

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

DIXIE COCA-COLA BOTTLING COMPANY PLANT

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: DIXIE COCA-COLA BOTTLING COMPANY PLANT

Other Name/Site Number: Baptist Student Union, Georgia State University

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 125 Edgewood Avenue, SE

Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Atlanta

Vicinity: N/A

State: Georgia

County: Fulton

Code: 121

Zip Code: 30303

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Category of Property

Private: X

Building(s): X

Public-local: ___

District: ___

Public-State: ___

Site: ___

Public-Federal: ___

Structure: ___

Object: ___

Number of Resources within Property

Noncontributing

Contributing

1

_____ buildings

_____ sites

_____ structures

_____ objects

1

0 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I, hereby certify that this property is:

____ Entered in the National Register _____

____ Determined eligible for the _____
National Register

____ Determined not eligible for the _____
National Register

____ Removed from the National Register _____

____ Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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6. FUNCTION OR USEHistoric: **INDUSTRY/PROCESSING**Sub: **manufacturing facility**Current: **RELIGION**Sub: **religious facility****7. DESCRIPTION**ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: **Victorian Eclectic****S MATERIALS:**Foundation: **Stone**Walls: **Brick, granite**Roof: **Slate, asphalt**Other: **Wood shingle**

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Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Introduction: The Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company Plant building (see Figure 1 and Photo 1), located at 125 Edgewood Avenue in downtown Atlanta, was one of ten buildings in that city prominently associated with the history of the Coca-Cola Company from 1886-1979. This building was the first headquarters and bottling plant, from 1900 to 1901, for what eventually became known as the Atlanta Coca-Cola Bottling Company. This was a significant period in the history of Coca-Cola, because of the agreement reached between Coke syrup maker Asa Candler and businessmen Benjamin Thomas and Joseph Whitehead. Under this agreement Candler sold the bottling and distribution rights of the soft drink to independent bottlers such as Thomas and Whitehead; as a result the way Coca-Cola was bought, consumed, and distributed was changed forever. This building, constructed in 1891, is the only significant remaining property associated with the early history of Coca-Cola in Atlanta. The other buildings associated with the Coca-Cola Company and the Atlanta Coca-Cola Bottling Company have been demolished. On May 4, 1983, the Secretary of the Interior designated the Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company Plant a National Historic Landmark.¹

Description: Erected in 1891, the northward-facing old Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company Plant is a rare surviving example of a building associated with the early history of the Coca-Cola Company that retains enough exterior historic integrity to convey its historical significance. The building is situated on an irregularly shaped lot at the southeast corner of 125 Edgewood Avenue and Courtland Street in urban southeast Atlanta, Georgia. Designed apparently to take full advantage of the size and shape of the lot, the Victorian Eclectic building constructed of brick, stone, and wood has eight sides, the longest of which extends about 60 feet along Edgewood Avenue (see Photo 2).

The 1978 National Historic Landmark noted that much of the building's facade and architectural elements, and interior floor plan had been altered or removed over the years. The National Register nomination for the building, prepared in 1976 by H. Lee Dunagan, for the Historic Preservation Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources describes the exterior of the property, at that time, thusly:

Each facade of the building is composed of various stylistic elements of European inspiration. The Edgewood Avenue facade is compositionally made up of the Italian renaissance inspired arcade above which can be found two round-arched windows, a doorway (now

1. George B. Adams, *National Historic Landmark Nomination for the Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company Plant*, copy on file at the Southeast Regional Office of the National Park Service, Atlanta, Georgia, March 1978.

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enclosed and once complete with a wooden balcony set under a pedimented gable roof) and a third window.² The doorway and arched windows are set beneath a Dutch stepped gable which is interrupted only by an oval attic window. The corner of the building, at the intersection of Edgewood and Courtland, contains what was formerly an arched window opening which faced both streets and was supported at the corner on the short Romanesque column. Above these windows the architect positioned a square, wood-shingled 'turret' with three rectilinear window openings and a pyramidal hipped roof. A winding staircase with wrought iron railing wrapped around the corner of the building and terminated on a square stoop facing Courtland Street, just above half-level. The doorway found at this point gave access to the residential quarters found on the second floor of the building, a factor that makes this structure unique architecturally in Atlanta. A second doorway, set in a round arch and once supporting a balcony similar to the one that once existed on the Edgewood facade, is found above the Courtland Street entranceway. Both doors are set into the brick facade under a narrow stepped gable which also contains two small, rectilinear attic vents (see Photos 1-4).³

The 1976 Dunagan National Register nomination, which was cited in the 1978 National Historic Landmark nomination, noted most of the windows in the building were one-over-one or six-over-six double-hung sashes. The roof exhibited a combination of hipped and gabled sections and was pierced by four interior brick chimneys set generally at opposite corners. The entire structure rests on a heavy coursed rubble masonry foundation and over a full basement that contains three side and rear exits that were closed.

