

Appendix B

A Note on Historical Research

Bill Lockhart and Bob Brown

On a personal level, we have attempted to create the best history and bottle analysis of the Seven-Up Co. and its containers that has been accomplished to this point. In the history section, we have tried to tell the most accurate story possible, debunking some myths and bringing to light untold stories. In addition, we have presented what may be the first history of the soda bottling industry of Carthage, Missouri, the home of what we believe was the first bottler of Seven-Up – based on the historical evidence we could find – even though that evidence disagrees with the name presented by the Seven-Up Co. as the first bottler.¹ In our bottle analysis, we have striven to examine as many details and include as many variables as we could discover, explaining as best we could why we reached our conclusions.

Our primary sources for historical information consisted of online newspapers such as Newspapers.com, augmented by other writings about Seven-Up in printed matter as well as the most thorough online searches we could manage. Despite our best efforts, there are gaps in our research – sometimes empty periods of a year or more – frequently because newspapers for those periods were missing from the databases. This is common in *all* historical research – so common that graduate-level history professors often note that history is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle with *most* of the pieces missing. However, new information continually surfaces (e.g., the discovery of previously unavailable newspapers), so, hopefully, future researchers can fill in some of the gaps. Historical research is *never* finished.

There are other problems with information obtained from newspapers – and from *all* other primary historical sources. Primary sources are ones *from* the actual era – newspapers, census documents, reminiscences of and interviews with people actually involved, city directories, etc. Secondary sources are those written *after* the events, possibly from primary

¹ Of course, the problem may be in defining “first bottler.” During the experimental years, before the period of the early test markets, someone may have bottled the experiments. If so, that could be the “first bottler” claimed by Seven-Up. In our definition, “first bottler” meant the bottler who advertised Seven-Up to the public in the initial test market.

sources, possibly from other secondary sources – books, articles, online webpages, etc. Most secondary sources do *not* cite where they get their information or why they reached their conclusions. These should be taken as possibly being accurate, although many of their assumptions are faulty – *even if they came from the best primary sources available at the time*. New sources appear constantly – online or in dusty archives maintained by counties, cities, universities, and other bodies. Whenever possible, we have used primary sources, often refuting online or printed information.

Generally, in bottle-related histories, the three best sources for accurate information are newspapers, federal and state government publications (especially patent and trademark documents), and the archives of actual bottlers, brewers, franchisers, and/or glass makers. Each of these has its problems, and each may provide inaccurate information. As noted above, *most* of the information about Seven-Up and other company has been lost – not just some – most. Often, the lost bits are of fairly minor importance, but many are major. Some of this lost information – in company archives – has been compiled from the memories of the oldest workers or managers still available. But this was usually generated years, often decades after the fact.

Newspaper issues center around two main categories: missing information and accuracy. The farther back in history you search, the more spotty you find the remaining newspapers. Survival of newspapers is greater in the larger cities, and some smaller towns only have a few remaining issues beyond fairly recent years. But, even if every issue of a newspaper is available, the newspapers did not constantly address every change and issue of every business in town. Between the survival of the individual papers and the lack of reporting about mundane issues in a glass factory or bottler, most of the information we would like is missing. Then, everything was filtered through the reporters. Even when they quoted someone, the quotes could be inaccurate, and the accuracy of all the information was only as good as the knowledge of the individual reporter. Despite these issues, newspapers are often our best sources of information.

Even sources from the governments have issues. In this study, we found several inaccuracies in trademarks from Seven-Up. In these cases, it was because Seven-Up did not apply for the trademarks until a decade or more after the firm began use of the trademarks/labels/slogans in question. The design details had changed during that decade and

did not apply to the older labels. Some of the dates of first use on the trademarks seem to have been the best guesses – probably from the oldest employee.

Company archives also have problems, the biggest one of which is lost information. Many states only require companies to retain records for *five* years. Personal conversations with glass house representatives have frequently revealed that the firm has *no* actual archival information older than the required period. This means that outside research is often *more* accurate than items published by the bottlers or glass houses. That being said, where company archives are available, they are often incredible. In this study, the current owners of Seven-Up informed us that they had no information.

Similar issues exist for bottle research. One issue is the survival of individual bottles, and the problem is even worse for paper labels. Then, even if the bottles exist, how do you find them? Even though there are bottle collectors' networks, not all collectors are hooked up, and not all share the information – especially the fine details – that we need. One of our best resources is eBay, followed by other online auction sites. We discussed several other issues in the chapters on bottles and labels.

In its final form, history is a narrative told by the historian or historians. Like all good historians, we try to fill in the missing data with our best educated guesses, attempting to make it clear when we are filling in gaps and to explain how and why we reached our conclusions. While we have tried to make this the best history and bottle study produced about Seven-Up to date, we know that more data and sources (and bottles) will become available to researchers in the future. It is our sincere hope that future researchers will be able to fill in many of our gaps and will correct any errors.

