



PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

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Focus On: Coca-Cola Bottling Plant, 1201 S. Neil, Champaign

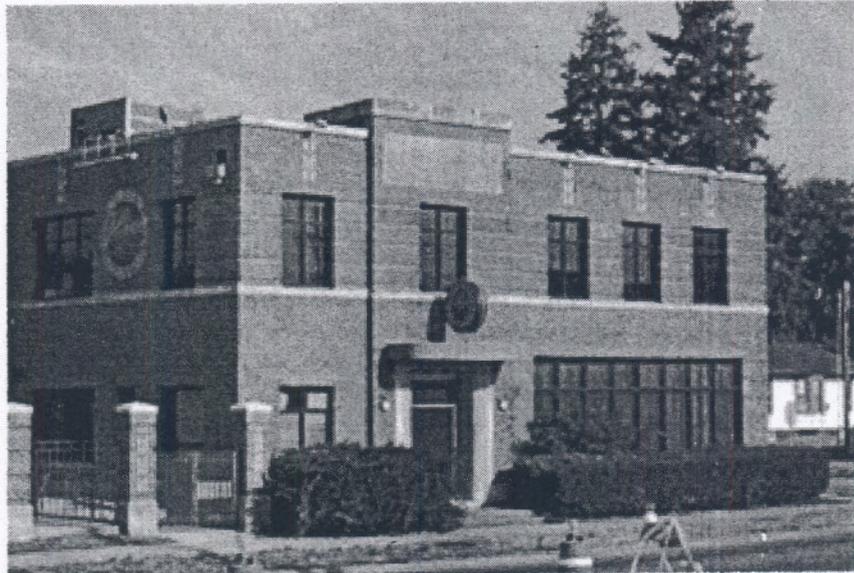
In 1919, only eighteen years after the first franchise was sold, a Coca-Cola bottling franchise opened at 215 N. Race in Urbana. By 1926, the business had outgrown its home and relocated to 307 S. Locust in Champaign. Luther F. Carson of Paducah, Kentucky and T.E. Overshiner of Hopkinsville, Kentucky, purchased the company in 1930 and began a more aggressive style of management. They introduced more flavors of soda to bottle and in 1938 built the Art Deco building at 1201 S. Neil Street in Champaign. This bottling plant remained the home of the Coca-Cola Bottling Company until 1976 when new owners moved the plant to 2809 N. Lincoln in Urbana.

Historical Significance

The Coca-Cola Bottling Plant represents the efforts, ingenuity, and dreams of the many people who made Coca-Cola the giant it is today. Dr. John Styth Pemberton, inventor of the Coca-Cola formula, had an "American Dream." Dr. Pemberton worked hard and long to create solutions to medical problems and on May 8, 1886, Pemberton perfected his headache remedy. He was searching for a medicine that relieved headaches and fatigue as well as tasted good. One of his four partners, Frank M. Robinson, named his remedy. Robinson, experienced in advertising, thought to use the two main ingredients in the name, coca leaves and kola nuts. He knew that by changing the "k" in kola to a "c" the product would advertise much better, hence the name Coca-Cola. *The Atlanta Journal* ran the first advertisement for Coca-Cola in their May 29, 1886 issue.

Coca-Cola, Delicious! Refreshing! Exhilarating! Invigorating! The new and popular soda fountain drink containing coca plant and the famous cola nut. For sale by Willis Venable and Nunnally and Rawson.

To encourage the sale of the soda, Pemberton would stand on the street handing



Jillian's adaptively reused the historic Art Deco Coca-Cola Bottling Plant. The plant was constructed in 1938 from company designs, but under the supervision of local architect, George Ramey. The plant closed in 1976. Photo by Simpson.

out tickets entitling the bearer to a free sample of Coca-Cola. Today the Coca-Cola Company will still honor those tickets with a free case of Coca-Cola.