The building has served as the Baptist Student Union for Georgia State University since 1966. The building was noted as sound structurally in 1978. The external brick walls are load bearing, and the first-story floor joists are solid 3-by-14-inch planks set on 16-inch centers. Inside the building there had been considerable alteration since its original construction (see Photos 5-6).

By 1987 the building had become so deteriorated it was listed in the Annual Report to Congress as a Threatened National Historic Landmark. In the same year the staff of the National Register Programs Division, of the National Park Service's Southeast

2. The third window noted is actually a pair of flat-headed windows.

3. H. Lee Dunagan, *National Register Inventory-Nomination for Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company*, 1976. (The Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on July 7, 1977.)

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Regional Office undertook a Condition Assessment Report to assist the owners in undertaking a renovation of the building.⁴ Using the Condition Assessment Report as guidance, in 1988, the building's exterior was restored and a new one-story brick addition with a two-story stairwell was constructed on the existing building's blank south side, replacing the previously added modern concrete block wing (see Photo 7). A photo of the building from 1893 served as the reference for the exterior restoration.

The restoration along the Edgewood Avenue storefront facade included the use of clear glass with mullions for the three Italian Renaissance inspired arched windows on the ground floor (see Photo 3). The far right arched window previously had a door cut through the storefront window. Also the upper floor central balcony with a pedimented gable was restored over the ground floor arcade, where the enclosed central doorway is, though the balcony is flatter and does not protrude as much over the sidewalk as the original balcony did. As with the original balcony, brick haunches support wooden brackets that in turn support the wooden balcony. The chimneystack near the center of the Edgewood facade, one of the four total, has been reconstructed as well.⁵

The building's west corner wood-shingled square turret had its wood detailing and brackets restored. Below the turret, the two corner arched windows which had been filled in with concrete block were restored with clear glass (see Photo 3). The wooden entrance porch and balcony facing Courtland Street to the west were also restored. The half-level entrance porch and doorway, which once gave access to the residential areas on the second floor, no longer provides access to the interior, because the interior staircase has been removed.

The eastern or rear facade's only changes involved the construction of a fire stair. All of this facade's openings are still filled in with cinder block masonry. The white paint that once covered the entire building was also removed during restoration, with appropriate trim colors then applied throughout (see Photo 2). The exterior cleaning, repair, and restoration of this landmark building and its original architectural elements enhance its historical integrity in terms of materials, design, workmanship, feeling, and association.⁶

4. National Historic Landmark Condition Assessment Report, Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company, 1987. Copy on file at the National Park Service, Southeast Regional Office, Atlanta.

5. Atlanta Urban Design Commission, Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company Plant Research File. *Agenda Item Record*, undated, and David Butler, 'Where Coca-Cola Bottling Began - Eclectic Edgewood Avenue Gem Speaks Volumes of History,' *Atlanta Downtown* (May 1997): 18-19.

6. Ibid.

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The rehabilitation of the building's interior, in conjunction with the construction of the brick addition, further altered the original floor plan to where it is virtually indiscernible. Both were done to accommodate space and safety needs of the Baptist Student Union. Interior stairwells were removed, and many walls were removed or added in order to create enlarged spaces, or new spaces. Only the twenty-foot ceiling heights on both floors were retained (although the ceilings are covered with modern acoustic tiles), as were all wooden windows (see Photos 5-6).

The 1988 brick addition consists of a one-story, setback, clear glass storefront entrance facade that opens to the two-story stairwell addition, to the existing building, and to new lounge and office areas. The addition was constructed to be lower than the existing building and to not be visible from Courtland Street until one crosses Edgewood Avenue. Applied architectural details include string courses of granite to match the existing building and corbeling below the cornice to emulate the projection of the wood cornice on the existing building. The brick was laid in a stretcher bond, as in the existing building (see Photo 7). The Atlanta Urban Design Commission strongly supported the overall exterior restoration efforts and the construction of the addition.⁷

Historic Context: In the years since John S. Pemberton concocted his first batch of magic syrup in 1886, the Coca-Cola Company has occupied ten 'homes' in Atlanta,⁸ associated with the administration of the company, the production of the syrup, or the bottling of the beverage, up through 1979, constructed its new corporate headquarters:

1. The first was the Edmund W. Holland House at 107 Marietta Street in 1886-7, where Pemberton developed his formula for the syrup. This building has been demolished.
2. The second was Jacob's Pharmacy at 2 Marietta Street, where during 1887, Coca-Cola was first sold, and first mixed with carbonated water and dispensed at a soda fountain. This building has been demolished.
3. The third was again the Edmund W. Holland House at 107 Marietta Street during 1888, where Pemberton ran the business until he sold all rights to the beverage to Asa Griggs Candler. This building has been demolished.
4. The fourth was Asa G. Candler's drug supply store at 47 Peachtree Street, where the syrup was manufactured, between

7. Atlanta Urban Design Commission, Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company Plant Research File, *Agenda Item Record*, undated.

