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A UNIQUELY AMERICAN WATERING HOLE:
THE DRUG STORE SODA FOUNTAIN AT THE
TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

By
Eleanor Alexander

Approved: ________________
Kenneth L. Ames, Ph.D.
Professor in charge of thesis on behalf of the
Advisory Committee

Approved: ____________________
Barbara McLean Ward, Ph.D.
Director, Winterthur Program in Early American
Culture

Approved: ____________________
R. B. Murray, Ph.D.
University Coordinator for Graduate Studies
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Ah, that little soda fountain
in the little village store
You remember it, I reckon
from amidst your childhood lore?
As an altar, mystic onyx,
at which thirsty souls would bow—
Marble, glass (and also pewter)—
mean compared with founts of now.
Ah, the grand anticipation
when we shyly sidled in
And surveyed the magic frontage
as we dangled happy shin.
While the keeper of the Altar
(Mr. Brown or Mrs. Jones)
Queried: "Well, what flavor?"
in not overpatient tones.
Choc'late, strawberry, or ginger?
Cherry—huh! or sass'prilla!
Ever taste the combination,
mingled lemon and vanilla?
'Twas a gamut quite sufficient
for the strictest epicure,
And the wildest dreams of childhood
Might no finer [drink] conjure.¹

The soda fountain, an ornate dispenser of myriad
treats, was a nineteenth-century American innovation that
became a financial and social success. Although the
apothecary existed in many countries, only this nation's
drug stores incorporated the fountain as an essential
merchandising component. Introduced in the early 1800s as

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a marketing aid to shore up flagging profits, the drug store soda fountain evolved into a uniquely American social institution.

The fountain was both an apparatus for advertising and dispensing what was commonly called soda water, and a gathering site for good soda and good times. To fulfill these simultaneous roles, the fountain changed forms, evolving from simple but attractive structures to architectural masterpieces often grand in scale. Fountains appealed to the eye and imagination. They were expressly designed "to tempt a thirsty mortal or make a mortal thirsty." Some early fountain forms literally embodied this notion. Shaped like swans or water-bearing vessels, they inspired customers to buy soda water.

This artificially carbonated beverage was invented in Europe, probably during the eighteenth century. Sold generally as an unflavored bottle tonic, it was a viable commodity there. But American ingenuity transformed soda water into an epicurean delight. Sweet flavored drinks and complex concoctions made with ice cream and other ingredients eclipsed the basic European product. The new taste sensations were created and dispensed at fountains.

As highly visible symbols of soda water, the apparatus promoted the beverage well. Customers flocked,
lured by picturesque fountains made of luxurious materials. Soda water's growing popularity obscured its origins and made it seem an American invention. Indeed, late nineteenth-century boosterism proclaimed it the "national drink," saying in essence: the English have ale; the Germans beer; the French, wine; but we have soda water!  

The term soda water described a man-made carbonated drink by the end of the eighteenth century in Europe. Some form of soda was a required production ingredient; hence the name soda water. One popular formula involved dissolving sodium carbonate in water impregnated with carbonic acid, thus giving the drink its effervescent quality. However, this seemed an unsatisfactory method, since the product had "mischievous results, especially if indulged in to the extent to which some persons pursue the use of soda water." Although the complainant did not specify these mischievous results, another scientist may have provided a clue. He found that creating the beverage from baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) and tartaric acid in water, yielded an acceptable drink, but one with laxative properties. Apparently the culprit in these soda water making techniques was some form of sodium. For by the nineteenth century, it was the missing rather than required ingredient. A Philadelphia doctor wrote (1821):

... this carbonated water which is sold at all the apothecaries ... under the name of soda
water is a wrong appellation, for although at first it was customary to add a small quantity of soda to the water, at present there is not . . . any addition of the kind made."

On the threshold of mass appeal, soda water became a misnomer. Some thought the name should more honestly reflect production. For a while, the term aerated (fixed or charged air) water co-existed with the popular pseudonym soda water. Other preparation methods brought other appellations. Soda water was created by forcing carbonic acid gas into pressurized water, and became known as carbonic acid water.

Americans developed a new technique for producing the drink, whereby a gas made from marble dust and sulphuric acid was added to pressurized water. When Carbonated Drinks Quarterly (October 1877) suggested calling the beverage "marble water," the recommendation fell on deaf ears. Only native American stone was used, giving rise to the notion of soda water as a patriotic drink. Soda water was similarly called an economical beverage, since the marble dust component came from demolished buildings, tombstones, and monuments. But drinking gravestones struck skeptics as unpleasant and unhealthy. As they quaked at the thought of consuming marble, a soda booster countered with a more alluring perspective. Look at what modern science has wrought, he
declared. "[It] has made it possible to transmute the Venus diMedici . . . into a glass of soda water. . . ." 10

While the nineteenth century brought refined means for making the drink, attempts at creating it actually began in the sixteenth century. The goal of duplicating natural seltzer or bubbling water challenged many scientists. Most often cited is the work of eighteenth-century chemists, with Joseph Priestly, noted discoverer of oxygen, receiving credit for inventing soda water. French physician Gabriel Venel produced a sparkling water in 1750; but Priestly's experiments in Leeds (c. 1767) yielded the first palatable drink. Three years later, a generator for making soda water in volume was invented in Sweden, causing Europeans to investigate the beverage's commercial potential.11

Since the medicinal value of naturally carbonated water had long been touted by persons of means, the same role fell to its imitator. After a night of wine, women, and mirth, Lord Byron called for soda water.12 Others sought it as a remedy for heartburn and weak stomachs, heat, and fatigue. By the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, citrus juice, also praised for its healing powers, was added to soda water. As the first flavored, although unsweetened, effervescent drink, it was the
precursor of the sugary variants on which American trade would thrive.

Early retailing of the beverage in Europe centered in apothecaries. Trade was brisk in plain carbonated water. Theirs was a business in packaged take-home goods, with soda water sold mainly by the bottle and consumed off the premises. Because of this, fountains were not used as dispensers.

In the early nineteenth century, American druggists also distributed soda water in bottles. However, pharmacists soon saw the possibilities inherent in selling by the glass. Not only was it more profitable, but it eliminated the need to purchase bottles that were taken from the premises. Selling by the glass also meant that customers clustered at the service center, sipping drinks and socializing. For this style of soda vending, a larger container of carbonated water was a necessity. Hidden in cellars or under counters, it was, by manufacturer's definition, the fountain. A countertop device linking the vessel below was used to "draw-off water into tumblers." It was this device, encased in handsome form and material, that the public dubbed the fountain.

The fountain was a commercial asset to American soda sellers. It was a novel means of advertising the new
version of soda water. The fountain's high visibility on the service counter invited attention and afforded self-promotion. In England and Europe, when soda water was sold by the glass, a more inconspicuous dispenser was used. Drinks were poured or siphoned from stoppered bottles that retained carbonation of unused contents.\textsuperscript{14} The highly decorative fountain seems to have been an American idea.

The earliest mention of a fountain appears in 1808. A Philadelphia merchant is recorded as dispensing mineral water "from the reservoir in which it is prepared underground, through perpendicular wooden columns, which enclose metallick tubes. . . ."\textsuperscript{15} A year later, a similar but more elaborate soda-water apparatus, as it was also called, enhanced a New York City firm:

... the waters pass up into mahogany pillars, crowned with gilt urns. . . . The pillars with their urns, stand a foot apart and the middle one is raised above the others; silver stop-cocks inserted in the side of the pillars give the whole much neatness and richness of appearance.\textsuperscript{16}

Such fountains may have been the first to elevate the apparatus to the status of an art form. Manufacturers of these embellished dispensers printed testimonies from enthusiastic owners. One proprietor rhapsodized: "... its beauty, its symmetry and attractiveness, with its statuettes and gas jets, attracts the admiration of all" (1878). Wrote another to a fountain maker: "Words of mine
cannot do it justice. If you could hear the 'Oh's! Ain't it grand?' and similar expressions from patrons, your cup of happiness would be full" (1876). 17

Other contemporary descriptions confirm that viewing a fountain was an aesthetic experience. People even traveled for miles to see a fanciful model. A social critic observed of this popular art form (1891):

There are hundreds of thousands of people to whom the soda water fountain has given their first realizing gaze of the beauties of art. . . . There are thousands of arid little villages . . . out of whose dull materialism it arises . . . to refresh the weary eye and soul. 18

For all its aesthetic properties, it should be remembered that the fountain was a utensil, an implement for doing a job. John Kasson has observed in Civilizing the Machine (1976) that all manner of machinery--power looms, printing presses, locomotives--were festooned and adorned; and their beauty was duly noted. He explains:

Many of the same aesthetic values Americans demanded in the fine arts they sought also in technology. As a result, form followed . . . fashion and symbolic expression to a surprising degree in nineteenth century industrial design. . . . As works that satisfied the national passion for both beauty, utility, productive achievement, and artistic expression, American machinery formed a major part of the aesthetic experience. . . . 19

The fountain, which Kasson overlooks in his study, may have been the supreme manifestation of the tool as art; its
acclaim as an art object appears unmatched.

The fountain was a godsend for pharmacists. With the new department stores cutting druggists' retail trade, and the popularity of patent medicines eroding their prescription business, pharmacists needed a money-making sideline. The fountain provided it. Druggists had the knowledge and ingredients for making soda water, and tradition linked the beverage to the pharmacy. Although competition arose from confectionery shops and eateries, the fountain was "recognized by the public as peculiarly the druggists'" (1890), and "there [were] few stores in the land without a soda apparatus of some character" (1892).20

At the height of the fountain's popularity, an observer claimed it to be a manifestation of biblical prophecy, noting (1906):

> In Deuteronomy (8:7), "a land of fountains" is definitely promised. Surely this has been fulfilled. Are they not to be found in every town and hamlet from Eastport, Me. to San Diego, Cal.?21

While his statement was exaggerated for dramatic effect, the soda fountain was certainly everywhere. Proliferation, however, only hints at its significance. The drug store soda fountain manifested and supported American values. It was an acceptable social space for families, children, and courting couples. It was also one
of the few decorous public sites for both sexes that catered to unescorted ladies. During the temperance era, the drug store soda fountain rivalled the saloon for customers. Offering fancy soda-water beverages as an alternative to alcoholic drinks, the drug store provided a wholesome alternative to the barroom. The drug store fountain assumed political significance, as office seekers used its resources to woo temperate voters. Moreover, the soda fountain was a major self-promoting industry, providing jobs and income. Because of these and other factors, the Bible thumper was on target with his summary statement: "... the fountain is entitled to a dignity not yet ascribed to it."
NOTES

CHAPTER I


5Ibid., p. 7.

6Ibid.; Charles La Wall, Four Thousand Years of Pharmacy (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1951), p. 488. La Wall and Riley also state that soda water derived its name from this process of mixing baking soda and tartaric acid in water.


