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ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

A “Dopeless” Diamond Belied Koca Nola’s Cocaine-laced Content



Because it had been widely used in soft drinks in the 1890s, cocaine gained rapid acceptance as a local anesthetic. In 1904 Thomas H. Austin founded the Koca Nola Company, a soft-drink firm that produced copycat cocaine-laced beverages in Atlanta, the hometown of the largest cola company in the world at that time. By 1907 the Koca Nola diamond logo (above) had been trademarked. On the diamond, Koca Nola is touted as “The Great Tonic” that is not only “Delicious” but “Dopeless.” Unfortunately for the beverage company, federal chemists isolated cocaine in a jug of their Koca Nola. Consequently, in March of 1910, the United States Department of Agriculture published its “Notice of Judgment” that Koca Nola had violated the 1906 Food and Drugs Act by “Adulteration and Misbranding” its beverage, which, yes, still contained cocaine. Although its logo was “dopeless,” apparently Koca Nola was not. Bankrupt by 1910, the Koca Nola Company did not completely disappear until 8 yr later. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists’ Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology.)

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