Table 1 for other bottlers we found and the year we suspect that each first began bottling Jumbo Cola. Of course, the exact date when each of those bottlers adopted the drink could have been earlier than those on the table. We based the table dates on the earliest ad we could find for each bottler.



Figure 32 – Jumbo ad (*Masonville Messenger* 9/21/1934)

Table 1 – Bottlers of Jumbo - A Super Cola*

Bottler	City/State
1934	
Quality Orange Kist Beverage Co.	Kingsport, Tennessee
Jumbo Bottling Co.	Murfreesboro, Tennessee
Dr Pepper Bottling Co.	Madisonville, Kentucky
Brandywine Bottling Co.	Nashville, Tennessee
Seminole Bottling Co.	Chattanooga, Tennessee
Seven Springs Beverage Co.	Knoxville, Tennessee
1935	
Jackson Bottling Co.	Jackson, Mississippi
Springhill Bottling Co.	Newark, Ohio
Nehi Bottling	Lineville, Alabama
Lilly Ice & Bottling Works	Pemberton, West Virginia
Franklin Bottling Works	Franklin, Indiana
1936	
Crown Bottling Co.	Delaware, Ohio
Squeeze Bottling	Kokomo, Indiana
Harmon Bottling Co.	Franklin, Indiana
1937	
Dr. Pepper Bottling Co	Murphysboro, Illinois
Seminole Bottling Co.	Huntsville, Alabama

* There could be other bottlers remaining to be found.

Like the bottles we have been discussing, the ads and articles are a study unto themselves and provide a good glimpse into what transpired during those years. Many of the articles stated that five years of development and testing were involved in the eventual production of Jumbo Cola. The *Chattanooga Daily Times* stated on August 9, 1934, that “five years were spent in

developing and testing before it was placed on the market for general public consumption. In Chattanooga, Jumbo is bottled and distributed by the Seminole Bottling Company.” If we subtract five years from 1934, that takes us back to 1929. As we know, 1929 was the last year of the promotional bus tours. Even though we were unable to find any documentation that explained exactly what was involved with the testing and development period, its apparent that it started in 1929 and cumulated in 1934.

Another research question: Was Jumbo Cola developed from scratch or from a pre-existing cola that needed improved? In answer to this, we are again reminded that Mar-Vel was not a cola but a chocolate drink, so Mar-Vel was not a likely candidate as the origin for Jumbo Cola. As far as we can tell, Little and Foster were involved with only one other cola – Chero Cola – and it seems highly unlikely that they tinkered with the Chero Cola formula in order to call it their own. Chero Cola, of course, had a cherry flavor – not a typical cola. For those who are not familiar with the history of Chero Cola, it was itself reformulated to become Royal Crown Cola in 1934.

One thing is certain. With at least 20 years experience of bottling Chero Cola in multiple states, both Little and Foster would definitely have been familiar with cola concentrates. It would therefore be no major stretch of the imagination to think that they could develop a new cola on their own from scratch. Its also possible, even likely, that the claims mentioned earlier about the so called Mar-Vel cola being reformulated to become Jumbo Cola was more likely a case of Jumbo Cola being reformulated into Double Cola.

According to a fully documented 1945 court case between the Seminole Flavor Company and the Commissioner of Internal Revenue, which involved some questionable tax records filed by the Seminole Flavor Co. in 1940 and 1941, we find the following information under the heading “Finding of Fact.” It is important to understand that franchise guidelines, such as those mentioned below, were also the norm during the franchise period for Jumbo Cola. The transcript does not include any mention of Mar-Vel nor the so called Mar-Vel Cola, but it does clearly indicate the development of Jumbo Cola prior to Double Cola.

Finding of Fact (quoted from Leagle 2019, Seminole Flavor Co. V. Commissioner, 1945)

Petitioner's Double-Cola concentrate was introduced to the trade late in 1935 or early in 1936. In 1937 its sales of Double-Cola concentrate amounted to approximately 75 percent of its total sales, and during the taxable periods herein such sales amounted to more than 90 percent of the total sales. Double-Cola is manufactured from a secret formula consisting of approximately 16 different ingredients. The formula was perfected over a period of years by the efforts of C.D. Little and J.S. Foster, president and treasurer, respectively, of the petitioner, and no other persons have knowledge of the component parts of the formula.