8. 'The Nine Homes of the Coca-Cola Company,' *The Coca-Cola Refresher* (January-February 1967): 12-16.

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- 1888 and 1891. This building has been demolished.
5. The fifth 'home' consisted of two floors of a commercial building at 42½ Decatur Street in 1891-1892, to handle the expanded manufacture of the syrup to keep up with public demand. This building has been demolished.
 6. The sixth was the old Henry L. Wilson House at 77 Ivy Street (now Peachtree Center Avenue), where from 1893 to 1898 Candler ran his syrup business. This building has been demolished.
 7. The seventh was a three-story red brick building (constructed in 1898) and annex (constructed in 1903-1904) at 179 Edgewood Avenue and College Street (renamed Coca-Cola Place in 1911), where the bulk of the syrup was manufactured from 1898 to 1909. The 179 Edgewood Avenue building, constructed in 1898, was destroyed by fire in the 1970s and the site of the building has since been replaced with a one-story, brick commercial building. However, the substantially altered three-story brick Coca-Cola Building Annex, constructed in 1903-1904 and located at 187 Edgewood Avenue, adjacent to the site of 179 Edgewood Avenue building, is extant. The Coca-Cola Building Annex was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1996, at the state level of significance.⁹
 8. The eighth property is the present National Historic Landmark at 125 Edgewood Avenue, where the Coca-Cola syrup was first bottled in Atlanta for distribution throughout most of the Southeastern United States and where the partnership of Benjamin Franklin Thomas and Joseph Brown Whitehead began franchising the rights to independent bottlers to bottle and distribute Coca-Cola throughout the nation.
 9. The ninth property was a large brick building near the intersection of Marietta and Magnolia Streets, where the Coca-Cola Company had its main offices, from 1909 to 1920. This building is now demolished.
 10. The tenth building was the Coca-Cola Company's main office at 310 North Avenue, N.W. from 1920 to 1979. This building was noted in the 1978 National Historic Landmark nomination, 'Although it has received numerous additions, the red brick, originally three-story, building that forms the oldest part of Coca-Cola's present 'home' is the most significant surviving Coca Cola structure. Unfortunately, according to company official and publication, it is slated for demolition early in 1979 to make way for further expansion

9. Steven Moffson, *National Register of Historic Places Nomination for the Coca-Cola Building Annex*, 1996.

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of the firm's adjoining world headquarters complex.¹⁰ The 310 North Avenue building was demolished in 1983.¹¹

Of these ten 'homes' associated with the early history of the Coca-Cola Company only the present landmark building at 125 Edgewood Avenue is extant. Moreover, of the five 'homes' associated with the early history of the Atlanta Coca-Cola Bottling Company all but one are gone, the exception being the present National Historic Landmark at 125 Edgewood Avenue, where Coca-Cola was first bottled in Atlanta for distribution throughout most of the Southeastern United States and where the partnership of Benjamin Franklin Thomas and Joseph Brown Whitehead began franchising the right to bottle Coca-Cola throughout the nation. Thus, this small, two-story, irregularly shaped, red brick building located on Edgewood Avenue is the most significant surviving structure associated with Coca-Cola in Atlanta.

Outside of Atlanta, the 1978 landmark nomination also noted three other buildings related to the early history of Coca-Cola. These include a moved cottage, in Columbus, Georgia, that John Pemberton lived in before he moved to Atlanta and developed the Coke formula;¹² an altered frame building that housed Benjamin F. Thomas's short lived bottling plant (1899) in Chattanooga, Tennessee;¹³ and an early commercial structure, in Vicksburg, Mississippi, used by Joseph A. Biedenharn, to bottle the Coca-Cola syrup in 1894, but without Asa Candler's permission.¹⁴

10. George R. Adams, *National Historic Landmark Nomination for the Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company Plant*, March 1978.

11. 'Going Up: the Coca-Cola International Headquarters Complex,' *A Progress Report from the Public Relations Department*, I, No. 1 (1977), 1. Thomas Oliver, 'Old Coke Building Razed,' *The Atlanta Journal* (September 23, 1983).