8Riley, A History of American Soft Drink Industry, p. 11. In the literature of the 1870s, the terms aerated water and carbonic acid water are sometimes used.


12George Gordon Byron, Don Juan, canto 2, stanza 178:

"Let us have wine and women, mirth and laughter
Sermons and soda water the day after."

On the other hand, Byron (cited in Stansbury, "Evolution of Soda Water, p. 330) is also credited with writing:

 "Ring for your valet--bid him
quickly bring
Some hock and soda water
then You'll know
A pleasure worthy Xerxes,
the Great king."


15Ibid., p. 50.


CHAPTER II
FROM MEDIOCRE TO MAGNIFICENT

I sing the fount of soda
That sweetly springs for me;
And hope to make this ode
Delightful melody.¹

In the nineteenth century, no serving utensil for food or drink was as fanciful in shape and style as the soda fountain; nor did any serving piece undergo as many structural changes. From the first descriptive record of a fountain in 1808 until 1903 when the final form was introduced, the apparatus had seven major and often imaginative shapes: the gooseneck, urn, column, box, cottage, wall fountain, and modern counter fountain. Several factors influenced these forms. To fulfill the major function of promoting soda water, the apparatus had to catch the public's eye. As the drink's popularity increased, new fountain shapes emerged to better serve that demand. The fountain grew in size and complexity. Initially a small countertop device, it became a free-standing unit, often of massive scale. Technological advances, business acumen, design philosophy, and aesthetics also governed fountain
forms.

GOOSENECK (1808?-1890s?)

The first known fountain, which in 1808 dispensed mineral water through perpendicular metal tubes encased in wood, was probably a gooseneck;² for the gooseneck was later described as a "perpendicular tube, more or less gracefully curved."³

Essentially, this fountain form was a vertical pipe placed on a counter and attached to a tank of soda water below. The pipe rose ten to twenty inches in height.⁴ At the top was a short right-angle extension (Figure 1) or, more commonly, a semicircular shape. Although properly known in the trade as a draught stand or draught column, the apparatus was popularly called gooseneck because of its appearance. Philadelphian Charles Lippincott (1823-1908), who became a prominent fountain manufacturer, recalled the early years: "In those days, soda water [was] drawn from a silver tube--the top of the silver tube curving down. Goose-necks we called them. . . ."⁵ Perhaps because of its appellation, the fountain began to resemble its namesake shortly after the first quarter of the century. The curved portion was fashioned into a head, complete with eyes and beak (Figure 2). More elaborate models assumed the shape of swans, "with feathers prettily ruffled"; soda
water passed through an open beak.⁶

This type of model may have initiated a marketing practice that was to stand fountain maker and soda seller in good stead. It blended symbolism with a popular design motif. While the swan evoked ideas of water and thirst, swan heads were also a prevalent decoration on then-current Empire style furnishings. Their appearance signaled that the gooseneck was an attractive up-to-date apparatus, as well as one that could quench a thirst.

Goosenecks were made of metal. Cheaper models were lacquered tin; others silverplated or bronze. Early fountains were probably the work of local craftsmen, since the first manufacturing firm, the John Matthews Company (New York), began a small-scale operation in 1832.⁷ Even then, goosenecks may have remained primarily the domain of local companies. By the 1830s there was a new fountain form; and in the soda-water business, newest fountain equalled best fountain and was accordingly preferred by aggressive retailers. The gooseneck, however, was a long lived form. It was still in use in unpretentious rural stores as late as the 1880s, and appeared as a bottom-of-the-line item in manufacturers' catalogues during that time. John Matthews placed his models near the end of his 1888 brochure.⁸ Charles Lippincott's catalogue thirteen
years earlier extolled the virtues of then-stylish fountains, but underscored the gooseneck's shortcomings by designating it an apparatus "for a very small trade." In a climate that guaranteed that the latest fountain could build and sustain a thriving business, a fountain for limited clientele was of negligible value to enterprising druggists. The plain design of both manufacturers' goosenecks shows the form no longer warranted special attention. These were basic goosenecks, without beaks, heads, and ruffled feathers. Price also reflected their worth. Matthews's goosenecks cost $12 to $40, while his popular 1880s fountains ranged from $375 to $4,200.

The gooseneck had one major flaw— it was a fountain with only one faucet for dispensing soda water. To have more faucets, goosenecks were installed across the counter, consuming counter and floor space, since each faucet required a separate soda-water tank. Furthermore, service from a gooseneck was cumbersome and slow, mainly because of prevailing technology. When a glass of soda was drawn, pressure was released and the liquid surged from the fountain, splashing anything in its path. Of this problem, a New Jersey druggist wrote (1820): "How it scatters its volatile spray, and sends up its sparks in our faces!" Another recalled: "... the aerated water came into the glass with sufficient force to rebound to the ceiling, if
care were not taken." To prevent this, soda water was drawn first into a small-necked bottle, then poured into the customer's glass. The bottle method had the added advantage of retaining as much carbonation as possible in a glass of soda; for when dispensed directly from fountain to glass, escaping gas rendered the beverage almost flat.

There were other limitations to the gooseneck. Because of its design, it was not equipped to house or dispense syrups. A small selection of flavorings, generally four to six, was kept in jars on or below the counter (Figure 1). Syrup was poured into the glass of soda water after it was drawn. Seldom was this a cold drink, since the fountain had no internal refrigeration. At best, the soda water tank rested in a box of cracked ice.

Goosenecks had characteristics of most new inventions. As the first of its kind, it was rudimentary. However, it was probably an adequate apparatus for the inaugural soda-water business. In those days, there was little demand for soda water. At best, it was an experimental venture in city drug stores, and was just one of many products offered for sale. Typically, in 1818, a New Jersey pharmacist hung signs advertising his new fountain; and also the paint, oil, hardware, medicines, and window
glass he sold. The fountain probably came into more general use as a sideline during the 1840s-50s. As the popularity of soda water grew and its profit potential was recognized, more efficient fountain forms evolved.

URN (1830s-1870s)

The urn, or vase, in use by the 1830s, remained a viable commodity for about forty years. Its heyday seems to have been during the 1850s and 1860s. An early soda water seller in Boston recalled that at that time "some very pretty apparatus shaped like urns came into use." A New Yorker remembered urns as the most prevalent fountain form in his city; many were artistic and chaste in design. The vase was also a heavy favorite in St. Louis.

Urns may have been the first soda-water apparatus marketed by manufacturers. Fountains from Matthews (New York) and A. D. Puffer (Boston) were visible in the latter city during the first half of the century. Introduced when the classical style was in vogue, the urn was a popular fountain, probably because of its classical form. Like the gooseneck, the urn melded symbolism and current design, for the urn had a traditional image as a water-bearing vessel.
The urn fountain was shaped as its name implies, with a footed pedestal and gradually swelling body. From one to three draught arms or faucets were attached to the front and sides. A fitted removal lid allowed ice to be placed in the fountain. If made by a manufacturer, the firm's name was artistically inscribed on the base (Figure 3).

Urn sizes varied, but there was usually a direct relationship between ornamentation and mass. In Matthews's 1874 catalogue, a relatively plain fountain with one draught arm and modest lid finial stood twenty-four inches high and had an eighteen-inch diameter. A three-draught urn with soaring terminal statue was forty-six inches high and twenty-four inches wide. It should be noted that by the 1870s, urns were stylistically and technologically obsolete, rendering them of little value to mainstream trade. Accordingly, Matthews suggested his models were best suited "for country stores in small towns."21

The vase was made only in metal. Cheaper models were of iron painted to resemble marble, or of an unspecified hard metal. Others were bronze or silverplated. Fountains in luxury materials were richly decorated with chased moldings, sculptures, and figures in relief. Draught arms were disguised as fish or water-spewing
animals (Figure 3). Costs varied, reflecting design, size, material, and number of draught arms. In New Jersey prior to 1840, one fancy metal fountain (presumably an urn) was $60. Price included soda-water tank, connecting pipes and valves, and recipes for flavored syrups. However, urns could cost as much as $600.

Like the gooseneck, the vase was a countertop fountain. Long pipes through the urn connected draught arms to the soda-water tank below. But the urn was a more practical fountain than the gooseneck because of the radical difference in form. The vase was essentially a container. While customers thought it was brimming with soda water, it held, instead, ice that chilled the soda water in the draught arm tubes. It also housed syrup jars, although there was no means for dispensing flavorings through the fountain. The need for storage and internal refrigeration may have caused the change in fountain forms from the gooseneck to a container like the vase. It was a significant development, for succeeding fountains were containers, albeit in different forms.

There was another advantage to the vase. Unlike the gooseneck, it was not limited to one draught arm. Contemporary illustrations show that an urn generally had two or three faucets, making it better designed to serve
the growing soda water habit. Eventually, even this proved insufficient. A good business commonly operated two fountains. Where the trade flourished, there were even more. A St. Louis druggist equipped his new store with five silver urns. During that hot summer of 1860, he claimed sales of up to $200 a day. With soda water customarily at ten cents a glass, two thousand customers a day was an astounding business. Reportedly, it induced others to try this promising sideline.26

COLUMN (1840s-1870s)

Scattered reports of the column fountain in the 1840s and 1850s indicate it may not have been a universally popular form. There are few references to it in contemporary or current literature, and by the mid-1870s, it had almost disappeared from manufacturers' catalogues. Matthews offered one "new and elegant pattern," but his chief rivals, Lippincott, Tufts, and A. D. Puffer, had none.27

The column was a countertop apparatus that also borrowed its form from a classical or neo-classical element. It resembled an architectural pillar (Figure 4). To some it conjured other visual references, and was accordingly called the monument or fireplug fount.28 The latter appellation may explain why the form was not too

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well known. Its imagery as a thirst quencher may have been
inscrutable to many soda drinkers and sellers. Unlike the
gooseneck and urn, which were universally associated with
water, hydrants did not have that distinction. These
emulative fountains were seemingly more popular where
hydrants were an established means of fighting fires. In
Philadelphia, for example, hydrants were in use by the
early 1800s. Reportedly, they looked like hollowed logs
(as did the basic fireplug fount) and carried water from
the Schuykill River.29 In New York City where John
Matthews manufactured the fountain, the first working
hydrant was installed in 1808.30 However, evidence
suggests that many towns and cities did not have this fire­
fighting system at such an early date. Without this frame
of reference, the fountain's imagery would have little
impact. The modern connotation of a fireplug fount as
offering relief from the summer heat would seem
unfathomable.

The fountain had a base and cylindrical body, with
usually one draught arm at opposite sides. It was capped
with a fitted, removable lid. The Matthews Company model
was twenty-one inches high and twelve inches in diameter.
Cost during the fountain's heyday is speculative, but it
was probably expensive. For while many were silverplated
and ornamented with eye-catching motifs (Figure 5), the
column was the first apparatus actually made of marble. It marked the end of the fashionable metal fountain. Marble and other rich stones were used for succeeding fountain forms because of their beauty and durability.

