



Here & Now

Vol. 4

An update for Florida Baptist Historical Society Board of Directors and friends

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Dear Board Members and Friends of the Florida Baptist Historical Society,

In the summer time we begin to think of outdoor activities, family and church outings, fellowships and refreshments. Fried chicken, potato salad and green beans have been church gathering staples for many years in the south. Another important guest at church gatherings has been the century presence of the beverage Coca-Cola. This month I want us to trace the story of "Coca-Cola going to church."

The Beginning

Dr. John Styth Pemberton, melted sugar mixed with water in a brass kettle in his backyard in Atlanta on May 8, 1886. He added some other ingredients and Coca-Cola was born. The added ingredients included "coca leaf" and kola nut" so that's how the name "Coca-Kola" was born.

The Candler Connection

Asa (1851-1929) and Warren (1857-1941) Candler were brothers and were reared by prominent parents and a pious Methodist mother. Warren Candler graduated from Emory College and later became the editor of the Methodist *Christian Advocate* and then president of Emory in 1888. Asa Candler became a druggist in Atlanta and on April 14, 1888, bought $\frac{2}{3}$ interest in the Coca-Cola Company. On April 22, 1891, Asa Candler became the sole proprietor of the Coca-Cola Company for the price of \$2,300.00. (Pat Watters, *Coca-Cola*, 1978, p. 8).



Asa Griggs Candler



Warren Akin Candler

Coca-Cola Claims

In 1887 Coca-Cola made the claim that it was a "cure for all nervous affections" and particularly was a cure for "sick headache, neuralgia, hysteria, melancholia..." (Watters, p. 18). Early on there was a charge that Coca-Cola included some cocaine. The company never denied this but did state that since the Pure Food and Drug Act was passed in 1906, "not a trace" of cocaine has been used in the drink.

The Methodist Candler

In 1898 Warren Candler became a Methodist bishop and was given the responsibility to start a mission in Cuba. Asa Candler was reaching out for new Coke customers and Cuba became a joint venture by the brothers as they spread Coca-Cola and Christianity in Cuba. One of their first joint projects in Cuba was the establishment of "Candler College" built primarily with Candler-Coke money.

In 1899 Warren was board president of Emory College and later Asa became chairman of the school finance committee. Emory moved to a 75 acre Atlanta campus where it became Emory University and their seminary was named Candler School of Theology in Bishop Warren's honor. (Sam Hill, J. *On Jordan's Stormy Banks*, p. 149). Candler nephews and in-laws financed dormitories, schools and buildings at Emory with their Coca-Cola money. Brother John Candler was a legal counsel and became a Georgia Supreme Court Justice. In 1972 over half of Emory's \$177 million endowment was tied up in Coca-Cola stock. In 1919 the Candler family sold Coca-Cola and soon Robert Woodruff (1889-1985) became the main power behind the Coke operation.



The plan of Emory University by architect Henry Hornbostel



Coca-Cola Advertisement

Baptists began to realize that Coca-Cola money could reach out to them too. The *Florida Baptist Witness* began running Coca-Cola ads with such appealing titles as “How Coca-Cola Resembles Tea” (July-September, 1920), and the *Southern Baptist Home Mission* magazine ran a full page ad in May, 1954, that showed a picture of a Coke and the caption “Pure as Sunlight.” The September, 1957, issue of *SBHM* magazine (p. 11) has a full page ad with a picture of a Coca-Cola and the question: “Had you thought how beautifully Coca-Cola fits into the great social activities and recreation program of your church?” A coupon is included for Southern Baptists in the September, 1957, ad that provides an opportunity for each church to have a Coca-Cola “Refreshment Center” in their church because you want boys and girls to think of your church as “the natural center of their social life. “They like pure, wholesome, refreshing Coca-Cola.”



Edgar Cooper

Editor Edgar Cooper (1918-2010) rightly prided himself in the fact that the *Florida Baptist Witness* received no advertisement from Coca-Cola or other soft drink companies when he was editor. Yet the trend could not stop the “Pause that Refreshes.” On the cover of the September 23, 1971, *FBW*, there is a full page picture of a young boy drinking a Coca-Cola. It is the promo for the state missions offering in 1971. The goal was for 600,000 Florida Baptists to give \$120,000.00. The front page challenges each Florida Baptist to give the “price of two cokes” and we can reach our goal.

