

# BOOK REVIEW

## "DECO SODA BOTTLES"

– a guide to collecting those fancy embossed soda bottles of the 1920s and 1930s"

by Brian Wade • Self-published • Copyright © 2003 • ISBN 0-9727794-0-X  
• softbound • 7" X 10" • 103 pages • 428 bottle listings • 271 bottles photographed  
(67 photographs) • bibliography • \$22.00 (39 East 16 Street, Huntington Station,  
NY 11746) • Author's e-mail address: brian.wade@att..net

According to the author, *"This book is meant to serve as an introductory guide to collecting and pricing these deco-era soda bottles. It is by no means a complete listing, but it is a thorough survey of the best and the most frequently found deco soda [sic] bottles that I have discovered.... It is my hope that this book will be of some help to fellow collectors, and will contribute to an increasing awareness and appreciation of the tremendous variety of beautiful and interesting embossed soda bottles...."*

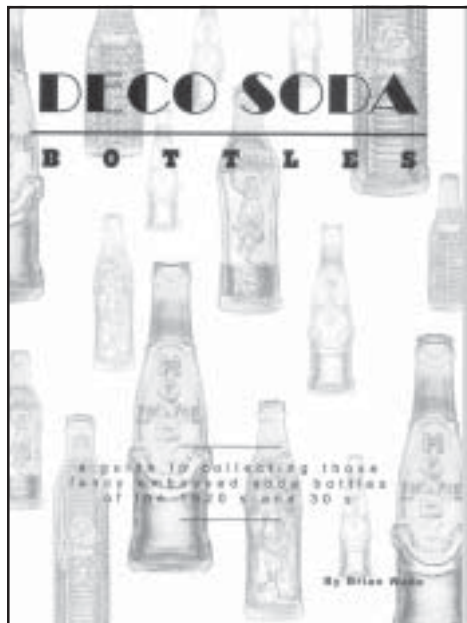
I used the author's own words, because they provide an excellent description of the intent of this book about **Specialty** ["DECO"] bottles. Does the book live up to the author's plans? Yes it does. It should be noted, however, that the work is a really good checklist of many of the important bottles in the category but hardly any history of the listed bottles is offered. It will have to be later work, by those interested, to provide the history of specific **Specialty** bottles.

Make no mistake, this is an important little volume; it introduces, defines, explains, describes, and pictures a type of old bottle that has, unfortunately, been greatly neglected by the bottle-collecting hobby.

That is an interesting statement to make when it is becomes known that the first bottle of this neglected category is the 1915-16 hobble skirt Coca-Cola bottle – perhaps the world's most well-known glass container!

The book is further important because it is the first to be devoted to these extremely interesting and historically important bottles.

The *bottom line here* is that this is a book I would purchase for my own reference library – in fact, I already did!



**Editorial observation:** To try to prevent the kind of ongoing error that was made for years after Applied Color Labeled (ACL) bottles were originally misnomered, "Painted Label" bottles, it might be fruitful to cite the following history and facts.

The misnamed ACL bottles were called "Painted Label" in spite of appeals from a number of bottle-collecting luminaries such as the late Dr. Julian Toulouse. Dr. Toulouse used his knowledge and 32-years experience as a glass engineer for Owens-Illinois Glass Company, to try to insert the correct "ACL" designation into bottle-collecting literature. Only in recent years did the correct term finally take hold. This is evidenced by the several successful editions of Collecting Applied Color Label Soda Bottles compiled by longtime ACL advocate, Rick Sweeney.

Here is what the author of the book being reviewed here says about his name for the Specialty bottle category:

*“DECO-DEFINITION: A deco soda bottle is defined here as ‘a fancy embossed crown-top soda bottle from the 1920s and 30s.’ Although these soda bottles represent a category that is distinct from all other types of collectible soda bottles, there has not been a single, agreed-upon name/definition used by bottle collectors. In addition to being called ‘deco sodas,’ I have also heard them referred to as ‘fancy embossed crown-top sodas,’ ‘proprietary sodas,’ and ‘embossed sodas from the 1920s and 30s.’”*

Like the late Dr. Toulouse, Mr. John J. Riley, Secretary of the American Bottlers of Carbonated Beverages (1939-1957), presented the correct terminology in his 1958 classic volume, *A History of the AMERICAN SOFT DRINK INDUSTRY, Bottled Carbonated Beverages 1807-1957*. In that seminal book he presented the correct term as follows:

*“The Specialty Bottle Vogue: Glass containers of special form, configuration, or surface design were long known, but the development of a beverage bottle of such unique design that it would serve to identify*

*the product contained in it did not assume particular importance until the Coca-Cola patented bottle became widely used, following its introduction in 1915-1916.... It was during this period that the proprietors of such prominent branded drinks as NuGrape, Orange Crush, Try-Me, Chero Cola, Whistle, Orange Kist, Dr Pepper, Double-Cola, Howdy, and many others adopted special of bottles for their products....”*

**To summarize:** “*DECO SODA BOTTLES*” as a book, does make a first and important contribution to bottle-collecting literature.

In naming Specialty bottles by the whimsical name used in the title, it leaves it up to bottle collectors, by themselves, to learn and use the correct nomenclature – “**Specialty Bottles.**”

If collectors respond to this appeal, that will, in Brain Wade’s words, “...contribute to an increasing awareness and appreciation of this tremendous variety of beautiful and interesting embossed soda bottles.”

**Reviewed by:**

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