The marble column proved winsome. An apprentice Philadelphia druggist dispensed his first sodas from two little marble designs made up in the shape of fire-plugs. . . . They were the finest in the city at that time, and when I bought my store in April 1846, I had the same designs made in marble at the marble yard.31

In the larger cities of Massachusetts during the early 1850s, "the really enterprising druggists of aesthetic taste" had marble fountains.32 While in Chicago, the first marble fountain "proved a wonder and a shrine at which many worshipped."33 An interesting result of this was manifested in St. Louis, where a precedent was noted that fueled the soda water industry. A pioneer recalled:

With the advent of the marble fountain people refused to patronize the urn and gooseneck, imagining that soda from them was not as good as from the marble. This education of the public has been of rapid growth, until now they feel that soda-water from a small apparatus, albeit of marble, is not as good as it is when drawn from a large and handsome one.34

Column fountains were technically superior to goosenecks and urns. By the late 1850s, pipes joining draught arms to soda-water tanks were replaced by coils of block tin, layered in ice inside the fountain.35 A colder
drink resulted. The marble covering, admired for beauty, was also an excellent refrigerator. Its density insulated the ice, trapping cold air within the fountain in a manner not possible for metal. Like the urn and gooseneck, however, there were no provisions for dispensing syrups. Soda drawn directly from fountain to glass still tended to be flat because of lost carbonation, making the bottle method of dispensing still a necessity.

BOX (1850s-1870s)

With the shapes of more elegant and picturesque fountains restricting their service function, the box seems a natural evolutionary form. Its shape, which was actually rectangular, accommodated more syrup containers. It was also a compact ice receptacle. While a believable gooseneck could have only one beak to emit soda water, and aesthetics seemingly limited the number of draught arms on curvilinear fountains, the broad side of a box permitted a number of dispensers. As a fashion, the basic form peaked in the 1860s and declined in the 1870s. Its greater significance is that the generic structure was the prototype for following forms.

Box fountains must have existed before 1859, although none appears in the literature before then. In the summer of that year, Gustavus Dows (1828-1886), a
Massachusetts drug store clerk, may have invented the first marble box apparatus. Legend has it he wanted to improve on the relatively uninteresting type of soda fountain then in use. Dows's marble box apparently made major strides, since many sources call Dows the father of the modern fountain, saying he invented the first marble apparatus. However, this seems unlikely, since there were marble column fountains more than a decade before Dows's invention. Technologically his creation rendered preceding forms obsolete by providing means for dispensing flavorings and soda water through the fountain. The white marble box had a draught arm at center front, with a row of eight syrup dispensers for the then-standard flavors. The dispensers were connected to one-gallon metal cans inside the apparatus. On the side, a hand crank shaved ice in the fountain and delivered it into a soda glass (Figure 6).

While the ice shaver contributed to making "the coldest most delicious glass of soda water that had ever been produced," it did not become a fountain staple. The marble box also had a coil pipe cooling system that contemporaries hailed as a Dows invention. Since this method was also used in column fountains of the time, and since Dows's patent excluded a cooling system, the claim is difficult to substantiate.

Dows's marble box was modest in design when
compared to existing fountain forms. Yet it did not lack style. Perched silverplated eagles, with wings poised "just ready to take flight," adorned each syrup faucet. When the eagles flapped their wings, syrups flowed.42

Dows entered the manufacturing business, retailing his fountain for $225.43 His first sale, to a Boston druggist, brought this response (1864):

I am indebted to the . . . apparatus for the immense increase in my sale of soda from $500 in 1861, to $16,000 in 1863. No doubt they will continue to increase. Customers are guaranteed a colder, richer more sparkling glass of soda water than from any other apparatus. I heartily recommend this to anyone in want of a soda fountain, it being the best ever invented.44

Sales of $16,000 meant Dows's marble box had done exceedingly well for the druggist, since soda water was only sold for a few months each year. Until late 1880, fountains were operated solely during "soda season," roughly the warm months of May to September. Apparently, other druggists and manufacturers noted this success. The rectangular marble box (without ice shaver) was soon in production at rival companies. Generally, it was twenty-four inches long, eighteen inches wide, and nineteen inches tall.45 For easier icing of the fountain, there was now a hinged top, rather than a removable lid; and it was decorated with an attached vase of flowers or statue in domed vase.
In spite of competitors, Dows had more business than he could handle. When in 1863 a Somerville, Massachusetts, pharmacist requested a fountain without delay, he was told he would just have to wait. There were many orders ahead of his, and production was limited. Impatient, James W. Tufts (1832-1902) built his own marble box and called it "The Arctic." The inference was clear: only good, cold soda flowed from a fountain of that name. So far as can be determined, Tufts began a trend that continued well into the twentieth century. All fountains were named, and names were often allusive or pleasantly suggestive. They evoked fond associations in soda-water buyers and vendors. An adroitly chosen name linked fountains to the good life. Somehow Tufts had hit upon a major marketing tactic. If asked the question: "What's in a name?" he and competitors might have answered: "A key to selling fountains and soda water."

Tufts's entry in the manufacturing business had even greater impact. Soon he introduced a model that set the mode of fountains for almost thirty years. He called his pace setter "The Cottage."

Tufts admitted that he designed and patented the cottage in 1869 because his Arctic apparatus was being
imitated and competition was keen.\textsuperscript{47} To outwit rivals, he added a pitched roof to the marble box fountain, a simple appendage changing style and character of the form (Figure 7). Building the cottage of colored marble was a further innovation, and set the tone for future fountains.

The "dog-house" or "dog kennel" (as it was affectionately, perhaps derisively, known), was a counter apparatus.\textsuperscript{48} It was larger than the box fountain, standing thirty-one inches high, twenty-four inches long, and eighteen inches wide.\textsuperscript{49} The broad side had draught arms for soda water, seltzer, and congress, a popular mineral water. Each was handsomely labeled, as were ten syrup dispensers. On the fountain's narrow side, a metal escutcheon read: "Arctic Soda Apparatus, J. W. Tufts, Boston"; for Arctic was now his patented trademark.

The novel design cost $250 and had immediate appeal.\textsuperscript{50} A Pennsylvania merchant wrote that his sales had increased nearly one hundred percent since he exchanged his old apparatus for a cottage.\textsuperscript{51} In St. Louis it was said that a druggist with a dog-house "was thought to be putting on style."\textsuperscript{52} Response was so favorable, that according to Tufts, he was induced to bring out a different version the following year. His new "French Cottage," with a vase of flowers surmounting its gambrel roof, caused a
sensation, and Tufts could hardly fill all the orders (Figure 8). By 1870, over 1500 Arctic soda-water fountains were in use.53

By this time, other manufacturers were in the lucrative cottage business. There were rustic lodges surmounted with elk heads, Uncle Tom's Cabin cottages, "designed to surprise patrons with something out of the ordinary"; and any number of interpretations of the humble bungalow. Once again, to ward off rivals, Tufts altered the fountain image, by introducing in 1871 a cottage so grandiose that it resembled a castle. His seems to have been the first in the reign of visually commanding edifices that awed the public and promoted soda water so well for almost two decades.54

Tufts's motives notwithstanding, there was a genuine need for this type of fountain, still generically called the cottage. Its immense size, accommodating up to twenty syrups and six draught arms, reflected entrenchment of the soda-water habit. Service was swifter and customer turnover greater because of the invention of the double-stream action draught tube during the 1860s.55 Soda water could now be drawn directly into a glass without losing carbonation, and the time-consuming bottle method of dispensing was eliminated. Stylistically, the fountain
made greater sales possible; for manufacturers guaranteed it would "attract attention, customer and profit to the enterprising proprietor."\textsuperscript{56}

How could it fail? Fountains embraced all architectural modes (Figure 9). There were French cathedrals, Byzantine, mediaeval, and Gothic structures. There were also Egyptian tombs, Roman ruins, and architecture created by fountain manufacturers. The latter was highly prized, for of such a fountain A. D. Puffer Company (Boston) wrote: "This apparatus makes itself conspicuous as an original . . . attractive design" (Figure 10).\textsuperscript{57}

Puffer's 1878 model, named "The Nonpareil," gives a clue to the genre. It was a combination of colorful variegated marble incised with carvings. The top was reddish-brown; the body, chocolate with white graining; the base and cornices were black, inlaid with silver. It was three feet square and five feet tall, with a statue bearing a gas jet crowning the top. Eight other bronze maidens in Grecian garb were distributed along two levels. With twelve syrup dispensers and four draught arms, the fountain cost $1,300. At that price it was somewhat of a bargain. Usually fine fountains were closer to $2,000, more than it cost to buy a small country pharmacy.\textsuperscript{58}
Venturesome druggists did not find this disproportionate, because the fountain delivered customers, as promised. Manufacturers were swamped with letters confirming this. Not only did these fountains draw customers, but a real eye-catcher stole patrons from rival stores. Pharmacist J. G. Forman of Massachusetts was one of countless others, declaring that his apparatus caused a competitor to throw up his hands in despair, moaning, "It's no use, Forman's new fountain gets all the customers this summer."59

It is interesting that soda-water consumption increased and elaborate fountains flourished during the 1870s. America was in a recession in 1873. Customarily, tight money and the sharp curtailment of spending occur before an economic slump. Yet Tufts in 1872 could not fill all his fountain orders, although he doubled production.60 In 1875, Charles Lippincott admitted that while money was still tight, demand for his goods had "largely increased."61 Fountains were obviously selling, and they were selling soda water.

During the last quarter of the century, the Philadelphia Centennial gave the business a tremendous boost. Lippincott and Tufts corned the soda-water concession and each supplied fourteen of their fanciest fountains. Along with this, the enterprising Tufts, ever the showman and
innovator, built a gargantuan soda-water apparatus over thirty feet tall (Figure 11). Crowds there were enormous and business at other fountains seldom lagged. Those needing proof that the apparatus was a money-maker now had it. During those six months of the Centennial, soda water was advertised as never before. Thousands of visitors treated to its delights returned to home towns demanding the beverage.62

WALL FOUNTAIN (1870s-1900)

There were indications during the castle fountain's extreme popularity that the fountain form was destined for another change. In the 1870s, Lippincott's and Matthews's catalogues forecasted the new direction. Models designed to be placed on a side or back wall counter were offered for merchants who wanted to free front-counter space of the expansive palace fountain. These trial fountains still clung to the castle format; they were half-castles, sawed longitudinally, with the cut edge facing the wall.63 While this arrangement freed the main service counter, it was not aesthetically pleasing, nor could it accommodate the increasing need for more soda and syrup dispensers. As a solution, around 1880, the fountain reverted to a longer, taller version of the marble box apparatus (Figure 12). By 1890, a towering superstructure in marble or wood was
added. The superstructure generally reached the ceiling, framing an expensive, large-scale mirror; but murals and sculpture were sometimes substituted. The wall fountain had reached maturity and was hailed as the most stunning apparatus to date.