Pemberton and his partners had no idea how big their remedy was to become. In their first year of business, Pemberton spent \$73.96 on advertising and sold \$50.00 worth of Coca-Cola. Sadly, two years after creating the Coca-Cola formula, Pemberton became seriously ill and was diagnosed as possibly having cancer of the stomach. Needing money to fulfill his obligations, Pemberton sold his share in the company to Asa Griggs Candler on April 14, 1888. Candler owned two-thirds of the company after that transaction.

Asa Candler had big dreams. By April 22, 1891, he was the sole proprietor of the Coca-Cola product and patent. By accident one day, he discovered that the formula tasted better with soda water instead of plain water. His sales soared and even while the United States was being devastated by the depression, the Coca-Cola Company was able to give a twenty-cents-per-share dividend in the first and second years after incorporation.

Mr. Thomas and Mr. Whitehead were the two men who probably expanded the consumption of Coca-Cola more than any other person or event. These two men came up with the idea of bottling the beverage. On July 22, 1899, the two lawyers, Thomas and Whitehead, signed a 600 word contract with Candler handing over all bottling rights to the two men with full use of the company's logo. It is believed that no money changed hands for this contract meaning that Candler just gave away the bottling rights. When asked if he made a mistake with the bottling rights to Coca-Cola, Candler had this to say

As a matter of fact, the system which evolved of allowing Coca-Cola to be bottled in hundreds of communities by persons native to and respected in those communities, who themselves profited greatly by the energy and initiative which they put into the promotion of Coca-Cola, is probably largely responsible for much of the success which the company has enjoyed.

The two bottlers did not have enough capital to build the required amount of bottling plants to meet their quota so they

came up with the idea of franchising a bottling rights. This was the beginning of the growth of the Coca-Cola product.

In 1919, when the stock went public, a share in the Coca-Cola Corporation could have been purchased for \$40. In 1976, that same share was worth \$11,000. Dr. Pemberton's soda is sold in over 135 countries and advertised in over 80 different languages. The world drinks over one billion gallons every year. In the mid-1930s there were over 6,000 Coca-Cola bottling franchises. In 1976, there were only 1331 franchised bottlers left, largely due to the improvement of motorized transportation.

Nationally, in 1924, the Coca-Cola Company developed a standardized plan for the construction of its bottling facilities. These standardized plans offered a more economical way to construct factories. The main concerns addressed in the design were operation efficiency, ability to expand, and publicity. Through large picture windows that always looked into the production area, publicity was obtained. Specification prerequisites were that the building's main construction material be brick, concrete, and steel and that the least amount of these materials as possible be used. The company offered four sizes of designs with differing floor plans and costs. Specifications described almost every detail, including what the interior finish material was to be composed of. The architect, who was usually a local architect, did not have much freedom.

Locally, in 1930, the Coca-Cola Company franchise was bought by Luther F. Carson and T.E. Overshiner, who began an aggressive management program. In 1938, the company had become too large for the plant at 307 S. Locust and a new plant at 1201 S. Neil Street was built. The production jumped from 30 to 100 bottles an hour. The plant remained a staple of the community until the mid-1970s. In 1976, in response to the energy crisis, the company switched to centralized bottling and many plants closed. The Champaign Coca-Cola Bottling Plant was one of the 4669 bottlers to stop bottling the beverage and become a distributor of the beverage only. The plant moved to 2809 N. Lincoln and served as a warehouse for distribution. From then until 1987, the S. Neil Street building housed Dabro Auto Parts. In 1994, the building was converted to a restaurant and bar.

Architectural Significance

The Art Deco architectural style got its name from the 1925 Paris *Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels*. Although the Art Deco architectural style was scorned by the intellectuals of the In-

ternational Style, it was the break from tradition represented by the Beaux Arts. Art Deco in America was largely influenced by the art work of North and South American Indians. The style is predominantly that of decoration, using low relief rectilinear designs with geometric curves playing a lesser role. Art Deco in pure form develops its schemes from parallel straight lines, zig-zags, chevrons, and stylized floral motifs. Smaller scale Art Deco buildings are box-like with flat roofs and metal casements. Rectilinear massing and horizontal banding are also elements of this style. Doors were often made of metal and set off from the rest of the building with fluting.