Florida Baptists get the Message

In the 1950’s the controversy of “drink machines” in the church was a real issue but the bottling companies received a soft landing with the help of ads in Southern Baptist and Florida Baptist papers.

Florida Baptists also got the message another way. When Coca-Cola stock went public in 1919 the cost was \$40.00 a share. In 1978 those shares were worth \$11,000.00 (Watters, p. 2). People went after Coke and Coca-Cola stock.

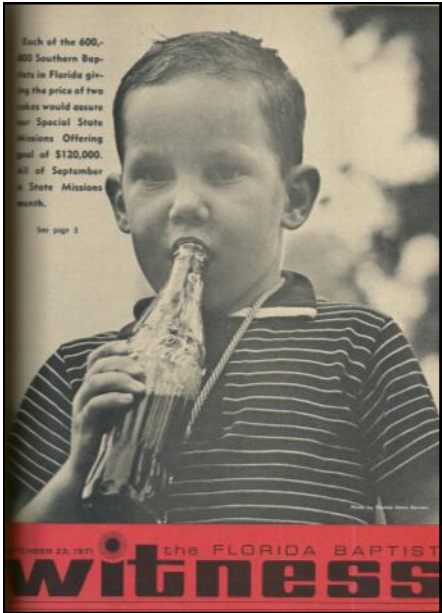
Quincy, Florida was a prime example. Pat Munroe was President of Quincy State Bank and he advised people to purchase Coke stock and hang on to it. Many people did. When I was interim pastor of FBC, Quincy in 1991-1992, a very faithful member of the church died. The member was Clara Inman who loved FBC, people, Quincy and flowers. When she died she left FBC, Quincy, over \$50,000.00. This was from Coca-Cola stock.

Coca-Cola has been around the world. Methodists and Baptists will tell you Coca-Cola has also been to church.

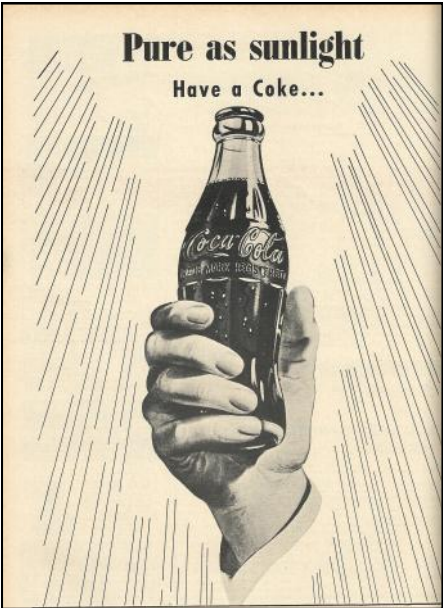
Honoring those who honor Christ,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

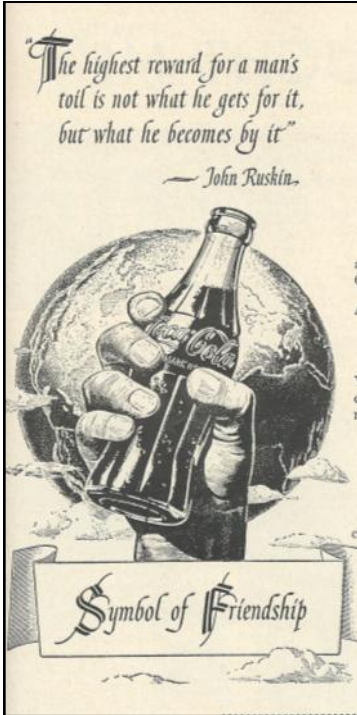
Jerry M. Windsor
Secretary-Treasurer
Matthew 6:33



Coca-Cola bottle in *Florida Baptist Witness*, September 23, 1971.



Coca-Cola advertisement in *Southern Baptist Home Mission* magazine September, 1954.



Coca-Cola advertisement in *Southern Baptist Home Mission* magazine September, 1957.