The fountain installed in the Arlington Pharmacy, Washington, D.C., may indicate why. A prize winner at the Columbian Exposition where it was exhibited (Chicago, 1893), it was purchased for the considerable sum of $5,000. Above a lengthy row of soda and syrup draught arms, a superstructure of white tiles shading into green surrounded a life-sized allegorical sculpture. The sculpture, semi­circular in shape, showed people flocking to the fountain of youth. A coronal frieze of cupids and nymphs capped the massive fountain.64

These fountains were recognized as works of art. An observer wrote:

Some . . . if taken out of their natural habitat would adorn our most beautiful parks. The bronze and marble statues crowning these masterpieces . . . could find a place in some art galleries.65

Wall fountains varied in size, from a basic unit about three feet long to custom models that were store length. The latter became almost commonplace. Best known was a $13,000, forty-five foot long fountain in New York
City. Almost fifteen feet high, "the bewildering combination of mirrors, Italian marble and Mexican onyx" housed thirty syrup dispensers, from which 123 different soda water combinations were regularly mixed and served (Figure 13). During the summer of 1896, a team of six clerks made sales amounting to $400 a day. Where the druggist did a more modest trade, two standard but attractive fountains were often used, and were united with a decorative central mirror (Figure 14). The entire eye-catching structure—the architectural wall apparatus and accouterments—was generally purchased as a unit.

Because of grandeur and scale, the wall fountain promoted soda water in a manner impossible for smaller, preceding fountains. Druggists agreed that display was essential for a retail business, and the wall fountain was superior in that respect. But grandeur also brought problems. Fountains were hard to clean, since many were encased in rich woods that were not intended for soaping and scrubbing. Dripping syrup and soda-water faucets rotted the wood, carrying with it an odor druggists found impossible to eliminate and attractive to flies. While the silver trimmings and bronze sculptures were meritorious, soda clerks called them polishing nightmares.
Wall fountains were also poorly arranged for good service. Flavorings and soda-water dispensers were part of the unit, but ice cream was stored under the front counter. The length of fountains posed problems, with clerks running from end to end combining syrups for now-requisite specialty drinks. Moreover, some found the method of service rude. Drawing soda required facing the apparatus, with the clerk's back turned to customers.

Technologically, the fountain was deficient. It was still refrigerated by large blocks of ice that melted, forming pools of drainage water on the floor. Fountain operators cited this as a hazard to their health, saying wet feet, chilblains, and rheumatism resulted.67

Towards the end of the century, there was a more serious factor to consider. The nation, caught up in sanitation, became concerned about germs and uncleanliness in food preparation. Stringent legislation was passed, culminating in the National Pure Food Law in 1907. Soda-water tradesmen realized that continued success in the twentieth century mandated a cleaner, better fountain.

MODERN COUNTER FOUNTAIN (1903–)

Perhaps little could be done to improve the beauty and efficiency of the wall apparatus, for in 1903 the
fountain form had another radical change. The ornate superstructure was divorced from the apparatus, with the former remaining a decorative element on the back wall. However, the dispensing part of the fountain—ice cream containers, syrup, and soda water draught arms—were placed in the front counter. For the first time, the form was a free-standing, self-sufficient unit. It was also functional, with the ingredients for soda-water making and serving within arm's reach. After almost ninety-five years, the fountain form was now set.

The counter fountain was a hybrid of technological advances. Some were cooled by mechanical refrigeration; others used brine or improved icing systems. With one refrigeration method, soda water was drawn at a uniform temperature of 36 degrees, banning forever a tepid drink. Drip-proof plungers replaced leaky syrup faucets. A press of the knob released a measured amount of syrup that removed the guesswork from flavored drinks. It was a more hygienic apparatus, with parts that needed frequent cleansing made of washable, noncorrosive materials.

It was also a more expensive fountain. By 1910, prices ranged to $30,000. The average cost of the 120,000 fountains then in use was $2,000, more than the price of a comfortable house in a major city. Now proclaimed the
"life blood of modern drug stores," an estimated eighty percent of the nation's pharmacists gladly paid the price, for fountains stimulated other trade. On leaving the soda-water counter, customers invariably bought pills, candy, or some item needed at home. Druggists were unanimous; a business without a fountain was no business at all!

The new counter fountain was as beautiful as it was profitable. Marble, onyx, and other rich stones were still used for construction. While the basic format consisted of a counter averaging ten feet in length, and back wall resplendent in marble, mirror, and statuary (Figure 15), distinctive geometric models emerged. Fountains were built in diagonal, circular, and oval shapes. Of these, the square was probably most common; and when domed, the most visually commanding. It stood in the center of the store. A striking model in Hegeman's Pharmacy (New York, c. 1906) was forty-five feet of onyx (Figure 16). Pillars capped in bronze and 14-karat gold supported the stained-glass roof. There was a mural on the ceiling, and hanging bunches of glass grapes enclosed electric lights. This fountain and others of its type were no longer merely fountains. They were architectural masterpieces.
Conspicuous in these opulent structures and to most counter service fountains was the placement of soda-water dispensers. While the syrup plungers and other utensils were concealed in the counter, the soda-water dispenser, like the gooseneck of old, stood on the counter. Disguised as an electric lamp, it was about two feet high, and had a marble or onyx base. Draught arms projected from either side, and a globe or leaded glass shade covered the top (Figure 16). The noticeable location of these fashionable lighted lamp-draught tubes on the counter attracted attention and proclaimed: soda water sold here.

In essence, the design concept of the modern counter service apparatus was like that of the first fountain. Then, too, a soda-water draught tube stood on the front counter, with mixings for drinks often concealed below. From approximately 1808 to 1903, the fountain concept had come full circle. Subsequent years brought new decorations and improved materials and construction, but the fountain form remained constant.
When soda fountains and soda-water drinking were approaching maturation in the 1890s, a question arose regarding who was responsible for this success. Some believed manufacturers were. They stimulated demand for beautiful fountains by anticipating the need, while concomitantly selling their wares. Others gave manufacturers their due, but said druggists had brought the business from obscurity to its present level of magnitude. It was the pharmacist, in constant contact with the purchasing public, who discerned their tastes and needs. On the surface both camps were right. Proof positive may be offered with G. D. Dows and James Tufts. Both were retail druggists who noted the fountain needs of soda seller and customer, and accordingly entered the manufacturing business. This type of consumerism encouraged the taste for costly, elegant fountains. There was a need for such an apparatus; it nurtured the nation's social and aesthetic demands. It further allowed the large class of middle and lower income fountain customers to enjoy, for the price of a soda, the beauty and benefits of a prohibitively expensive object. By association with an elaborate fountain, these same customers claimed a prideful ownership of an extremely popular item. If the soda apparatus did not nourish these types of social and aesthetic needs, how could the embellished castle style fountain of the 1870s emerge and
thrive during an economic recession? Why was there a boom in the even costlier fountain of the 1890s, and a surge in soda-water drinking when the country was in a prolonged depression? To understand this is to understand nineteenth-century American values, for the fountain reflected the philosophy of the times.

Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warren coined the term "Gilded Age" in their novel of that title in 1873. It satirized the tendency toward material gain and the worshipping of ostentatious lifestyles and objects. The 1870s saw the rise of big business, the accumulation of great riches among a handful of men, and a reverence of their power. Industrialization and urbanization took root in the 1870s and '80s. These twin forces created a middle class that parroted on a more modest scale the affluent lifestyle and aesthetics of the prestigious rich. These were heady times for Americans, who were convinced that they lived in the most progressive society to date. Indeed, by the turn of the century, the nation's material wealth was "greater than all the people in the Western Continent had been able to make from the discovery [by] Columbus to the breaking out of the Civil War. . . ."75

In this period of growth and change, the fountain also grew and changed. In this Gilded Age, it fared well.
From the beginning its primary consumer group and target audience was the carriage trade, for soda water was considered a luxury item. As a fountain jobber remarked pointedly: "... soda and ice cream are in no way necessities. They are simply, but not simple luxuries." A druggist was more terse, reminding his fellow tradesmen that "people don't have to have [soda water] to live. Only the ones who can afford it buy it. The man who plugs for this class of trade gets it." Pharmacists were also aware that this type of clientele often traveled in railroad "palace cars" and expected an aesthetically pleasant atmosphere. If they had to stand and drink at sloppy counters, soda-water parlors would soon have their business.76

It may be that the fountain's tie to the up-scale consumer market helped it weather tough economic periods of the nineteenth century. An ornate apparatus signaled success, particularly in hard times. Soda sellers were cognizant of this and used it to their benefit. In 1892, prior to a prolonged depression, druggists were lectured on the "advantage of appearing well." They were reminded that only a beggar could make a living by the poverty of his looks, and he did so at the risk of evoking disgust. Appearance was an indicator of worth. Since the world had always catered to the rich and shunned the dependent, a store with an opulent air could draw and sustain trade.77
Those near the bottom of the economic ladder also swelled the ranks at the fountain, partaking of its public opulence during the lean years. For opulence was inherent to fountains that were grand in scale, materials, and artistic sculptures.

The bit of affluence that the fountain brought to the lives of those of lesser means may have also helped the apparatus to flourish. A St. Louis druggist reported that an annoying result of industrialization was noise, dust, and coal smoke. But the sight of his beautiful fountain with its shining ornaments gave customers a feeling of rest and luxury (1892). When the turn of the century brought better economic times, the fountain drew even more workers. With the average paycheck at less than $10 per week, customers paid five cents for a glass of soda water, the cost of a New York City transit fare.

The fountain had the right attributes to attract clientele with large or small incomes. As a purveyor of an affordable luxury good, it was clothed appropriately. Soda-water tradesmen recognized the public's adoration of elegance. Accordingly, they adhered to the dictum that the full enjoyment of soda water required a handsome apparatus, and vice versa. Soda vendors also knew that a food item had to satisfy the sense of sight as well as taste,
and that "all, even the poorest appreciate luxury, particularly that which [relates] to food and drink" (1903).81

The aura of luxury contributed to the fountain's success, but it had other requisites that were established in the Gilded Age. The times brought a distinct city and country aesthetic, resulting from rapid urbanization. Fountain manufacturers were aware of the differences and serviced both tastes. In the 1870s, John Matthews's firm revived urn and column fountains, saying these old-time styles were "for small country stores."82 At the same time, the catalogue featured expensive fashionable fountains, presumably for the city trade.