The Coca-Cola Bottling Plant shows many of these components. For example, the stylized corn plants, which is representative of Native Americans and traditional farming in Illinois, are a prime example of Art Deco decoration. Moreover, there is banding around the entire building in limestone and brick. Overall, the building has very simple box-like massing and Art Deco streamlining. Other local examples include the Urbana Cinema, Champaign City Building, Champaign Central High School, Christie Clinic, and the two National Guard Armories.

George C. Ramey, born 1889, was a prominent architect in the Champaign area and a graduate of the University of Illinois. Ramey worked on other Champaign projects such as Robeson's Department Store, the Champaign City Building, and the new wing of the Burnham City Hospital. Although Ramey did not completely design the plant at 1201 S. Neil, he had a major role in its site placement and other details. George Ramey died in 1960 at his home in Florida.

This article was derived from the 1998 landmark designation nomination for 1201 S. Neil Street, Champaign. Although approved by the Historic Preservation and Plan Commissions, the City Council denied designation due to owner objection.

New Officers Elected

At the May Board of Directors meeting, four officers were elected: Richard Cahill, president; Kathy Reeves, vice-president; Lou Simpson, Treasurer; and Robert Nemeth, secretary.

A Board Retreat is in the planning stages for early September. The goal of this retreat is to assess PACA's past twenty years and to plan for the next twenty. Past and present board members as well as concerned individuals will be invited to attend. If you have topics for discussion, please call 359-7222.



The Orpheum Children's Science Museum's historic marquee will have its letter grid and lighted panels repaired with a 2002 Heritage Grant from PACA. Photo by Simpson

Heritage Grants Awarded

The Board of Directors awarded three Heritage Grants at their May meeting. Grants are awarded to area non-profit groups for bricks-and-mortar projects on historic buildings or for preservation-related educational activities. Funds are derived from architectural salvage receipts; at least 10% of yearly salvage sales are budgeted for Heritage Grants. This year's recipients are:

- Orpheum Children's Science Museum, \$2450 for the repair of the theater's historic marquee
- Illinois Disciples Foundation, \$806.25 for the tuck pointing of a brick parapet on their historic building
- The Center for Art and Architecture, \$950 for a seminar on historic preservation for teachers and students at Yankee Ridge School.

National Historic Preservation Conference

The National Preservation Conference, sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, will be in Cleveland this year. This is the premier educational and networking event for historic preservation professionals, volunteer leaders, and advocates. Last year more than 2000 preservationists attend the conference; this year, expert practitioners will lead nearly 100 educational and field sessions, all designed to provide tools that participants can use to improve their own communities. The conference will take place October 8-13.

Illinois Historic Preservation Conference

Chicago will be the site of this year's statewide preservation conference scheduled for September 12-14. The conference is hosted by Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois, and co-sponsored with the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency and the Illinois Association of Historic Preservation Commissions. Conference sessions and registration will be held at the 1924 Allerton Crowne Plaza Hotel, which recently underwent a \$40 million rehabilitation. St. James Episcopal Church (1875) will be the site of the Plenary Session which will feature Timothy J. Samuelson as Keynote Speaker. In addition to three days of workshops and seminars, special events such as a Gold Coast District House Walk and the Driehaus Awards Dinner (Chicago Stock Exchange Trading Room) are planned.

PACA is underwriting the conference registration fees so that a commission member from both the Champaign and Urbana Historic Preservation Commissions can attend this statewide conference. The Lachlan F. Blair Scholarship Fund was established for this purpose. This is the first year of the scholarship.



Lead paint safety expert, Jeff Gordon, led a workshop on Lead Safety for Old House Living & Renovation in April. Photo by Cahill.