When the petitioner brought out its Double-Cola concentrate its Cola accounts were very limited. Its fruit flavors, and a Cola concentrate known as Jumbo-Cola, were handled principally by independent bottlers and company owned or controlled bottling plants. Petitioner's first efforts to distribute Double-Cola followed the usual procedure of employing traveling salesmen to sell its product to established bottlers. Petitioner also attempted to interest people who wanted to go into the bottling business in the use of Double-Cola. Wherever possible petitioner entered into an agreement with the bottler granting him an exclusive franchise for bottling Double-Cola in his territory. Under this type of franchise the bottler agreed to bottle the flavors manufactured by petitioners and no other flavors. Other bottlers executed nonexclusive franchise agreements which did not restrict their use of flavor concentrates to petitioner's products. Both types of franchise agreements provided for advertising, merchandising, and supervising services by the petitioner with respect to and over the bottler's operations.

Certain advertising matter was to be furnished the bottler free of cost, and the bottler agreed to put up and erect all advertising according to petitioner's instructions and to feature and advertise Double-Cola as his leading drink. Bottling and sanitary requirements were set up, petitioner's representatives could inspect the bottler's plant to ascertain whether the requirements were being met, and the bottler agreed to submit samples of the Double-Cola he was distributing for analysis by petitioner and obligated himself to keep and maintain the

standards set by petitioner for its product. The number of petitioner's Double-Cola accounts materially increased during the calendar years 1936, 1937, and 1938. Thereafter the number of Double-Cola accounts gradually declined through 1943, but petitioner's total sales increased each year from 1936 through the calendar year 1943.

Petitioner's Double-Cola accounts were scattered over the United States and its facilities and organization were so inadequate that it was unable to give its bottlers the advertising, merchandising, and supervisory services called for in their franchise agreements. During 1937, 1938, and 1939 petitioner received numerous complaints from its bottlers about the unsatisfactory services petitioner was rendering. Petitioner lost a large number of bottling accounts during these years, some of which were potentially very good accounts, because it did not assist the bottlers with satisfactory advertising and merchandising services. Among other things, the bottlers demanded newspaper, billboard, moving picture, and radio advertising and sampling campaigns, none of which was being furnished by petitioner.

Even though the transcript provides a glimpse into the affairs of the Double Cola Co. in the 1940s, those events were still looming in the future when C.D. Little and J.S. Foster launched their campaign to promote Jumbo Cola in 1934. Because 1934 was in the middle of the Great Depression, which began in 1929 and ended with the U.S. entry into World War II in 1941, it was an unlikely period for success. However, all evidence we have found shows that the Jumbo Cola bottle was the first soft drink glass container to use an Applied Color Label, described in many of the articles as being "permanently fused into the glass."

News articles of the period disclosed a great deal of information, such as who bottled what and when, and provided us with much of the information contained in this study. In many of the articles, a promotion by the soda franchising firm involved giving away a free bottle of Jumbo Cola by way of a coupon that could be cut out and presented to the nearest bottler or grocer. There were also contests, such as the one published in the *Knoxville News Sentinel* on September 26, 1934, that asked readers to name the "Funny Little Man" illustrated in their ad.

The so called funny little man was also used in many of the other ads during that time period. As of this writing, we have been unable to find any articles that mention anything about the winning entries and the names they came up with for the “clown-like” character and his family (Figure 33). One of the prizes for that contest was a combination Jumbo Cola pocket knife and bottle opener. Terms like “Funny Little Man” may have been double entendres referring to C.D. Little. A second example was a cardboard advertising plaque with the slogan, “Let’s Have A Little Drink” (Figure 34). Little or one of his associates seems to have had a clever sense of humor.