The apparatus was also technologically up-to-date. When gas jets first lighted America in the 1870s and '80s, contemporary fountains were similarly adorned. This fact was duly noted by admiring customers.83 By the same token, light bulbs were included in fountain design when the nation switched to electricity. The fountain may even have been a trend setter, for in 1912, while just 16 percent of the nation's homes had electricity, all stylish fountains had decorative lights.84 They were far from rudimentary, taking the form of fancy globes, hanging pendants, and imaginative lamps incorporating soda-water draught arms (Figure 16). In fact, these lighting elements
decorated the apparatus as early as 1905.85

More than anything, it was perhaps the fountain's blending of technology and art that accounted for its success. Picturesque properties attracted fascinated customers, but the concept of the fountain as a functional art object endeared it to the public. John Kasson writes in *Civilizing the Machine* (1976) that a beautiful tool epitomized American values, and that it was not perceived as a laughable, frivolous object. Instead, it reflected the ingenuity and industry that had made America great.86 Just as the work ethic was glorified, so embellished tools and machinery were given an honored status in the life of the nation.87

Americans demanded from these working art objects the same aesthetic values they sought in fine art. They expected elegance, moral purpose, and symbolism.88 The latter was inherent to the soda-water fountain almost from inception. Early apparatus forms--gooseneck, urn, fireplug--connote blatant water imagery. When the form changed, its symbolic message changed. Patriotic motifs were used. Spread eagles embellished G. D. Dows's landmark marble box in 1859; others put the star and liberty cap on syrup faucets.89 It is possible that these icons were employed to signify national unity, since there were
rumblings of secession and civil war in the air. Or they may have been simply familiar references. Patriotic emblems had festooned home furnishings and even machinery from the early 1800s.

But what of a fountain shaped like a cottage? Could it have a discernible meaning? James Tufts introduced this apparatus in 1869, during the troubled times of Reconstruction. This was also the period of what has been termed the cult of domesticity, when the home symbolized stability and unity. The home was further viewed as the inculcator of good things, the core of a good life. Were these attributes applicable to the cottage apparatus? Did not a good thing—soda water—flow from the cottage fountain, just as good things emanated from the home?

Manufacturers relied heavily on such cottage associations. They copied the architecture of dwellings that were a pleasant part of the American lifestyle. An 1860s Matthews apparatus was described as being a "duplicate back and front" of a summer bungalow. It even had "a gable top, like the roof on a summer cottage." The iconography went further. For like bungalows at fashionable spas, cottage fountains were given allusionary or lofty names. Names often referred to the fountain's cold soda (thereby heightening symbolism), since the drink
was sold primarily during the summer. Tufts started the tradition, calling his apparatus the Arctic. A. D. Puffer had a Winter King; Matthews, an Icicle and Fire-Eater.92 There were other types of allusionary names. Matthews may have stumbled onto one of the best. He called one model the Argosy, meaning merchant ship with rich cargo.93 When the turn of the century brought the sanitized modern counter service fountain, appropriate names were attached. L. A. Becker Company (Chicago) aligned its new fountain with the new epoch by calling the apparatus the Twentieth-Century. Immediately those in the trade knew that this was a thoroughly modern fountain. The firm that originally designed the counter apparatus proclaimed it as a startling innovation. Accordingly, it was christened the Innovation.94 Others capitalized on the nation's penchant for hygienic food service. As one soda seller said, "... cleanliness must not only be a feature, [it] must be featured."95 Not surprisingly, models were named the Sanitaire and Sanitation.96

Were customers aware that the modern, hygienic fountains sported appellations proclaiming their assets? In all probability, yes. If a name were not prominently displayed on an apparatus, customers may have asked, since fancy names were associated with fountains. Moreover, astute soda sellers would have imparted this information
with glee. A name reflecting the times or the latest technology was a valuable commodity, for Americans at the turn of the century lived in an era consumed with the notion of progress.

It may be argued that each fountain was distinctively named to facilitate record keeping. However, contemporaries did not believe this was true, since any series of letters or digits could serve that purpose. As further proof, a fan of fancy names cited a popular book by Herbert Spencer. The Philosophy of Style (1871) discussed the impact of certain words and their arrangement on the human psyche. Surely, said the fan, a person is devoid of a finer sense if the nomenclature of fountains fails to suggest pleasant memories. He hinted that the full enjoyment of soda water required a stimulated palate and imagination, making suggestive names a "useful adjunct to the proper indulgence in America's favorite beverage."
Figure 1. Early gooseneck fountain with flavoring and crushed fruit jars. Source: George M. Dixon, *Swan's Atmospheric Soda Fountains* (Cincinnati: G. M. Dixon, n.d.), title page.
Figure 2. Fancy gooseneck fountain, early 19th century.

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Figure 4. Basic column fountain, c. 1840s. Source: "Soda-Water in Chicago," Pharmaceutical Era, 15 June 1892, p. 409.

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Figure 8. Tufts' French Cottage fountain originally made in 1870, in the Magnolia Drug Store (Georgia, 1890s). Source: Collection of the author.
Figure 10. The "Nonpareil" Cottage fountain manufactured by A. D. Puffer Company (Boston) 1878. Source: Catalogue of Puffer's Frigid Soda & Mineral Water Apparatus (Boston, 1878), plate 5.
Figure 11. James Tufts' Centennial fountain, 1876. "Soda Fountain Business of St. Louis," Pharmaceutical Era, 1 June 1892, p. 370.
Figure 13. "Riverside" fountain in a New York pharmacy was made by the John Matthews Company. It was believed to have been the largest fountain in the world in the early 1890s. Source: "Evolution of the Soda Water Industry in New York City," Pharmaceutical Era, 13 May 1892, p. 333.
Figure 14. Double wall fountain in a Georgia pharmacy, 1890s. Source: Coca-Cola Archives, Atlanta.
Figure 16. Domed square fountain in Hedgeman's Pharmacy (New York, c. 1906). Source: "Fountain That is a Work of Art," *Soda Fountain*, May 1906, p. 21.
NOTES

CHAPTER II


4This was the size of the 1870s goosenecks. See [John Matthews], Matthews' Illustrated Catalogue and Price List No. 1 (New York: n.p., 1874), p. 40; [James Tufts], Descriptive Catalogue of James W. Tufts' Arctic Soda-Water Apparatus (Boston: n.p., 1874), p. 56.


6Humphreys, "Evolution of the Soda Fountain," p. 924.


In the above-cited 1870s catalogues of Lippincott, Matthews, and Tufts, all guarantee that their latest and most elaborate models will attract customers.


In his 1874 catalogue, Tufts announced that his new Transformation Cylinders allowed any number of goosenecks to be attached to just one soda-water tank. This seemingly was not true with early gooseneck technology. See [Tufts], *Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 55.


There is an illustration of an 1830s ice cream parlor with urn fountains in Russel Rulau, *Hard Times Tokens*, 2nd ed. (N.p: Krause Publications, 1981), p. 7. Although urns were stylistically and technologically obsolete in the 1870s, the John Matthews Company offered three in the 1874 catalogue. It was, however, suggested that the fountains were best suited for "country stores in small towns" (p. 30).


21 Matthews' Illustrated Catalogue (1874), pp. 30, 41, 44.

22 Ibid., pp. 43-44.


27 Matthews Illustrated Catalogue (1874), p. 42.


The date of Dows's invention is listed as 1859 in Barker, "History of Boston's Soda-Fountain Trade," p. 290. Palmer, History of the Soda Fountain Industry, reports that Dows began working on it in 1858 (p. 11). Others say the box was invented in 1854; see Depew, One Hundred Years, p. 471; "Development of Soda Apparatus," p. 16. The date 1854 seems implausible, since it is also believed Dows and his brother did not operate a drugstore until a year later, and Dows reportedly invented the box while working there as a clerk. See Riley, History of American Soft Drink Industry, p. 64.

Riley, History of American Soft Drink Industry, p. 64.

Barker, "History of Boston's Soda-Fountain Trade," p. 290; Depew, One Hundred Years, p. 471; "Development of Soda Apparatus," p. 16.


Apparent only fountains manufactured by Dows had the ice shaver. His patent, issued 10 December 1861, covered the ice shaver "in combination with a soda water apparatus." Since it failed to mention the marble box with internal syrup cans, rival manufacturers used the idea. See Barker, "History of Boston's Soda-Fountain Trade," p. 290.

Riley, History of American Soft Drink Industry, p. 226, note 13; Barker, "History of Boston's Soda-Fountain Trade," p. 290. Throughout his career Dows either failed to patent his inventions or let long periods of time elapse before seeking a patent. As a result he was unsuccessfully involved in many lawsuits and completely lost his fortune.

"Soda Fountains," Daily Countersign, newspaper published at Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair, St. Louis, Missouri, 30 May 1864; Depew, One Hundred Years, p. 471.


46 Barker, "History of Boston's Soda-Fountain Trade," pp. 290-92; also Depew, One Hundred Years, p. 471. Tufts gives a different version of the story, saying he only wanted to improve "the inefficient and radically impractical apparatus then in use." See Tufts Arctic Soda-Water Apparatus (1874), p. 7.

47 Depew, One Hundred Years, p. 472.


50 Ibid.

51 [Tufts], Descriptive Catalogue (1874), p. 32.


53 [Tufts], Descriptive Catalogue (1874), p. 9.

54 Ibid.

55 Dows is credited with inventing the double-action steam draught tube, and was issued a patent 25 January 1870. However, the tube was used in fountains during the 1860s. See Riley, History of American Soft Drink Industry, p. 226, note 13; [Tufts], Descriptive Catalogue (1874), p. 8.

56 [Lippincott], Soda Water Apparatus, p. 8. All manufacturers said their most elaborate models would attract customers.


60 [Tufts], Descriptive Catalogue (1874), p. 9.

61 [Lippincott], Soda Water Apparatus, p. 3.

Matthews' Illustrated Catalogue (1874); [Lippincott], Soda-Water Apparatus (1875).

"Historic Fountain in Washington Resplendent with Art Accessories," Soda Fountain, October 1909, p. 27.


Palmer, History of the Soda Fountain Industry, p. 35.

On the cost of fountains and houses, and number of drugstores with fountains, see "Ten Billion Nickels a Year for Soda Water!" *Soda Fountain*, May 1910, pp. 393-94.


"Fountain That is a Work of Art," *Soda Fountain*, May 1906, pp. 21-22.


"At the World's Fair," p. 231; also Leslie Dorsey and Janice Devine, *Fare Thee Well* (New York: Crown, 1964), verso of title page quotes the Steward's Handbook: "The eye must be feasted as well as the palate" (1889).
American Soda Fountain Company, How to Make a Soda Fountain Pav., p. 22.

Matthews Illustrated Catalogue (1874), pp. 30, 41, 42, 44.


On the use of electricity in America, see Abrams, The Burden of Progress, p. 10.

See photographs of fountains in issues of Soda Fountain from about 1905.


Ibid., p. 160.

Ibid., pp. 154, 161, 180.

"Soda Fountains," Daily Countersign (1864); Depew, One Hundred Years, p. 471.


Dorsey, Fare Thee Well, pp. 245-46.


Chester, Carbonated Beverages, p. 78.