Lead Paint Safety Workshop

In April, PACA sponsored a workshop on Lead Paint Safety for Old House Living & Renovation at the Salvage Warehouse. The workshop was led by Jeffrey Gordon of the UI Building Research Council and the state's specialist in lead paint safety for historic buildings. Over twenty homeowners and rental property owners attended the two hour presentation.

Topics covered included the History of Lead, Lead Poisoning, State & Federal Regulations, Testing Methods, and Lead Safe Renovation's Guiding Principles, among others. PACA also supplied each participant with a free lead paint test kit.

Lead paint test kits are available at the warehouse. PACA members are eligible for one free test kit, additional kits are

available at cost. Non-members can also purchase the kits. The kits are easy to use and results are sent directly to the homeowner. PACA has no involvement in the process aside from supplying the test kits.

Additional lead safety workshops will be held if there is interest. Workshops on other old house renovation topics are planned for the future. If you have a specific renovation topic that you would like to have covered, please contact PACA.

PACA e-mail:

pacaexdir@insightbb.com

Membership Application P.A.C.A.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY:

- Adult\$15.00
 Student (1/2 time or more)\$10.00
 Senior Citizen\$10.00
 Family\$20.00
 Corporate\$75.00

- NEW
 RENEWAL

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTION _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

e mail address: _____ Phone: _____

Make checks payable to: PACA, Box 2575, Station A, Champaign, Illinois 61825

Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Cudos to Salvage Volunteers

Thanks for being there! I was in a terrible fix in that I needed some thin oak flooring for my Colonial Revival house's bathroom. After getting in touch with PACA, Rich Cahill and Darrel Foste, I spend two days prying up the much sought after flooring.

I hope to find time soon for a visit to your Salvage Warehouse just to see what all might be there. But in the meantime, if I understood correctly, a donation is acceptable for the salvage that I recovered. I am enclosing a donation and another for a PACA family membership.

*Sincerely,
A Satisfied Customer*

Save the Date!

Sesquicentennial Neighborhood House Walk

Sunday
September 29, 2002

1-5 PM

Volunteers Needed
call 359-7222

Salvage Donations

Chris & Melanie Hill
University of Illinois
John Mann
Frank Cunningham
Mr. & Mrs. Sweedler
Kevin Hunzinger
Nabor House
Urbana School District
Illinois PEO
Village of St. Joseph

Salvage V.I.P.'s

Bob Swisher
Rich Cahill
Mike Miller
Darrel Foste
Dan Leasure
Mike Richards
Brian Duffield
Matt Taylor
Nicole Swiss
Elisabeth Janicek
Bill Oden

New & Renewing Memberships (received since the last newsletter)

Charter Members (1981-1983)
Susan Appel
Mr. & Mrs. R.A. Avner

Over Ten Year Members
Michael Markstahler
Bonnie & Michael Irwin
Bruce C. Creamer
Sharen R. Slade
Nina Rubel
Jeff Mellander
Mr. & Mrs. Roger Yarbrough

Five to Ten Year Members

Jacqueline Gergen
Ginny Sims & Janice Lines
Raymond H. Lytle
Mrs. Harold Kurzweg
Daniel Leasure
Bruce Hutchings
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One to Four Year Members

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Tim Wilson & Siri Engstrom
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Charles Keller
Katie Davidson & Rick Harton
Adelaide Aime
Vicki Burkhalter & Susan Kundrat
Steven D. Brown
Betsy Burkybile
Steve Szambaris
Brian McNurlen
Dan McCulley
Ellen Beattie & Robert Damrau
Dorothea Blue
Holly Barnhart
Sharon Thompson

New Members

Scott Bower
Larry Bonebrake
Ken Madsen
John K. Peek
Douglas Lee
Christopher & Francine McCullen
Camille Declementi
Jesse Winters
Bruce & Patricia Rape
Nanette Koerner
Lisa Kean
John Fornear
Marina Manetti

PACA Newsletter

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