Figure 33 – Funny Little Man (Franklin Evening Star 6/19/1935)

Every Jumbo Cola bottle we were able to examine was manufactured by the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. in 1934 and 1935, with the majority of those bottles made in 1934. If our sample is representative, the bottles were only made twice, probably a huge order (and/or more than one) in 1934 and a smaller one (although still large) in 1935. The Owens-Illinois code on the first bottle was “3 <0> 4” – Factory No. 3 at Fairmont, West Virginia, in 1934 (Figure 35). The second bottle base was embossed “9 <0> 5” – Factory No. 9 at Streator, Illinois, in 1935. What is interesting about the second base was that *both* codes had been peened out with new codes stamped in their place.

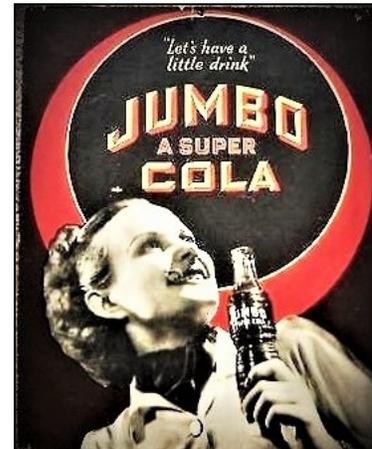


Figure 34 – Cardboard plaque (eBay)

The 1935 order apparently arrived at a difficult time for Plant No. 3, so the factory shipped the molds over to Streator, where the mold shop altered the codes. This was common at Owens-Illinois. The firm maintained a steady inter-plant delivery system, so the molds from Fairmont were probably at Streator and in use the day after the order arrived. Even though the firm continued to advertise Jumbo Cola into 1937, sales had apparently dropped to the place where the final 1935 bottle order was sufficient to last until the final dealer dropped the brand.



Figure 35 – Owens-Illinois logo (Tazewell-Orange.com)

One possible exception to the Owens-Illinois monopoly appeared in a *Knoxville News Sentinel* article published on June 3, 1934, stating that Lester Denton of the Seven Springs Beverage Co. had gone to the Chattanooga Glass Co. to try and acquire more bottles for Jumbo Cola. He stated they had already gone through 2,500 cases and needed at least 400 more cases to fill currently outstanding orders. But whether they ever got those bottles is currently unknown.

It is also unclear whether the Chattanooga Glass Co. ever produced *any* Jumbo Cola bottles – although that seems unlikely. As noted above, the only examples we have found were made by Owens-Illinois. We came up with three possibilities that might explain the Chattanooga connection: 1) Denton had ordered bottles from Owens-Illinois, and those arrived before he completed the Chattanooga deal; 2) Denton made a short order with Chattanooga Glass that we have not discovered – possibly none survived; 3) since Denton was desperate, he bought generic bottles and used them, with or without paper labels.

As noted above, the existence of a Jumbo Cola bottle made by the Chattanooga Glass Co. is highly unlikely, so we now direct our attention to the final segment of this study. Our focus is on the first soda bottles to adopt ACL – a process that was still in its infancy and that used experimental pigments – so, it is not surprising that many of the examples still in existence have what some collectors call “ghost” labels – barely visible lettering that has deteriorated due to sun



Figure 36 – Ghost label

exposure and/or having been buried in the ground (Figure 36). Bottles with intact and vivid labels are more unusual, but they do exist. Those particular bottles were likely never exposed to the elements. As you can see in Figure 29, original labels were a vibrant yellow and stood out well against the darker color of the cola. This colorful, long-lasting feature contributed to the eventual popularity of Applied Color Labels from about 1940 to the present.

Unless we use the still available Double Cola as an example, we have no real idea about the taste of Jumbo Cola because Jumbo Cola was replaced by Double Cola by 1937 or 1938. Beginning in 1938, the bottlers who advertised Jumbo Cola between 1934 and 1937 had dropped the drink from their line and replaced it with Double Cola as their signature brand. As

mentioned earlier, it is unclear why some 1936 and 1937 bottlers produced both Jumbo Cola and Double Cola at the same time, although advertisements suggest that they did just that (Figure 37). They may have wanted a transitional period to wean Jumbo drinkers to their new brand. Regardless of the reason, Jumbo - A Super Cola disappeared from the market place by 1938, but it retains the distinction as America's first Applied Color Label soda bottle – “Super” indeed!