97 "At the World's Fair," p. 231.
CHAPTER III

GOBLETS OF GOODNESS

Bright or dun day
Matters not
When a sundae
Hits the spot
Half the heaven on earth there is
Greets you in the soda's fizz
Solid comfort, tenuous dream
Spring from carbonated cream.¹

Soda water was transformed in the nineteenth century from a medicine into a delicious assortment of lip-smacking treats. Its rise as an epicurean delight was not unhampered. Naysayers and health officials proclaimed it a menace. An ever-changing selection of tasty new creations and the advent of temperance reform galvanized the popularity of soda water.

Americans loved the beverage! By 1910 it was so much a part of the nation's gustatory habit that an estimated half billion dollars was spent on fountain treats, more than double the yearly cost of maintaining the Army and Navy.² The drink's appeal was universal, crossing geographic and class lines. In New York it was said that millionaires sipped champagne while the poor guzzled beer,
but both drank soda water. Among Chicagoans, soda patrons ranged "from the highly educated and cultured to the most illiterate and debased." Boosters proclaimed soda water the favorite of man, woman, and child; the truly democratic beverage; the great American national drink.

No mystery surrounded soda water's popularity. It was an affordable luxury that was available and, above all, delectable. Just how delectable was best summed up by Will Rogers after his first ice cream soda in an Oklahoma Territory drug store: "... it's the finest thing that you ever tasted in all your life," he told a friend. "You will think that you have died and gone to heaven."

While good taste was a prime factor in soda water's appeal, the beverage was also successful because of its versatility. By the 1890s, large fountains stocked from fifty to one hundred flavored syrups, and sold about 1,000 glasses of soda water on a good day. Mixing syrups with carbonated water, ice cream, eggs, and other ingredients, the druggist created an extensive selection of offerings available only at his store. All types of egg flips, phosphates, and "goblets of goodness" were born. At Riker's, a New York City pharmacy, customers crowding the forty-five foot long fountain chose from over one hundred special drinks and sundaes. Patrons of a Philadelphia pharmacy had a similar selection, while the Economical Drug
Company in Chicago offered no less than 167 treats. Even modest drug store fountains served a larger variety of drinks than most restaurants and tearooms.

The name soda water was magical as the new century dawned. It encompassed not only carbonated beverages, but sundaes and any soda-less item served at the fountain. Indeed, something called "Hot Soda" was growing in demand. Although tradesmen readily admitted the term was deceptive --there could be no carbonation once soda water was heated --still the misnomer prevailed. Did it matter that "Hot Soda" was absolutely devoid of soda water? Or that it was actually tea, coffee, hot chocolate, and broth? Not at all. "It is not so much what you call it or in fact what it is," wrote a tradesman, "so long as the public is pleased with what you give them. . . . [Besides], the name ["Hot Soda"] satisfied the public since they secure the drink at the soda fountain" (1909).

This embracing of almost any fountain foodstuff that was generically labeled soda water showed America's love affair with the fountain and soda water. Yet the industry had its naysayers. A crusading newspaperman in a small Indiana town wrote (1905):

... more human misery has been caused by the drinking of soda fountain products than by the drinking of intoxicants or the smoking of cigarettes. Only a small portion of the race partakes of strong drink to excess or use tobacco.
in any form, while a majority of Americans . . .
guzzle the stomach destroying soda waters. 9

The writer's purpose in indicting soda water was
to fuel the fires of local citizens who wanted fountains
closed on Sundays. Across the nation, communities wrestled
with the problem of shutting fountains on Sundays under
existing Blue Laws, or passing laws banning the sale of
soda on that day. Several years later America's favorite
beverage faced another crisis. The issue of its dangers
erupted, this time with scientific backing. In an article
entitled "Why That Soda Water Tastes So Good!," the U.S.
Bureau of Chemistry stated that a number of fountain
specialties contained cocaine and caffeine, and that there
were even refreshments served at the soda counter that
actually contained morphine. "These [drinks] by reason of
their powerful stimulating properties are the favorites,"
the report concluded. 10

Newspapers spread the message. There were
menacing, habit-forming drugs in soda water. The Atlanta
Jeffersonian railed that Coca-Cola would "injure the eyes,
wreck the nerves, weaken the brain, loosen the moral
structure" (1909). 11 While the industry countered that
many reports were exaggerated allegations, fountain
managers were urged to "scrutinize" their drinks and to
"become personally satisfied of the 'innocence' of every

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mixture dispensed to the public." Soda sellers were also reminded that not all fountain concoctions were in peril; there were just certain "dope beverages" that should not be sold. "Vendors, police yourselves," admonished a trade journal, for you have "had ample warning of the state of the public mind and the growing activity of law officers in stamping out such conditions" (1909).

The beleaguered soda water of the early twentieth century had come a long way from its early nineteenth-century origins. Then soda water had been hailed for its health-giving properties. It was an unflavored, unsweetened tonic, a drug store remedy for stomach disorders and hangovers. Druggists also mixed and sold flavored syrups, for they too had medicinal value. Fruit flavors disguised the taste of castor oil; chocolate was good for nervous people; and sarsaparilla cured syphilis, acne, and "white swellings." A dash or so of syrup was originally combined with soda water probably during the early decades of the nineteenth century, and a sprightly, healthy refresher was born. The notion of mixing the two may have stemmed from the custom of drinking iced water sweetened with fruit juice. This was a favorite summertime drink. Similarly, when soda water was launched as a tasty beverage, it too was considered a summer drink. Until the late 1880s, it was sold only during the "soda
season" of May to September.

Initially, the assortment of drinks offered customers was as limited as the soda season. Until the close of the Civil War, druggists served up to six different sodas, flavored with standard syrups on the medicine shelf. Since pure fruit juice syrups spoiled rapidly and were time-consuming to make, most flavors were prepared from ethers and colored with dyes. Two nonfruit standbys, vanilla and sarsaparilla, came from extracts.16 Reportedly, the imitation flavors were close enough in aroma and taste to the real thing; and druggists maintained that their sodas were good and tickled the palate.

A wider selection of better tasting flavors came with the next decade, as soda fountain manufacturers entered the syrup-making business. Rising above competitors, the Charles Lippincott Company (Philadelphia, 1875) offered thirty genuine fruit flavors. The list also included such rare syrups as rose, mint, and eggnog.17 By the 1880s, ice cream soda and the sundae were invented.18 This joining of America's favorite dessert with soda water and new-fangled syrups galvanized the soda-drinking business. Soda sipping became a delicious pastime.

Business at fountains boomed. A soda tippler
noted:

From morn to night fall
With song delightful
And vigor spiteful
The faucets spout; 19

Crowds at popular fountains were common, and their "chorus of clinking glasses [was] musical as well as profitable to proprietors." 20

With the surge in soda-water drinking, druggists took a closer look at the beverage. It was a decided money maker and each wanted his share. Soda water was good business, but was it good enough to sustain a trade? "You cannot build up a large, profitable trade with ordinary mixtures because of keen competition," complained one druggist. Grumbled another, "People must be induced to come into your particular store. Good soda water alone is not always sufficient. . . ." 21 A trade journal further explored the problem, then issued a revolutionary statement that altered the nature of soda-water beverages (1896):

. . . successful soda-water dispensers are those who . . . have something peculiarly their own which people talk about. Druggist Blank may have lemon and vanilla flavors, and say they are the best in town, but Druggist Dash may say the same thing. But if Blank mixes his lemon and vanilla, makes a new drink and calls his "Frigid Lemon-ella," he has a distinctive advantage over his competitors. He knows the public must procure it only at his store, and by creating a demand for it, he is incidentally creating a demand for all his soda beverages. 22

Druggists who were not already engaged in this
shrewd bit of self-promotion took the bait and began mixing specialty drinks with inscrutable names. While mainstays like lemon or chocolate sodas hung on, the new concoctions captured the public's fancy. Across the nation, large drug stores advertised one hundred or more fountain treats. Still the number of beverages was endless. Each soda seller created his specialties and jealously guarded their ingredients. He gave his drinks short lives, serving them for a few months at best, then created new offerings. The ploy spurred customer anticipation and kept customers coming. Pharmacists were enthralled with their new tactic. Crowed one Baltimore dealer, "The possibilities in soda water are great . . . and interest may thus be kept alive perpetually!"

It was more than mingled flavors that made novelty drinks the sensation. A druggist could create a lip-smacking beverage, but it was the name that drew customers and clinched the sale. "Names are powerful in appealing to the fancy," explained a tradesman. Others concurred. In the 1890s, customers seemed to care more about the fantasy suggested by a drink's name than about the flavors in their glass.

Since names were the sole means of advertising drinks, the matter attracted considerable attention. Like soda fountain models, what a beverage was called "[should]
cause pleasant anticipation when read or heard by thirsty people." Not surprisingly words denoting coldness were favored, and customers sipped "Cold Waves" or "Mountain Springs." The drinks were like nothing patrons had ever experienced, mysteriously concocted and exotic to palates. Accordingly, unusual names prevailed, "for soda water," said a source, "is no ordinary thing." There were beverages called "Shirazz," even "Piff-Paff-Pouf." Names of tropical areas were appropriate, as were rare fruits and flowers. Druggists even culled mythology for erudite, euphonious terms.

The source list was inexhaustible. But there were restrictions reflecting the times. A national trade journal article discouraged the use of Chinese names because of some opposition to imported cheap coolie labor (1896). And since the writer further believed that most Americans could not pronounce Hawaii, he suggested it too should be banned. During the first decade of the twentieth century, exotic names began to lose favor. They followed the course of each new specialty drink: popular for a time, then lacking in appeal. "After awhile [customers] began to ask what these drinks with the wonderful names were made of," a New York soda clerk said, "and that was the beginning of the end . . . so far as the fad was concerned." A Philadelphia fountain manager agreed. His clerks were
barraged with questions. He added:

I could never see the wisdom of giving [soda water] names which have not the slightest application. Who would know what [it] was, seeing the name displayed over the fountain?  

Mysterious names were a fad that served a purpose. They may have been nudged from prominence by the National Pure Food Law (1907). Its focus on aspects of food service preparation might have caused customers to inquire about their inscrutably named drinks. In any event, druggists chose other tactics. Some switched to terms more reflective of ingredients, offering "Opera Chocolate" and "Charlie Chaplin" sundaes. Neighborhood pharmacists focused on home pride. Soda water named for local schools, landmarks, and events proved to be winners. In time each name was discarded. As there were trends in drinks, so there were trends in names; and names, like drinks, had short lives. Soda patrons craved novelty. A catchy, new name ensured a big demand for a beverage. A trendy term on a once-popular concoction guaranteed its resurrection. The name game was constant. About this aspect of his vocation, a druggist simply said, "To be successful, you can't stand still in the soda fountain business."

Staying abreast of the times meant druggists used every appropriate trend to promote soda water and secure more customers. The temperance movement (1830-1933)
provided an auspicious opportunity. Some form of temperance—an organized effort to induce people to abstain from alcohol—had been in existence since the eighteenth century, when public drunkenness became a public nuisance. By the early nineteenth century, alcoholism was linked to crime, poverty, ill-health, and moral degradation. Still, moderate use was the goal of scattered temperance societies and individual pledges of abstinence the major tactic. In the latter part of the century, the movement expanded and united. An aggressive, righteous element entered the campaign. The Prohibition Party, formed in 1869, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (1894), and the Anti-Saloon League (1893) garnered national political power. Total abstinence became the target, as well as government control of liquor. As the movement gained support of church organizations and leading public figures, many liquor laws were passed, culminating in federal prohibition (1919-1933).

