

Twice as Much for a Nickel!

by
Mike Prero

That was Pepsi's slogan from 1939-1950. And Pepsi, a favorite, of course, with Soda collectors, has a long history...and the covers to prove it!

In 1898, one of Caleb Bradham's formulations, known as "Brad's Drink," a combination of carbonated water, sugar, vanilla, rare oils and cola nuts, is renamed "Pepsi-Cola" on August 28, 1898, and Pepsi-Cola received its first logo. The instant popularity of this new drink lead Bradham to devote all of his energy to developing Pepsi-Cola into a full-fledged business. He formed the first Pepsi-Cola Company. Pepsi's theme line was "Exhilarating, Invigorating, Aids Digestion."

By 1905, there were 15 U.S. Pepsi bottling plants. In 1908, Pepsi-Cola became one of the first companies to modernize delivery from horse-drawn carts to motor vehicles. The collapse of the sugar market in 1921 results in enormous financial losses for the Pepsi-Cola Company, and in 1923 it went bankrupt. Roy C. Megargel, a Wall Street broker, bought the Pepsi trademark, forming the Pepsi-Cola Corporation, but that also went bankrupt in 1931. The Loft Candy Company then acquired it. Charles Guth, president of Loft,



assumed leadership of Pepsi and commanded the reformulation of the Pepsi-Cola syrup formula.

1934 was a landmark year for Pepsi-Cola. The drink was a hit, and, to attract even more sales, the company begins selling its 12-ounce drink for five cents (the same cost as six ounces of competitive colas). The 12-ounce bottle debuted in Baltimore, where it was an instant success. Sales skyrocketed nationally. Pepsi-Cola Company soon made advertising history with "Nickel, Nickel," the first advertising jingle ever broadcast nationwide on radio. In 1941, in support of the war effort, Pepsi's bottle crown colors changed to red, white and blue. In 1948, Pepsi was produced in cans for the first time. By 1956, 149 Pepsi-Cola bottling plants were in operation in 61 countries outside the U.S.

In 1963, Pepsi-Cola continued to lead the soft drink industry in packaging innovations, when the 12-ounce bottle gave way to the 16-ounce size. Twelve-ounce Pepsi cans were first introduced to the military to transport soft drinks all over the world. Diet Pepsi, America's first national diet soft drink, debuted in 1964. In 1966, Pepsi entered the Japanese and Eastern European markets. Pepsi lead the way into metrics by introducing the industry's first two-liter bottles in 1970. Two years later, Pepsi signed a contract with the Soviet Union. By 1976, Pepsi had become the single largest soft drink brand sold in American supermarkets. 1981 saw Pepsi reach an agreement with China to begin production in 1982.

By the end of 1985, there were 380 independently owned and operated Pepsi-Cola franchise territories in the United States. More than 600 other Pepsi-Cola plants were in operation in 148 countries and territories around the world. Continuing to expand, in 1994 Pepsi re-entered the South African market.

Pepsi collectors know the covers are out there. I have only have some 19 in my own collection, not counting the 48 WW II Disney Pepsi set. Wayne Eadie, NY, had 156 as of December 1210. There is at least one set, some foreign, and a few Swedish foil boxes reported by Terry Rowe. I don't believe I've ever seen any really old Pepsi covers, though. Anyone have any Pepsi DQ's, Safety Firsts, etc?