Figure 37 – Jumbo/Double Cola ad (Chattanooga News 12/31/1936)

Post Script: The Single-Barrel Double Cola Bottle

C.D. Little designed and patented his last soda bottle in 1936. He filed for the patent on December 19 of that year and received Design Patent No. 105,024 on June 22, 1937. Little assigned the patent to the Seminole Flavor Co. of Chattanooga, Tennessee (Figure 38) We coined the term “Single-Barrel” to reflect the differences and similarities between this design and the “Double-Barrel” bottles advertised for the “Double” soda brands.



Figure 39 – Double Cola (Tazewell-Orange.com)

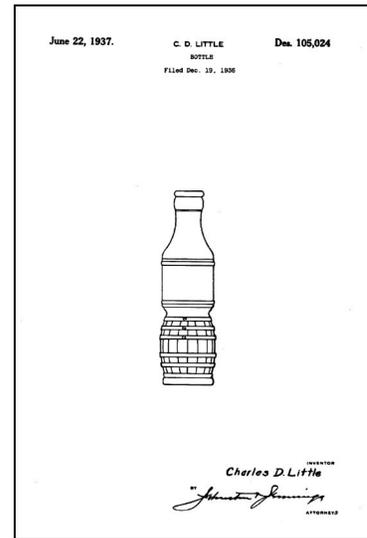


Figure 38 – Little 1937 patent

Fittingly, this patent ends our study with a final mystery. Even though we conducted an extensive search, we have only been able to find a single example of an actual bottle like the one illustrated in the patent. The bottle had an Applied Color Label with “Double Cola” in white lettering inside a bright red oval on one side, and “A

Great Drink - A Mighty Flavor” in white lettering on the opposite side (Figure 39). Of all the bottles discussed in this study, the one just described could possibly be the rarest. This was probably the prototype Double-Cola bottle, possibly one that never made it past the original test market, thereby only made for one short run.

Discussion and Conclusions

Although our study has wandered about the South and a few Southern sodas, our main focus has been Jumbo - A Super Cola – the first ACL soda bottle made and distributed in the United States. As usually happens, fashion played a strong part in the design of the bottle. C.D. Little entered into the soda bottling business and became a bottle designer at an interesting period in U.S. history, beginning with his opening of the Seminole Bottling Co. in 1928 and the design of the “double barrel” bottle the following year – during the Dust Bowl that was destroying the Midwestern “breadbasket” of the country and just before the stock market crash of 1929 plunged the U.S. into the Great Depression.

Soda bottles had also undergone a recent, major design change to a style that collectors called deco, archaeologists called proprietary, and the glass industry called specialty bottles. The story of that development would make an interesting study of its own, but the shift was from mostly fairly squat, generic bottles with either fairly simple embossing of the soda bottler’s name and city (often in a round plate) or a paper label. During this pre-refrigerator period, paper labels were cheap and easy to apply, but they tended to wash off in ice tubs, the only practical media available to cool the beverages for retail sales.

Although there were a few earlier bottles that could be claimed as specialty styles, the 1915-patent Coca-Cola bottle was the first to be a true success – one that was so dramatic that the same basic style continues to grace grocery shelves in the early 21st century. These specialty bottles eliminated the paper label problem. There was nothing to wash off, and the bottle, itself, called attention to the brand – using combinations of squares, circles, bands, ribs, and many other design elements to create unique bottles, sometimes even with embossed pictures.

Little’s bottle bottle design (patent applied for in 1929, received in 1932) fit right into the “specialty” pattern with its double barrel shape – a constriction in the center with a rounded

upper and lower sections interspersed with segmented bands to resemble barrels. In practice, three bands – one in the center of each “barrel,” and one at the constriction – were used for embossed labels and probably eventually made into plates that could be removed to change labels. The first of those – for the ill-fated Mar-Vel chocolate-flavored milk drink – may have debuted prior to the application for the patent in 1929, although there may have been a generic bottle that was first used by some bottlers of the drink.

