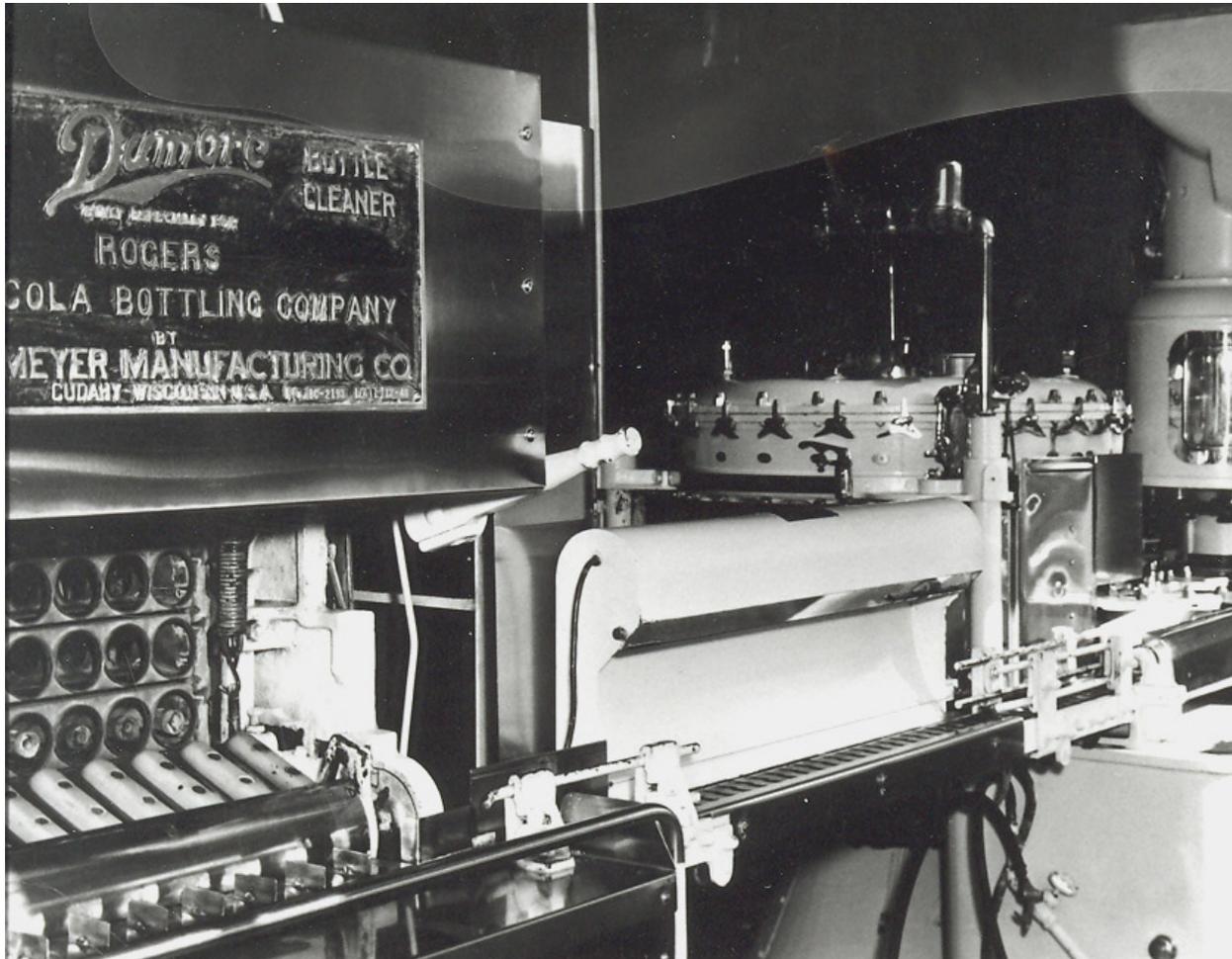


# Photo of the Month

Rogers Coca-Cola Bottling Company



Bottle Cleaning Machine, Rogers Coca Cola Bottling Company  
Neg. # 010770

Coca-Cola is an undisputed American icon of the twentieth century. The history of Coke began during the late 1800s as a fountain drink. Originally, the company produced and sold syrup to soda fountains to mix with seltzer water and sell to customers. By 1894 bottles of Coca-Cola were being produced, but in very small amounts. The pace of bottling grew rapidly between the turn of the twentieth-century and the 1920s thanks to improvements in bottling technology and the sale of franchises to regional entrepreneurs. By the early 1920s over 1,000 bottling operations existed throughout the country and sales outpaced the soda fountain variety.

The Rogers Coca-Cola Bottling Company was one such franchise in the nation-wide growth of the company. The plant was first located at 105 South Arkansas Street in 1912. In 1926 Frank Kinzel bought the Rogers plant and franchise. Under Kinzel, the plant added equipment including a new truck and 2 ½ train cars of new bottles. Three trucks, five employees, and a warehouse in Berryville supported the plant's operations by 1928.

Sanitary and mechanized production of food products was highly touted during this period. A 1928 newspaper advertisement proclaimed that the product was “bottled by experts – in a sanitary plant, with automatic machinery, in sterilized bottles – thus insuring: quality, uniformity, and purity.” During this year, the operation reported using 8,000 pounds of pure cane sugar as well as being the only bottling plant in Benton County to feature fully automated machinery. A bottle cleaning machine in the Rogers Coca-Cola Bottling Company, probably taken during the 1950s, is pictured at right.

The plant moved to 215 West Poplar Street in the early 1930s. Walter Luffman and his son, Fred, acquired the franchise in 1935 and again expanded and improved the operation. It eventually gained the reputation as a model plant throughout the state of Arkansas. The succeeding years brought more expansion and in 1969 the plant incorporated all of the building located at Poplar and Third Streets. Operations continued at this location during the late twentieth century.