12. This building, called the Pemberton House, located at 11 7th Street, in Columbus, Georgia, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on September 28, 1971. *National Register of Historic Place, 1966-1991*, (1991, 148). Ken Thomas, of the Georgia State Historic Preservation Office, noted the building (moved prior to its listing in 1971) is open to the public (personal communication May 2003).

13. This building, located at 938 McCallie Avenue, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, was called the Benjamin F. Thomas House. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on December 3, 1980. *National Register of Historic Places, 1966-1991*, (1991, p. 745). Ms. Annie McDonald, Southeast Tennessee Development District, reported that the Thomas House burned and was destroyed in c. 1995 (personal communication May 2003).

14. This building, located at 1107-1109 Washington Street, in Vicksburg, Mississippi, is extant and called the Biedenharn Candy Company Building. Mr. Richard Cawthon, of the Mississippi State Historic Preservation

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Integrity: The 1978 National Historic Landmark nomination clearly noted, the Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company Plant, 'although it is in dire need of many repairs, it is fairly sound structurally.' The author also noted the interior of the building 'has undergone considerable alteration, and . . . discerning the original floor plan will remain difficult.'¹⁵

The 1988 renovation returned the exterior of the building to its 1890s appearance, and has helped the owners to preserve the building (see Photos 1-4). However, this work further removed original aspects of the interior, although leaving intact the interior ceiling heights on both floors and interior wooden windows (see Photos 5-6). Since the Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company Plant building was designated a National Historic Landmark on May 4, 1983, all other buildings in Atlanta, Georgia, and one in Chattanooga, Tennessee, associated with the early history of the Coca-Cola Company have been lost. As a result, the Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company Plant building, even in its present condition, becomes even more significant as a rare surviving building which illustrates the early history of the Coca-Cola Company and the Coca-Cola Bottling Company.

Office, noted the building is open to the public (personal communication May 2003). It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on December 2, 1977. *National Register of Historic Places, 1966-1991, (1991): 42*

15. George R. Adams, *Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Plant National Historic Landmark Nomination*, March 1978.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally: X Statewide: Locally:

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B C X D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A B C D E F G

NHL Criteria: **Criterion 1**

NHL Theme(s):

**III. Developing the American Economy
Extraction and production
Distribution and consumption**

Areas of Significance: **Commerce**

Period(s) of Significance: **1900-1901**

Significant Dates: **N/A**

Significant Person(s): **Joseph Brown Whitehead
Benjamin Franklin Thomas**

Cultural Affiliation: **N/A**

Architect/Builder: **Unknown**

Historic Context: **XII. BUSINESS
B. Manufacturing Organizations
1. Food, Beverages, and Tobacco**

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Summary Statement of Significance: The Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company Plant is the oldest extant building directly associated with the Coca-Cola Bottling Company in the United States. It was here in this historic building that the franchise concept was first applied to the soft-drink industry, under the partnership of Benjamin Franklin Thomas and Joseph Brown Whitehead, a concept that eventually enabled Coca-Cola to be sold globally. Occupied by the Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company between 1900 and 1901, this building served as both the pioneering headquarters and bottling plant for what became the Atlanta Coca-Cola Bottling Company, incorporated since 1986 as a division within Coca-Cola Enterprises, the main bottling subsidiary for the Coca-Cola Company. The Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company Plant is the sole surviving Atlanta, Georgia, building associated with the early history of Coca-Cola that retains enough historic integrity on its exterior to convey its historical significance.

Coca-Cola has formed an integral part of the social and economic fabric of the United States for the past century. 'The most widely distributed, undoubtedly the best known, and commercially one of the most promising mass-produced items in the world,' said *Fortune* magazine in 1945, 'is not an automobile or a refrigerator or a gadget. It is a Coca-Cola.'¹⁶ Consumed internationally at the rate of 165 million drinks every 24 hours in 1974, this remarkable product, says *New Yorker* writer E. J. Kahn, Jr., has become 'in the eyes of many people abroad . . . a fluid that, like gasoline, is indispensable to, and symbolic of, the American way of life.'¹⁷ Renowned journalist William Allen White expressed this sentiment best, perhaps, some 30 years ago when *Life* magazine asked him to pose for a photograph in celebration of his 70th birthday. Choosing to stand in front of the Coca-Cola dispenser in an Emporia, Kansas, soda fountain, White explained that 'Coca-Cola is such a sublimated essence of all that America stands for, a decent thing, honestly made, that I thought it would be fitting and typical to have the word 'Coca-Cola' in a picture that portrayed the average American town.'¹⁸

Economically, The Coca-Cola Company has made its presence felt in numerous and diverse ways at all levels of American endeavor. The firm has ranked as a major international corporation since World War I, been the world's largest industrial consumer of refined sugar for most of that time, served since 1900 as a

16. 'Bob Woodruff of Coca-Cola,' *Fortune*, XXXII (September, 1945): 139.

