

Tale of Two Cities: the Kola Wars

Review of two books in one take, by Bill Baab

When Coca-Cola's popularity started taking off, competing small bottlers noticed.

But Coca-Cola had something going for it that the small fries did not: Money to spend advertising its product nationwide, later around the world.

Collectors of antique bottles, particularly soda water bottles, have always been fascinated by those Coca-Cola wannabees. While many of the soda waters were manufactured in Small Town U.S.A., others made their bids for fame and fortune in larger cities.

Dennis Smith, a former Alabama resident who migrated for business reasons to the Buffalo, N.Y., area several years ago, has devoted much of his spare time to research. A result has been a series of booklets, latest of which are titled "Kola Wars: Birmingham," and "Kola Wars: Atlanta."

Smith charted such diverse brands as Celery=Cola, My-Coca, Cola-Nip, Wiseola, Glee-Cola, Cafa Cola, Lima-Cola, Koko, Koca Nola, Nifty Cola, Afri-Kola and even Dope. He has become the authority on Celery=Cola.

In both booklets, he lists each brand in alphabetical order, reveals the date it was founded and other pertinent facts, including the date it went out of business. Illustrations of ads and vintage photos help complement the text, but except those pictured in advertising matter, there are no bottle photos.

Many of the bottlers' operations were short-lived because the Coca-Cola Company took them to court because of the similarity in brand names and usually won.

Making a collection of bottles really isn't much fun if collectors don't know the historical backgrounds of the bottlers. Dennis Smith has saved all of us hours, months and even years of research.

Each booklet is \$15 postpaid from the author. Personal checks are accepted and should be made payable to Dennis Smith and mailed to P.O. Box 1913, Buffalo, NY 14225.

Smith grew up in Birmingham, Ala., and started collecting bottles as a teenager during the 1960s.

"I, too, was fascinated by all the different soda brands I dug and started researching their histories," he said. "Celery=Cola was the most interest to me with its connection to Coca-Cola. I edited the Alabama Bottle Collectors Society newsletter and then wrote a book on Alabama bottlers.

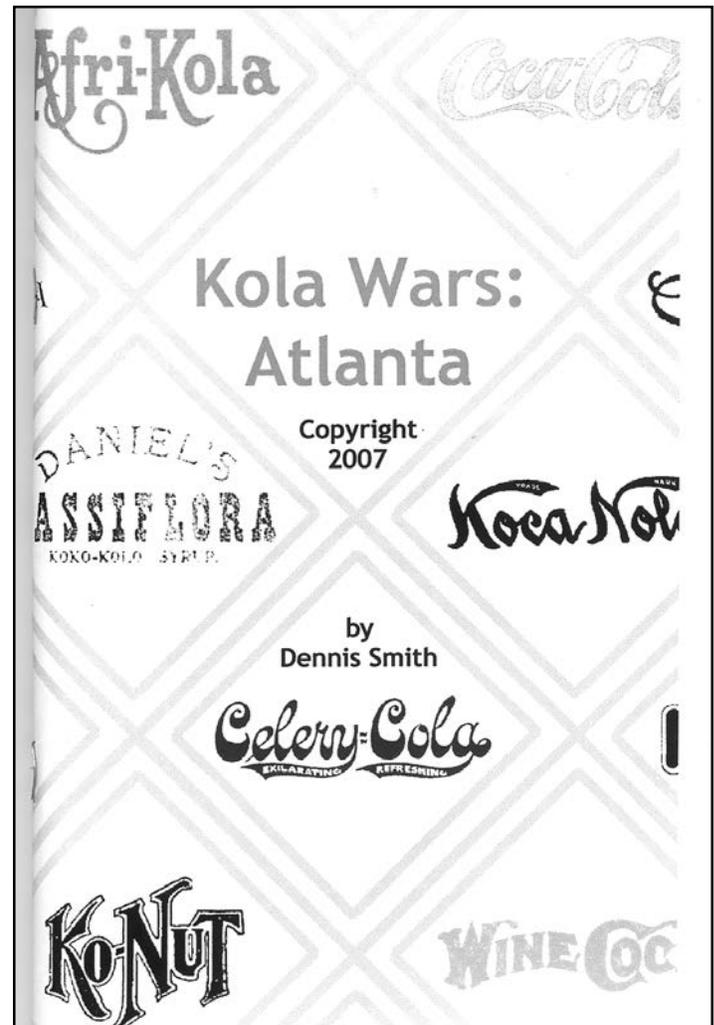
"I moved to California in 1985 and between work and family earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in archaeology and finished two years of graduate work. I helped research and write archaeological reports and a graduate paper titled "Soft Drinks and Dopes: Changing Perceptions of Soda Pop in American Culture."

Smith moved to Buffalo, N.Y., in 1991 and still actively collects and researches soft drink history.

"I have collected information from bottlers' trade magazines, newspapers, directories, court and patent records and through

correspondence with collectors and descendants of the people who operated the companies. I've done research in state archives from Alabama and Georgia to New York, the Library of Congress, New York City Public Library and other libraries from California to Florida to Canada."

Smith also is the author of "There's None So Good: The Story of Chero-Cola," "Alabama Coca-Cola Bottlers and Their Bottles," "Dr. Pepper and Deacon Brown," "Anniston Bottlers," "Gadsden Bottlers," "Tuscaloosa Bottlers," "Selma Bottlers," "Mobile Bottlers" and "Montgomery Bottlers."



KOLA WARS: ATLANTA, by Dennis Smith. 60 well-illustrated pages. \$15 postpaid from the author. Personal checks are accepted and should be made payable to Dennis Smith and mailed to P.O. Box 1913, Buffalo, NY 14225.

Other books by Dennis Smith:

Kola Wars: Atlanta

Kola Wars: Birmingham

There's None So Good: The Story of Chero-Cola

Alabama Coca-Cola Bottlers and Their Bottles

Dr. Pepper and Deacon Brown

Anniston Bottlers

Gadsden Bottlers

Tuscaloosa Bottlers

Selma Bottlers

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www.KilaWars.com