

ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

June 2024



Figure 1

Figure 2



Figure 3

What is your favorite drink? Whatever it is, chances are that when you take a sip of it, you don't focus on it too much. You are not thinking about how long the drink has been around, what its original purpose was, or its cultural impact. You are thinking about the flavor if you are thinking about it at all. That being said, everything has a place in history. This Hires glass root beer bottle from THPO's Collections is one such example.

Hires Root Beer was created in 1876 by pharmacist Charles Elmer Hires from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Hires first sold this drink at his pharmacy, calling it Hires Root Tea. Later, he sold his drink as root beer and developed a soda fountain syrup for it ([Patton, 2009](#)). This was not unusual at the time. Many of our favorite drinks had their start in pharmacies; for example; Coca-Cola and Pepsi ([Berger, 2019](#)). These drinks were originally sold as remedies. Hires Root Beer was once advertised to "Purify the blood" (Pendergrast, 2000). What that meant exactly is unclear. Charles Hires may have been the first person to successfully sell root beer commercially, but the drink itself did not start with him. Native populations in North America used sassafras and sarsaparilla, the central ingredients to root beer, in beverages long before Hires' enterprise ([Verberg, 2023](#)).

This glass bottle was developed long after Hires Root Beer's humble beginnings. As indicated by the maker's mark, it was manufactured in 1957 (Figure 2). Charles E. Hires would have never seen a bottle like this one, dying in 1937 ([Taplin, 2016](#)).

The maker's mark also indicates with its LGW that it was manufactured by Laurens Glass Work (Toulouse, 1971). Today, the Hires brand is owned by Dr Pepper Snapple Group, but is difficult to find anywhere except online ([Taplin, 2016](#)). On this bottle, the Hires label has long fallen off, leaving only a smooth glass surface. The word Hires can be seen on the bottom of the bottle beneath the maker's mark (Figure 2). On the surface of the bottle that was not covered by the label, there is a texture that is reminiscent of an orange peel.

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