17. E.J. Kahn, Jr., *The Big Drink: The Story of Coca-Cola* (New York, 1960): 3.

18. *The Coca-Cola Company: An Illustrated Profile of a Worldwide Company* (Atlanta, 1974): 107.

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pioneer national advertiser and developer of such innovative marketing techniques as the take-home beverage carton, and been since its inception the sole supplier of Coca-Cola syrup-through 'parent' Coca-Cola bottling companies-to hundreds of licensed independent bottlers who have contributed importantly to local economies throughout the country. Coca-Cola has played an especially significant role in the industrial development of the region that gave birth to it-the South. 'Coca-Cola is sometimes known as the holy water of the American South,' says Kahn, 'and there is no question but that many of the men who have helped chart its sparkling course through millions of market places have approached their task in a spirit that is downright evangelistic.'¹⁹ The early 'Coke' salesmen did their job so effectively, in fact, that when Asa Candler disposed of the company for \$25 million in 1919, it was the largest financial transaction that had ever taken place in the South.

At the time the Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company Plant was designated a National Historic Landmark, on May 4, 1983, the landmark nomination noted, 'There are several extant structures associated with the early history of Coca-Cola ... (but) this small, two-story, irregularly shaped, white-painted, red brick building is the most significant.' Today, the Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company Plant Building is the sole remaining early Coca-Cola associated building in Atlanta, and one of only three left in the entire Southeast.

Joseph Brown Whitehead, Benjamin Franklin Thomas, and for a short while John Lupton, established the Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company in the spring of 1900, less than a year after Asa Candler granted them exclusive right to bottle his syrup (1899). After securing a bottling permit from the city of Atlanta in April 1900, Whitehead, one of the men most responsible for transforming Coca-Cola from strictly a fountain drink to primarily a bottled drink, established the Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company here in 1900. They remained in this location only through 1901, but that was long enough to make the building well-known in Atlanta as the first home of what eventually became the Coca-Cola Bottling Company with licensed independent bottlers throughout the Southeast. Thus the structure is symbolic of the earliest efforts to bottle Coca-Cola, of the first application of the franchise concept in the soft drink industry generally, and of all early Coca-Cola operations in the city which, according to Kahn 'Coca-Cola men scattered around the world' consider 'Mecca.'²⁰

History of Coca-Cola

The American Bottlers of Carbonated Beverages, a trade association, traces the origin of the American soft drink

19. Kahn, *The Big Drink*, 45.

20. *Ibid.*, 50.

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industry to the early years of the 19th century when apothecaries first began omitting soda from artificial mineral water, which was widely used for medicinal purposes, and adding sweeteners and flavoring agents. In recognition of this trend in apothecary shops, in 1820 the first *U.S. Pharmacopoeia* included directions for making sarsaparilla syrup, and in 1833 the first addition of the *Dispensatory of the United States of America* offered a recipe for making syrup of mulberries and a suggestion that similar syrups could be made from other fruits as well. Gradually, as apothecaries experimented more and more with these and other formulas, the public began to drink less artificial mineral water for medicinal purposes and more flavored effervescent water for refreshment. By mid-century 'soda fountains,' from which these wonderful new beverages were dispensed, were becoming an important means of adding to the apothecary trade. In 1854 *Griffith's Universal Formulary*, an apothecary text, provided more recipes for fountain drinks, including ginger beer, and in time apothecaries began adding sweet cream to their flavored concoctions. In 1860 Gustavus D. Dows, of Lowell, Massachusetts, advertised what might have been the first 'Iced Cream Soda,' although Robert M. Green of Philadelphia is often credited with making it in 1874. Whatever the case, eventually orange, lemon, grape, vanilla, peach, and other flavors appeared at soda fountains all over the country, and by the 1870's these nonalcoholic beverages were popularly referred to as 'temperance drinks,' a term shortened subsequently to 'soft drinks.'²¹ Today they are common throughout much of the world, but because of the 'early attention given in this country to the flavoring, and its use in such wide variety,' says carbonated beverage historian John J. Riley, 'the effervescent soft drink has been considered a refreshment predominantly American in origin and popularity.'²²

'Coca-Cola,' says soft drink historian and memorabilia expert Lawrence Dietz, 'is to the soft drink business what Steinway is to pianos or Bayer is to aspirin--only more so.'²³ Yet Coca-Cola began as just another experiment by a small-town pharmacist, John S. Pemberton, who in 1869 had moved from Columbus, Georgia, to the city of Atlanta. It is unclear whether Pemberton, when he discovered Coca-Cola in his backyard laboratory in May 1886, was attempting to concoct a new headache remedy or a new fountain drink. In any event, his bookkeeper, Frank Robinson, dubbed the untested substance 'Coca-Cola,' which he penned on the first packaging label in the same flowing script that characterizes the Coca-Cola trademark today. To test the marketability of his new product, Pemberton chose an Atlanta soda fountain 'one of four in

21. Waverly Root and Richard de Rochemont, *Eating in America: A History* (New York, 1976).

22. John J. Riley, *A History of the American Soft Drink Industry: Bottled Carbonated Beverages, 1807-1957* (Washington, 1958): 4-12.