The escalated campaign during the latter part of the nineteenth century placed druggists in a dilemma. Liquor or wine was often mixed with soda water and syrups to make some of the popular fountain drinks. Articles in trade journals debated whether it was economically or morally sound for the practice to continue. As temperance gained momentum, druggists joined the winning team. Fancy
drinks with spirits disappeared from fountains and soda water was given a clean, new image. Advertising it as "a purely temperance beverage, healthful, luscious and satisfying," pharmacists hoped to keep reformed customers and increase clientele.  

Temperance boosted the popularity of soda water, as Americans bowed to pressure or sought alternatives to strong drink. Especially noted was the increase in male customers at fountains. Undoubtedly, the ranks of women and children—the traditional soda drinkers—also swelled, as those who indulged in alcohol succumbed to moderation or abstinence. However, male patronage was directly attributed to liquor reform and to soda water as a temperance agent. Said one druggist (1907):

> Men realize they can work to better advantage . . . and feel better in every way by satisfying their thirst at the fountain [rather than] drinking beverages to be had at saloons.  

Others pointed out the economics of the situation. It was simply cheaper to drink soda water. Since it was filling and a thirst quencher, men did not overindulge as they did when drinking liquor. Soda water was also touted as a good buy. A Baltimore druggist commented: "Evidently the young man reasons that if he can pay ten cents or even fifteen cents for a mixed drink, then a dime is not too much to pay for a sundae" (1908).  

This infusion of male customers gave soda water validity. Pharmacists agreed that soda
water, "once considered as something good enough for women
and children, has come to be regarded as a man's drink"
(1910).

Soda water became a man's brew because soda
sellers deliberately introduced drinks to entice men as
temperance gained momentum. Prior to 1870, before
temperance became a reckoning force, fountain beverages
were sweet and frothy. They were the undisputed favorites
of women and children, the principal soda patrons. During
the decade of the seventies, the formidable Women's
Christian Temperance Union sprang into action. More men
were seen at fountains, requesting mineral waters. By the
time the Anti-Saloon League gained power in the 1890s,
there was a new soda-water craze. Phosphate, a tart and
pungent drink "with an attractive champagne sparkle,"
became the rage and was especially popular with men
(1892). Milwaukee, famous for its breweries, was said
to have a core of "phosphate fiends." Two druggists noted
that a certain group of men visited their stores twice
daily ordering phosphates "in startling quantities"
(1909).

Pharmacists offered other drinks to please their
new clientele. Beverages became heavier and heartier.
They bore appropriate names like "Mountain Nell" and
"Business Man's Bracer" (1896). These robust drinks,
described as nourishing and filling, earned soda water the sobriquet of liquid food (1905). With malted milk creations, and kumyss—a fermented milk beverage—a writer declared that it was now "possible to dine on soda water" (1892).

Reportedly, men did just that, especially at lunch time. High on their list of favorites were the raw egg drinks that soared to popularity in the 1890s. Egg flips, egg phosphates, and egg creams were but a few of the endless variations. It comes as no surprise that at least one druggist dubbed them his "temperance egg-noggs" (1896).

Temperance was good for the soda-water business; but soda water also aided temperance. At the turn of the century, it was estimated that 85,000 Bostonians a day patronized soda fountains during the summer. It was further believed that one out of two regular saloon goers also drank soda water at temperance bars. Had soda not been so popular, it was reasoned, alcoholic consumption by Bostonians would have been greater. From other communities came reports of soda water's effectiveness as a temperance agent. It was a pleasurable alternative to strong drink; it was a preventative as well as a cure; it was accomplishing temperance reform faster than any other agency. While giving soda water credit, other social...
observers and druggists were cautious about exaggerating its role. There were, after all, psychological and physiological reasons for drinking intoxicants that soda could not satisfy. In some towns, fountains were busiest on days when saloons were closed, indicating that soda water was a stand-in rather than replacement for liquor. Zealots, however, took a different perspective. One noted that soda water, particularly the man-pleasing concoctions, was seriously competing with strong beverages, and soda was emerging as the preferred drink. He added: "Many would undoubtedly drink beer if soda could not be had" (1896).\textsuperscript{51} Another, leaving no doubt about his choice, wrote:

\begin{quote}
Not the obfuscating wine, \\
But the soda brew be mine!\textsuperscript{52}
\end{quote}

America's passion for soda water was boundless. It withstood the frenzy over "dope beverages" and the challenges of Sunday Blue Laws. The nation's affair with the drink surmounted gustatory trends, and the concerns over soda-water ingredients caused by the National Pure Food Law. With the aid of temperance reform, the ranks of soda-water lovers swelled. They, too, joined the chorus of those who proclaimed it America's favorite drink.
NOTES

CHAPTER III


2"Ten Billion Nickels a Year for Soda Water!" Soda Fountain, May 1910, p. 393.


9"Sunday and Soda Water," Pharmaceutical Era, 6 July 1905, p. 3.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
11"Dangers of Habit-Producing Drinks," *Soda Fountain*, July 1901, p. 17. Coca-cola was created in 1886 by Atlanta druggist John Pemberton. When cocaine was removed from the beverage is uncertain. J. C. Louis and Harvey Yazijian state in *The Cola Wars* (New York: Everest House, 1980), p. 35, that the drug was removed in 1903. This seems unlikely in view of news articles printed in 1909. Sidney Cohen in *Substance Abuse Problems* (New York: Hayworth, 1981), p. 76, suggests the drug was removed after passage of the Pure Food Law in 1938.

12"Dangers of Habit-Producing Drinks," p. 17.


The first ice cream soda may have been invented by Phillip Mohr (1858), but there are other claimants. See "How Ice Cream Soda Was Invented in 1858," Soda Fountain, April 1911, p. 47; "Father of Ice Cream Soda," Soda Fountain, April 1906, p. 17 (on Fred Sanders, Detroit); "Ice Cream Soda's Birth Due to Pioneer's Happy Inspiration," Soda Fountain, February 1910, pp. 115-117 (on Robert Green, Philadelphia); "Three Principal Claimants to the Honor of Inventing the Ice Cream Soda," Soda Fountain, May 1913, p. 17-19.


"Soda-Water in Chicago," p. 413.


Ibid.


"Does Not Favor Mystic Names," Soda Fountain, September 1907, p. 25.


Soda Fountain, June 1906, p. 17 (article on Central Drug Co., Detroit).


"Home of Hot Soda in Baltimore is Mecca for Thirsty in Summer," Soda Fountain, October 1908, p. 16.

"Baltimore Druggist Discusses Quality Service," p. 596; also "Fountains as Aids to Temperance," p. 20.


"Is the Sweet Tooth Better Developed in Men Than in Women?" Soda Fountain, September 1909, p. 29.


CHAPTER IV
"VIRTUES OF THE SODA FOUNT"

But I must and will recount
Virtues of the soda fount.¹

By the turn of the twentieth century the fountain had surpassed its original function. It was still a soda-water dispensing apparatus, but it was also a site for fulfilling a social need. "Meet me at the fountain" became a popular expression as the fountain acquired overtones of a social center. Friends and families gathered to see and be seen, to drink and converse. The term drug store loafers was also heard. These were ladies who "used an ice cream soda as an excuse to rest and gossip," and men who sat around chewing and spitting tobacco during prolonged conversations.²

The drug store fountain played an integral part in other social activities, with a visit often topping off previous engagements. Fountains were besieged after theatre performances and shopping hours. Pleasant outings in a horse drawn carriage ended with a stop for soda water.

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Above all, the fountain was essential in courting and a mecca for flirtatious young ladies. A Michigan lady told her diary (1891) how she skipped choir practice to meet boys at the drug store. She listened to sweet nothings, drank "cream soda and [had] an elegant time."³ In Delaware (1907) a school principal complained that one of her teachers was a flirt who spent too much time at a certain pharmacy, although she was engaged to a very nice young man.⁴ In virtually every community when courting couples "walked out," their destination was a fountain. An observer of the ritual noted:

Here the young dandy--
Trim, spruce and bland he
Takes Miss Amanda
For whom he burns:
At counter stopping
His nickels dropping
In art of popping
A lesson learns.⁵

As a place of amusement, fellowship, and refreshment, the fountain may be called an informal everyman's club. This factor perhaps increased its appeal, for club life was important in the turn-of-the-century society. Men and women of means joined clubs befitting their status, spending hours of leisure there. Club houses with dining rooms, libraries, and game rooms offered members amiable surroundings and civilities. While the fountain lacked the social club's extended facilities, it was not short on
social amenities. There were, of course, refreshments and camaraderie. In neighborhood pharmacies, people of similar status congregated. At popular downtown fountains serving a more varied clientele, cliques staked out their territories. A Detroit soda clerk explained (1896): "They carry the [fountain] chairs to different parts of the store, arrange themselves in little groups and settle down for a pleasant chat."6

There was a feeling of belonging at fountains, similar to that of exclusive clubs. Soda clerks knew established customers by name and knew their favorite drinks. Some drug stores even kept a written list of regular patrons in the form of personalized silver soda mugs. They were displayed at the fountain, artistically stacked on counters and shelves.7

Like the dining room of a social club, decorum prevailed at the fountain. "A smile that won't come off" was observed on soda clerks. Their attire was equally pleasing. Males wore neckties and immaculate duck jackets. White shirt waists with ribbon collars were standard for women.8 Refreshments were presented in style. On the theory that "serving soda water is as much an art as serving dinner," the thinnest glasses were used.9 So were dainty china and spotless cloth napkins. A handsome soda
apparatus was requisite. It was decorated for tone and effect. Bowls and glasses were arranged on the fountain to simulate a sideboard in a pleasant dining room. Flowers and tall plants were common. During the 1890s, electric fans were installed—generally just around the fountain—to cool the area and shoo flies.