There is virtually no question that Little’s next patent – applied for in February of 1934 and received just two months later in April – was based on his original double barrel design. As noted in our discussion about the bottle, the barrel “staves” had been replaced by horizontal rings, but the central constriction still created a distinct separation between the top and the bottom – reminiscent of the earlier “barrels.” As we hypothesized above, the bottle seems to have been designed specifically for the ACL process – a fitting supposition for the first ACL soda bottle.

Indeed, our search for early ACL soda bottles has been exhaustive (and, periodically, exhausting), disclosing a few bottles in 1935 and 1936, more in the remainder of the 1930s, and an exponential growth in the 1940s. But, we have found only one bottle used in 1934 – Jumbo - A Super Cola. It seems amazing that this virtually unknown product – in a test market that essentially failed (because of the drink, not the ACL process – paved the way for the most heavily used soda bottle labeling system of the 21st century.

Meet the Authors

A Collector Turned Researcher

I started collecting ACL soda bottles in 1975 and, over time, built my collection to about 1,000 bottles. My first ACL was a Don Diego from San Diego, California, that I dug out of an old dump that is still there today but is now part of a National Forest where no digging is allowed. I was 23 years old in 1975, and little did I know at the time that I would be involved with writing articles about those glamorous ACL bottles, which I attribute in no small part to Bill Lockhart for inviting me to participate in not only this article, but also the previous one I mentioned.

During my early days of collecting, books were my primary resource for conducting research. When the Internet came into existence it opened up new avenues for research, and I have been going non-stop ever since then. About ten years ago, I participated in an online discussion with other soda bottle collectors that involved a search for the earliest ACL soda bottle. It took awhile, but eventually the bottle discussed here surfaced, and we all agreed it was the earliest example ever produced. As far as I know, it still holds that designation. It was not until just recently that I realized just how little I actually knew about the bottle, such as how many different bottlers bottled the product, where they were bottled, and, most importantly, why only certain bottlers were selected to bottle and distribute them. Unfortunately, I never did find a definitive answer as to why only certain bottlers were selected, but I did find just enough information to warrant what I call “the rest of the story.” Hence, the reason for this new article that I hope you enjoy and find not only interesting, but educational as well.

A Researcher Turned Collector

I never intended to be involved with bottles or collectors. As a late bloomer, I attended college at the age of 44, studying prehistoric archaeology. My first job at the University of Texas at El Paso was as a work study with John Peterson, the historical archaeologist for the school. My first job was to wash and catalog 379 bottles from the El Paso Coliseum parking lot. The next semester, I took a historical archaeology class from John and wrote the report for the Coliseum collection along with Wanda Olszewski, another student in the class.

That should have been the end, but I was working with John on an excavation at San Elizario, Texas, along with a guy named Bill Fling, who specialized in faunal remains. When someone hit a bottle pit, he hollered out, “Where’s Bill?” John answered, “Which Bill, Bone Bill or Bottle Bill?” Wanda and I finished excavating the bottle pit, and wrote the report. Although she went back into prehistoric work after that, the die was cast for me.

As part of the reports, I discovered that there was virtually nothing in print about El Paso soda bottles (or beer or milk or drug store bottles), so I decided to fix that. Soon, I discovered that archaeologists had a very limited view of bottles, and the vast majority were in the hands of collectors. So, I began hunting up the collectors and photographing their soda bottles. The first one, gave me five soda bottles; others gave me more. As I began researching the El Paso soda

bottlers, I discovered that the collectors only had a small percentage of the bottles, too – so I began frequenting antique stores. Eventually, I amassed the most complete collection of El Paso soda bottles in existence, following that up with milk, beer, and drug store bottles. That led to looking at manufacturer’s marks, and bottles became a major part of my life.

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