23. Lawrence Dietz, *Soda Pop: The History Advertising, Art, and Memorabilia of Soft Drinks in America* (New York, 1973): 13.

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the city' situated in the pharmacy of Dr. Joseph Jacobs. There fountain operator Willis E. Venable routinely dispensed Coca-Cola syrup in plain water until one day early in 1887, when he mistakenly added carbonated water. This fortuitous development delighted Venable's customers and started a trend that resulted in the carbonation of all Coca-Cola drinks. It also markedly increased Pemberton's business, but because of ill health the creator of what would in time become the 'holy water of the American South' could not capitalize fully on its popularity.²⁴

Later that same year he sold two-thirds interest in the drink for a mere \$1,200 to Venable and businessman George S. Lowndes. A short time later Lowndes bought out Venable and then sold his own interest to former Pemberton associate Woolfolk Walker and his sister. Walker and his sister then entered into partnership with Dr. Jacobs and businessman Asa G. Candler. They formed a company to manufacture Coca-Cola syrup and in April 1888 bought Pemberton's remaining interest. Before the end of the year Candler alone had acquired seven-ninths of the Coca-Cola rights, and in 1891 he purchased the rest, all for a total outlay of only \$2,300.

By this time the growing firm of Walker, Candler & Company was producing more than 9,000 gallons of Coca-Cola syrup annually, and so Candler committed his full resources to stabilizing manufacture of the syrup and expanding its market. A pharmacist himself, Candler worked with Frank Robinson on Pemberton's recipe and added a few ingredients to insure uniformity of production. The resultant formula, which remains essentially unchanged today, called mostly for sugar and water, with minute traces of decocanized coca and cola nut oil, plus caramel, phosphoric acid, and an assortment of fruit flavors so thoroughly blended that no one of them stood out individually. In January 1892 Candler incorporated his new enterprise under Georgia law as the Coca-Cola Company, with capital stock set at \$100,000.²⁵ He retained all but a few of the approximately 500 shares of stock himself. During these formative years Coca-Cola remained almost exclusively a fountain drink, which is the way Candler always regarded it, and 'as the popularity of the soda fountain, a typically American institution, increased through the decade of the 1890's, so also did the popularity of Coca-Cola,' says Atlanta historian Franklin M. Garrett.²⁶

For some time before Candler incorporated the Coca-Cola Company, certain enterprising pharmacists and makers of flavored carbonated water had been selling bottled soft drinks with considerable success. It is not surprising, therefore, that

24. Kahn, *The Big Drink*, 45.

25. Charles H. Candler, *Asa Griggs Candler* (Emory 1950).

26. Franklin M. Garrett, 'Coca-Cola in Bottles,' *The Coca-Cola Bottler* (April, 1959): 1.

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while Candler did not conceive of bottling Coca-Cola, several other persons did. The first of these appears to have been Joseph A. Biedenharn, a Vicksburg, Mississippi, soda water bottler who started selling fountain Coca-Cola in 1890. Despairing because he could not peddle the sweet Georgia nectar to customers in the outlying countryside as he did his other drinks, Biedenharn decided, in 1894, to bottle it. Although he failed to consult Candler before undertaking the task, he did send the Coca-Cola magnate the first case of 24 bottles. Candler replied merely that the product 'was fine' and did not elaborate further.²⁷ He did not foresee that the bottle was destined to revolutionize his business and make Coca-Cola available to millions more consumers.

