

Marianna Coca Cola Bottling Company, History Began in 1898

What is now known as the Marianna Coca Cola Bottling Company began operation in 1898 when two brothers, Lanier and Mack Keen, left their home in Dublin, Ga., and opened a small flavor bottling plant in River Junction. In 1903 another brother, J.

H. Keen, left his farm near Dublin and joined his brother in their carbonated beverage venture.

Although the business was growing, it was not sufficient to support the three brothers. Lanier and Mack, said to be of a more venturesome nature sold their interest to the younger brother, J. H. Keen.

From 1903 to 1907 J. H. Keen bottled a line of flavors and it was at this time that he was offered a contract to bottle and sell Coca Cola. Keen signed the contract on March 15, 1907.

In 1913, after several surveys and conferences with Herbert F. Haley, secretary and treasurer of the Florida Coca Cola Bottling Company, it was decided to open a plant in Marianna, the largest community in the territory. Prior to 1913 most of the supplies for bottling were shipped up and down the Apalachicola and Chattahoochee Rivers, and by train, there being no usable roads in the territory. However, it was thought now that business would be much improved if bottled goods were delivered by wagon to the customers out of Marianna wherever the roads permitted.

For the Marianna operation, Mr. Keen organized a corporation known as the Purity Bottling Works and sold an interest to J. P. Streetman. Streetman served as manager of the plant until his death in 1940. The interests of Streetman was later acquired by the heirs of Keen.

The River Junction plant merged with the Marianna Coca-Cola Bottling Company in 1954 (the names were changed from Purity Bottling Works in 1924) with C. E. Jackson, the present president of the company, serving as president, treasurer and manager of the River Junction plant from 1932 until the merger. He served as treasurer and production manager from the merger until 1957.

Upon the death of J. H. Keen in 1942, his son, C. D. Keen, became the president, secretary and manager of the Marianna plant and served in these capacities until the merger in 1954, at which time he became secretary and distribution manager in which capacities he served until his death in 1957.

The growth of the business is indicated in many ways - from a one-horse delivery system to a fleet of trucks delivering over a large area - a large increase in personnel, and from the building at the corner of Madison and LaFayette Streets to a much larger and more modern plant located on Highway 90 West.

The company is still owned by the descendents of J. H. Keen. His daughter, Mrs. C. E. Jackson, is vice president, and Mildred Keen, the widow of C. D. Keen, serves as secretary. Andrew Alsop serves as general manager of the company.

