

# Curator's Choice

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## Hometown Coke Bottle

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People often think archaeologists study people's trash; while this isn't strictly true, sometimes they do! At the Fenby Farm Lime Kiln site (18CR163), the kilns were filled with modern trash prior to the excavations in 1997. While the site was primarily excavated to understand the importance of perpetual lime kilns to Carroll County and Maryland as a whole, the refuse provides interesting insight into consumer goods from the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Frye 1998). A notable artifact is the base of a Coca-Cola bottle (Figure 1) filled right in Westminster!



Figure 1. The bottle base from 18CR163 showing the embossed "Westminster MD" on base.

The Westminster Coca-Cola Bottling Co. Inc. submitted its articles of incorporation to the state of Maryland in 1931. The bottling plant continued successfully for many years before it merged with the Mid-Atlantic Coca-Cola Bottling Company in 1991 (Maryland Department of Assessments & Taxation). The plant in Westminster closed after the merger. The building's façade retains its Coca-Cola branded architectural elements (Figure 2). The building stands on Old Westminster Pike, and it currently houses various shops.

The iconic Coke bottle design has become a symbol in American pop culture. It was designed to strengthen brand recognition and make the product stand out from its imitators and competitors. Coca-Cola's top attorney, Harold Hirsch, suggested that the best way to unify the brand across bottling plants was to use a distinctive bottle. Bottle producers nationwide worked on designs to present to the Coca-Cola Company. Drawing inspiration from the shape of the cocoa bean, Earl Dean, following Alexander Samuelsson's guidance, sketched the now famous design. In 1916, Coca-Cola directed all their bottle producers to adopt the design and emboss the city name of the bottling plant on the base of the bottle (The Coca-Cola Company). Which is why we know the Coke bottle from Fenby Farm Lime Kiln was a locally produced one. I imagine people were proud that there was a Coke bottling plant in their town and that they could see at a glance whether a bottle was filled in Westminster.



Figure 2. Building façade featuring contour bottle design. Photo by Bryan Costin, <https://flickr.com/photos/bcostin/329786572/in/photostream/>.

### References Cited

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