During the next four years, while fountain sales of Coca-Cola soared to nearly 300,000 gallons annually, America moved toward war with Spain, an event that would have enormous consequences for both the nation, directly, and for Coca-Cola, indirectly. While serving with the United States Army Commissary Department in Cuba, lawyer-businessman Benjamin Franklin Thomas observed brisk sales of a carbonated pineapple drink, and being an avid fan of Coca-Cola, he thought that it could be bottled successfully too. Upon returning home to Chattanooga, Tennessee, he broached the idea to a friend, promoter Joseph Brown Whitehead, and he supported it enthusiastically. The two entrepreneurs then traveled to Atlanta to present their idea to Candler and secure his permission to implement it. Their notion did not appeal to him, however, and he tried to dissuade them. They persisted, though, and gave Candler repeated assurances that they would assume full responsibility for Coca-Cola bottling. Finally he granted them a simple, approximately 600-word, contract dated July 21, 1899. They received the exclusive right to bottle the drink everywhere in the United States except Mississippi, where Biedenharn was still holding forth; Texas, where syrup distribution negotiations were pending; and six New England States, where Seth W. Fowle & Sons already had a distribution contract. In return, Thomas and Whitehead were to buy all their syrup from the Coca-Cola Company, which would furnish general advertising. This 'terse agreement,' says the official Coca-Cola Company history, 'was to become one of the most important commercial contracts in history. It remains today, nearly three-quarters of a century later, the keystone upon which the Coca-Cola bottling business rests . . . [and] the basis for the unique distribution system that characterizes the entire soft drink industry.'²⁸

Thomas and Whitehead wasted little time in capitalizing on their contract. With about \$5,000, part of which Whitehead obtained by selling one-half of his interest to attorney John Thomas Lupton,

27. *The Coca-Cola Company: An Illustrated Profile of a Worldwide Company* (Atlanta, 1974), 19.

28. *Ibid.*, 19-20.

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they opened their first bottling plant that fall in Chattanooga. Realizing that they could not blanket the entire country with plants unless they secured additional assistance, they then sold bottling rights for various geographical regions

'The system of the independent bottler thus established was destined to have an all-important effect,' says Garrett, 'upon the growth and well-being of the business.'²⁹ Soon disagreement about bottlers' contracts and the design of the Coca-Cola bottle prompted Thomas and Whitehead to dissolve their partnership. Thomas, who got rights to the Northeast and the West Coast, formed the 'parent' Coca-Cola Bottling Company (Thomas) Incorporated, to license independent bottlers in those regions, while Whitehead and Lupton moved to Atlanta and chartered the 'parent' Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company (known later as simply The Coca-Cola Bottling Company) to bottle Coca-Cola in Atlanta and license independent bottlers in the Southeast. The Whitehead and Lupton-owned Coca-Cola bottling plant resided from 1900-1901 at the 125 Edgewood Avenue property. It was also from this building that the two partners began the licensing of independent bottlers of Coca-Cola throughout the Southeastern United States. Whitehead and Lupton formed other 'parent' companies to license bottlers in remaining areas not covered by Biedenharn, Fowle, or their former partner Thomas. By about 1920 almost 1,000 independent bottlers served the nation, boosting the economies of many localities and enriching both the 'parent' bottlers (Whitehead and Lupton, and Thomas) and Candler's Coca-Cola Company.

Coca-Cola's rapid growth in popularity is due in large part to the company's ingenious and persistent national advertising campaigns and its innovate packaging and marketing techniques. Early on, Pemberton originated use of point-of-sale signs which became mainstays in the Coca-Cola advertising arsenal. In latter years these took a variety of forms, including cardboard cutouts of outdoor scenes and of Hollywood stars like Jean Harlow. Beginning in the 1890's the company employed, in addition to 'point-of-sale signs', newspaper and magazine ads, outdoor posters and painted walls, complimentary tickets, and a host of utilitarian give-aways which often were adorned with pretty girls painted by such artists as Norman Rockwell and N. C. Wyeth. The gratis items included blotters, calendars, serving trays, change trays, fans, bookmarks, knives, and paperweights. Coca-Cola dispensed these items throughout the first half of the 20th century, and today they are extremely popular with collectors. Slogans and jingles proved successful Coca-Cola advertising devices too. Over the decades, among the best known nationally were 'Delicious and Refreshing,' 'Coke adds Life,' and that classic of American advertising, 'The Pause That Refreshes.' Coca-Cola further promoted sales by adopting a distinctive curved and grooved bottle in 1916, introducing the first take-home beverage carton in 1923, developing an inexpensive and functional refrigerated cooler for retailers in 1929, inventing the

29. Garrett, 'Coca-Cola in Bottles,' 3.

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automatic fountain dispenser in 1932, and pioneering the use of coin-operated vending machines in subsequent years. Thorough this period the Coca-Cola Company fought a series of legal battles against individuals and firms that tried to imitate both its product and its name. In fact, according to the company history, 'Coca-Cola ... has been a party to more litigated cases in its battle to establish and protect its trademarks 'Coca-Cola' and 'Coke' than any other trademark owner in history.'³⁰

The Candler era of Coca-Cola history ended in 1919. Two years earlier, while serving as mayor of Atlanta, he had transferred most of his stock in the company to family members. The Chandler family held the stock for only 20 months. On September 12, 1919, financier Ernest Woodruff, backed by the Trust Company of Georgia, purchased the Coca-Cola Company for \$25 million. According to Kahn, this constituted 'the largest financial transaction that had ever taken place in the South.'³¹ At the time, says *Fortune*, the Coca-Cola Company was prosperous, but it was also 'suffering from ingrowing executives,' conservatism, and lack of a modern sales organization.³² After the transaction various Candler's remained with the company and provided interim leadership until 1923, when Woodruff's son Robert became president.