The fountain was more than a social entity. It pervaded other areas of American life. During temperance the fountain was politically important. Oklahoma candidates in the 1908 state primaries lined up constituents at soda fountains, telling them to "drink heartily." Reportedly, thousands of dollars were spent on soda water and ice cream in this prohibition state. Successful vote getters in Superior, Wisconsin, credited soda water and candy. By the same token, a defeated candidate claimed these treats had worked against him. His failure to buy votes with fountain products had cost him the election (1909). Even in areas where liquor was not prohibited, politicians were conspicuous at fountains. Officials in Philadelphia and Harrisburg professed to drink only temperance concoctions, or to take wine only on doctor's orders. Since the general thinking was that constituents preferred men who abstained, the politically astute vowed temperance allegiance and frequented soda fountains.
The fountain's impact was similarly recognized in the commercial sector. Increasingly it generated so much revenue, that druggists devoted their major energies to its operation. A Pennsylvania pharmacist reported sales in 1892 of

$760; 1893, $950; 1894, $1,150; 1895, $1,312. This year [1896] we are trying to pass the $1,500 mark and I think we shall do so, as the soda business was never better. . . .\textsuperscript{15}

Other druggists gave similar testimonies; the fountain made more money than any other department. By 1910, a trade journal proclaimed: "If all the soda water [this year] were paid for in nickels, 10,000,000 would be needed."\textsuperscript{16}

How did the figure compare with other enterprises? It was more than three times the value of automobiles produced that year by that growing industry; and sufficiently greater than the gross income of all registered American cargo vessels of over five tons engaged in inland and coastal transportation.\textsuperscript{17}

The fountain had further economic impact. It spawned jobs and income. There were manufacturers, distributors, and salespersons. Above all, at the immediate level, there was a cadre of fountain clerks. By today's standards their job may seem insignificant, that of mixing and serving soda. But during the boom years of the fountain, when tasty soda water drew customers, clerking...
was an important position. Quality soda and quality service were the fountain clerk's responsibility and it governed the financial success of a fountain. As a Cincinnati druggist said, "One must have a capable [clerk] behind the counter or his trade will go to the bow-wows." Another added: "An excellent [soda water] apparatus is an excellent advertisement, but like all advertisements, it fails unless the beverage backs it up." 

Clerking was not just a job, it was a profession. Assistants were rigorously trained, for drawing good soda was an art and not everyone could do it. At some drug stores, pharmacists worked the fountain full-time. Their knowledge of chemistry, it was said, produced better syrups and fancy mixed drinks. For others, a correspondence school offered an eighty-course program. Advertising, business, and ice cream making were studied. So were soda-water history, creative beverages, and related topics. Adherence to course principles guaranteed competent clerks, whose knowledge would "place the soda water industry upon a higher plane" (1912).

By cultural standards the fountain had already reached its apogee. As early as 1848, a philosopher deemed it a hallmark of civilization, one of the necessities for refined existence. A "pharmacie with a most
pretentious soda-water fount" was not uncommon to isolated settlements. Its presence conveyed a level of sophisticated living, and conferred status on frontier villages.23

Believing the soda water phenomenon could sweep other nations, manufacturers hawked the fountain's attributes abroad. During the 1870s, fountains were shipped to Europe, England, Australia, and China.24 By the 1890s, they appeared in South Africa, South America, and Polynesia.25

Perhaps because of close cultural ties, Americans thought the soda-water craze would conquer the British Isles. Although soda water gained acceptance, the fountain was never an unqualified success. The guarded optimism of a New York clerk hints at the situation (1896):

... they seem to like the soda pretty well
... once getting the taste of it. I should think a live druggist who would import the soda water habit into England might coin a fortune, if he did not go broke before the habit was established.26

An American correspondent concurred (1903):

... it was a slow process to arouse [the British] to the real enjoyment to be had at a fountain. They have now adopted it and seem to enjoy it, [but] they will never take up with it to the extent that American do, forming the soda habit. ...27
While the British acquired a taste for soda water, the same does not appear true of the fountain. During its infancy in America, there were glowing testimonies of its aesthetic properties, and tales of it drawing customers. Stories relating a similar British reaction appear nonexistent. In fact, one American source said (1896), "They think our fancy soda fountain the strangest thing they have ever seen."  

If the fountain held marginal appeal, it is not surprising that it never became a fundamental part of British culture. When the apparatus had been in England roughly forty years, an American journalist commented (1907): "... it is doubtful whether the soda fountain will ever [be] a popular institution in England. How unprogressive are our cousins across the Atlantic. . . ."  

Cultural habits were not the only reason the fountain fizzled. Unfavorable weather was a factor in Great Britain. There was no soda season to speak of, those three to four months of sultry summer days that had launched and sustained the American industry. Said a Boston druggist who lived for a time in London (1903): "... the conditions of climate do not awaken a thirst for cooling drinks as does summer weather in this country."  

His observation was not without merit. During a chilly
1907 season, it was reported that London druggists with fountains were discouraged; those considering fountain installations vacillated. Climatic conditions were again named the culprit. A London correspondent wrote: "It will take a good many scorching summers to remedy the harm the present inclement weather has done the fountain trade in Great Britain."³²

Such was not the case in South Africa, South America, and Australia. Extended summers were conducive to developing a fine soda-water trade. But other factors hampered the business. In Sydney, Australia, for example, fountains only operated during the six months of warm weather, then closed for the remainder of the year. By 1913 when American fountains knew no seasonal shut-down, Sydney soda customers could comb the city (so it was said) and be unable to buy a glass of soda or dish or ice cream during the off period.³³

Other practices may have been pivotal. The business acumen fueling America's industry was missing. There was no equivalent group like the American druggists who created and nurtured the business. There was instead--at least in Berlin--strong opposition from local brewers. It resulted in a ban on ice cream sodas in 1906. An American fountain journal scoffed at this action. Editors took the
Berlin authorities to task in an article headlined, "Feared Soda Would Ruin German Brewers." 34

This battle between beverage sellers was nothing new. In America, soda-water tradesmen were often at odds with the spirits industry, both wangling for customers and favorable legislation. The fountain business in Europe seemingly had no champion. British pharmacists were prejudiced against the trade. It was inappropriate for the apothecary’s decorum and interrupted its proper mission. Druggists were further disinclined to allocate resources for its development. 35 The evidence suggests that pharmacists in other nations were also unwilling purveyors of soda. For few fountains were located in drug stores. They were more common to restaurants, cafes, and confectionery stores.

There were other differences in business practices. Plain sodas and patented beverages were the mainstay of foreign markets. Fancy specialty drinks, a proven success with Americans, were seldom created. When available, their cost was greater than ale or other traditional favorites. 37 The importance of a fashionable fountain was minimized. At a time when the counter service apparatus was standard in America, an Australian complained that only wall fountains with outdated technology were sold in Sydney.
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(1913).38 Similarly, large numbers of second-hand fountains were shipped to South America and South Africa.39 New merchandise was available, but sales were often disappointing. A New York company with a special export line found that high tariffs in some countries rendered their goods prohibitive.40 Several American manufacturers opened show rooms in Great Britain. In 1907 after years of promoting the fountain, sales were still below their expectations.41

One reason for limited sales was the comparatively small number of European soda-water establishments. While fountains proliferated in America, they merely dotted the continental terrain. Mainly they were in large cities that drew tourists and Americans living abroad. Even in these areas the quantity was small. A Philadelphia druggist counted more soda fountains on a major thoroughfare in his city than he had seen on a European tour of five countries (1908).42

The druggist also commented on the quality of soda, hinting the drink was not always presented at its best. In Berlin he was served a glass of raspberry soda without ice, an unthinkable practice by American standards. At some London stores the druggist fared even worse. "What they claimed was American soda water," he fumed, "was nothing
like the real thing."

The pharmacist's statements are another clue to why there was no international soda fountain craze. A quality beverage was the cornerstone of the American trade; a drink's proper temperature played no mean part. Americans had learned that a frosty soda had more sprightly carbonation, and an enhanced flavor. Yet Australians, and apparently Germans, would not have it this way. Reportedly Australians refused to drink cold soda water, preferring it at least five to six degrees warmer than what Americans favored.43

There was, too, the all-important question of service. An Australian soda vendor on a business trip through France, Great Britain, and Canada told an American druggist (1913):

We can't cater to everybody the way you do here. I am very much impressed with the American way of serving soda. It is very much superior to those in Australia and the rest of the world.44

It was the patented soda fountain drink rather than the fountain craze that had remarkable success abroad. Coca-Cola, created by Atlanta druggist John Pemberton (1886), and its imitator Pepsi-Cola, made by North Carolinian Caleb Bradshaw (1896), eventually gained worldwide acclaim. Probably distributors of both colas built on the
experiences of those who introduced soda water internationally. With shrewd marketing tactics and product control, Coke and Pepsi reached heights unparalleled by other fountain drinks—and even the soda fountain.

Superior service, business acumen, and quality soda created the American drug store soda fountain craze. Pharmacists' desire for a profitable enterprise and a manipulation of cultural values to achieve that goal were equally important factors. The fact that there was no drug store soda fountain craze abroad suggests that it could only have happened in America. For the fountain and soda water were products of nineteenth-century American values. It was "Yankee" ingenuity that altered the state and course of a European tonic called soda water. Druggists added flavored syrups, ice cream, and other ingredients, transforming soda water into an assortment of tasty concoctions. Druggists promoted their product with an eye-catching fountain. It changed in size and style as the popularity of soda water grew. From a simple metal apparatus to a marble architectural structure, the fountain's form and elaboration mirrored American aesthetics and values.

The fountain succeeded because it followed the mandate that machinery (like fine art) should be beautiful
and should incorporate symbolism. Early soda water dispensers—the gooseneck, urn, and fire-plug—connoted water imagery in a clever, self-promotional vein. Near the middle of the century, when civil war threatened, patriotic emblems adorned the popular box-style fountains. The turbulence of Reconstruction brought fountains shaped like cottages, at a time when the home symbolized harmony and peace. By the century's end, public places had lavish architectural interiors. Theater lobbies, train stations, and other gathering sites were opulent and grand in scale. This trend towards the beautification of collective spaces has been identified by scholars of architectural history. The fountain in the drug stores fit that mode. Wall fountains stretching from ceiling to floor, and often the length of the store, were inextricably part of the new grand interiors. As the new century dawned, fountains were even more sumptuous. Some were freestanding and domed; others had striking geometric shapes. Whatever the form, the fountain was the most attractive and expensive element in the drug store.

The drug store soda fountain also succeeded because it met social needs. It welcomed a neglected clientele, children and unescorted ladies. During temperance, the fountain competed with the saloon for customers, offering a wholesome atmosphere and special drinks to attract men and
converts. This pleasant atmosphere, combined with delicious soda-water concoctions and an imposing soda dispenser, made the drug store fountain a site for social intercourse. Friends and families gathered, as did courting couples. The fountain symbolized good times. What began as a small-scale venture to boost pharmacists' profits, became a national passion. The drug store soda fountain was a uniquely American watering hole.
NOTES
CHAPTER IV


4 Letter from Edwin Kruse to Alice Dunbar-Nelson, 29 October 1907, University of Delaware Library, Dunbar Collection.


7 "Why People Drink Soda," *Pharmaceutical Era*, 19 January 1905, p. 90. Also, the author has what is believed to be a late nineteenth-century personalized soda mug.


"Politicians as Fountain Patrons," *Soda Fountain*, May 1907, p. 23.


"Ten Billion Nickels a Year for Soda Water!" pp. 395.

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"Hot Drinks in Cincinnati," *Soda Fountain*, October 1906, p. 17.


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