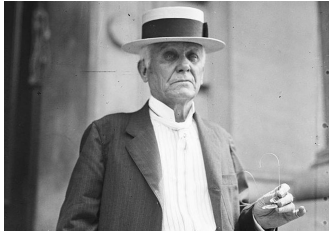


# Asa Candler

From Atlanta, He Brought Coca-Cola to the Nation



*Asa Candler*

In Atlanta, one does not order a soft drink or a soda, and never a Pepsi, but a Coke. Coca-Cola – or “Coke,” as it is often known - is seemingly synonymous with the city. In Atlanta – and throughout the South – “Coke” has become a kind of shorthand for any number of soft drinks. And, one of the people we have to thank for that is Asa Candler.

## Asa Candler Discovers Coca-Cola

Born in western Georgia, in 1851, Asa Griggs Candler came to Atlanta with an eye toward working in the pharmacy industry. But, in the years to come fate and circumstances would send him in a number of different directions.

The beverage known today as Coca-Cola has its beginnings in downtown Atlanta. Dr. John Stith Pemberton, who was living near what is today Centennial Olympic Park, mixed a syrup at his home and took it a few blocks down the street, to Jacob’s Pharmacy. The Pharmacy – located in the Five Points area – initially promoted the syrup as a tonic for such ailments as headaches. This was how Asa Candler initially discovered – and in 1887, purchased full ownership of Coca-Cola for the sum of \$2,300.



*Jacob's Pharmacy*

## Success



*Coca-Cola ad, 1910*

In short time, Candler made a success of his investment. By 1890, the beverage was selling more than four times what it had only one year earlier. In the early years, Candler used a variety of tactics to build the company, including distributing free drink coupons.

In 1886, according to the Coca-Cola Company, an average of nine drinks per day were sold – and only in Atlanta. By the turn of the twentieth century, the beverage was available in every state, thanks – in part – to a revolutionary business tactic. By that time, individuals across the country were allowed to purchase the right to bottle Coca-Cola.

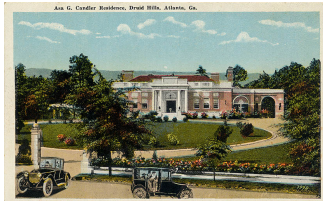
## The Candler Building

In 1906, Candler constructed a multi-story office building about one quarter mile north of the railroad depots. Named the Candler Building, it was – at seventeen stories – taller than any building ever built in Atlanta. Covered in Georgia marble and featuring numerous detailed carvings and interior marble features, the building was luxuriously ornate for the time.



A lower floor of the Candler Building was home to the Central Bank and Trust Corporation. Candler himself had founded the financial institution, in part, to increase the prestige of the building, thinking that it would make it more attractive to potential tenants. The bank survived until 1922, when it merged with another Georgia-based financial institution, Citizens and Southern National Bank.

## Real Estate



*Candler Druid Hills home*

The Coca-Cola Company helped to make Asa Candler a wealthy man. As his fortune grew, Candler invested in real estate. He helped to develop a neighborhood on the city's periphery into Druid Hills. Candler and his children would call the affluent area home for several decades.

## Race Cars and Airplanes

In 1909, Candler's son, Asa Jr. and a partner built and operated an automobile racing track on a plot of land south of the downtown area. By the track's second season, interest had waned, and the track soon closed. Asa Sr. took ownership of the land and, in 1919, leased it for use by the fledgling air transport industry. By the mid-1920s, the City was leasing the land as an early airfield, which it named Candler Field, after its onetime owner. Today, it is the home of Hartsfield–Jackson Atlanta International Airport.



*Car Racing Track south of town*

## Emory University

Asa Candler had been raised in a Methodist household. His brother, Warren, was a Methodist minister and had been president of Emory College. In 1914, when the Methodist church announced plans to establish a university in the south, Asa Candler wrote a letter, pledging \$1 million to assist with situating the college in Atlanta. The offer was accepted, and Emory University was established in Atlanta. In the years to come, Candler would remain a benefactor to the institution, donating – by some estimates – over \$6 million.

## Mayor Candler



By 1916, Asa Candler was 65 years old. He had found success in the business, banking, real estate, and philanthropic sectors. That year, he added another title to his resume: Mayor. His sole term saw its share of ups and downs. After sorting out Atlanta's disorganized finances, Candler helped the city to recover from the destruction of the 1917 fire.

He also put his own funds towards preparing the infrastructure of a site that would host Camp Gordon, a World War I training-facility.

Thinking to the future of the Coca-Cola company, when Candler began his mayoral term, he had given his children control of the Coca-Cola Company to his children. He would never regain control of the organization. The siblings, it is said, were uninterested in running the company and, in 1919, sold it to a group of Atlanta businessmen led by Ernest Woodruff for \$25 million. The family and other investors got \$15 million in cash and \$10 million in Coca-Cola stock.

Asa Candler Sr. passed away in 1929, but his legacy remains across Atlanta. It is seen in the downtown building that bears his name. It is in the neighborhood that he helped to develop and called home. It is in the university that he helped to establish in Atlanta and in the air with the world's most traveled airport. And, of course, his legacy is seen in the beverage that he built from a soda fountain tonic in an Atlanta pharmacy to a globally recognized brand.

- Takeaways:**
1. Spread Coca-Cola from Atlanta to the nation
  2. Had other professional interests: business, banking, philanthropy
  3. Connection to Druid Hills neighborhood
  4. Connection to Emory University
  5. Owned land now home to Atlanta airport

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