Robert W. Woodruff brought a renewed spirit to the firm, and beginning in 1924 it set a new sales record every year through 1930. In fact, says Garrett, 'the phenomenal growth of the business of Coca-Cola since the 1919 sale is one of the classics of American business.'³³ But 'Woodruff's major accomplishment,' insists Kahn, 'has been the transformation of Coca-Cola from a national into a universal drink.'³⁴ To accomplish this, Woodruff introduced new personnel training programs, improved dealer service policies, instituted new 'Quality Control' into the manufacturing process, continued to support innovate sales promotion and advertising, and stepped up Coca-Cola's expansion 'begun by Candler' into foreign markets. After selling Coca-Cola in Jamaica and Germany in 1901, Candler had built a syrup factory in Canada and bottling plants in Cuba and Panama in 1906 and had licensed a brewery to bottle Coca-Cola in the Philippines in 1912. Woodruff built on this foreign precedent and took the drink into every corner of the globe, opening 30 bottling plants in Latin America alone in the twenties and thirties. Before he retired in 1955, nearly 100 countries were bottling his Georgia

30. *The Coca-Cola Company: An Illustrated Profile*, 17.

31. Kahn, *The Big Drink*, 60.

32. 'The Coca-Cola Company,' in *Fortune's Favorites: Portraits of Some American Corporations* (Freeport, N.Y., 1931): 337.

33. Garrett, 'Coca-Cola in Bottles,' 6.

34. Kahn, *The Big Drink*, 67.

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syrup. Based on these foundations, the Coca-Cola Company continued in subsequent years to grow apace. It expanded its corporate base by acquiring the Minute Maid Corporation in 1960, reached total sales of over \$820 million in 1964 and over \$2 billion in 1973, and saw 165 million drinks of 'Coke' consumed every 24 hours during 1974.³⁵

35. The Coca-Cola Company, Annual Reports. The Coca-Cola Company, Atlanta, Georgia (1966-1974).

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- Previously Listed in the National Register. **July 20, 1977**
- Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- Designated a National Historic Landmark. **May 4, 1983**
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: # _____
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office - Georgia
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other (Specify Repository): - The Coca-Cola Company
 - One Coca-Cola Plaza
 - USA 773A
 - Atlanta, Georgia 30313

 - James G. Kenan Research Center
 - Atlanta History Center
 - 130 West Paces Ferry Road
 - Atlanta, Georgia 30305

 - Atlanta Urban Design Commission
 - 55 Trinity Avenue, Suite 3400
 - Atlanta, Georgia 30303

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: Less than one acre

UTM References: Zone Northing Easting Zone Northing Easting

A 16 3737770 742390

Verbal Boundary Description:

The original National Historic Landmark Verbal Boundary Description stated, 'The boundary of the designated property coincides with the boundary of the legal lot known commonly as 125 Edgewood Avenue, Atlanta, Georgia.' The legal lot boundary, shown on Figure 1, begins at the southwest corner curb of Edgewood Avenue and Courtland Street proceeds south roughly 99' along Courtland Street, and turns east at Auditorium Place. It proceeds east roughly 99' along Auditorium Place until the property line ends. It then proceeds north roughly 99' along the rear property line, and turns west-northwest for another roughly 72' along the irregular property line where the designated property abuts its neighboring property on Edgewood Avenue. It then proceeds west roughly 60' along Edgewood Avenue back to the point of origin.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary was selected due to the designated property's urban location, irregular shape, and relatively small size (see Figure 1).

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

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Date: June 24, 2003

NOTE: This National Historic Landmark (NHL) Study updates the documentation in the original NHL nomination, for the Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company Plant, prepared by George R. Adams, Director, Historic Landmark Project, American Association for State and Local History, and dated March of 1978.

Preparation of the updated NHL study was undertaken by Mr. John D. Sylvest, an intern with the National Park Service, to complete part of the requirements for a Masters Degree from the Heritage Preservation Program, Georgia State University. Technical assistance in the preparation of the updated NHL study was provided to Mr. Sylvest, during his internship, by:

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Figure 1. Site plan showing the location of the Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company Plant, at the corner of Edgewood Avenue and Courtland Street, and Landmark boundary. Site plan from the National Historic Landmark Condition Assessment Report, 1987.

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