The Coushatta Bottling Works

by Judge Paul Stephens

I doubt if many who read this item can remember the old Coushatta Bottling Works. A great many more recently have heard about it, especially since a few of the bottles have turned up in the hands of some of the local bottle collectors.

It is very probable that I would not have remembered except for a personal experience that happened long ago, that I have never forgotten.

In the summer of 1905, when I was four years old and the Japanese were at war with the Russians, a neighbor of the same age and I, with imaginations running at full speed, decided we would go to Japan to help the Japanese fight the Russians.

Our plan was a big secret because we were afraid our parents couldn't be trusted to let us go. Early one morning we left our homes over on the river, walked through old town, across the foot bridge to the railroad. There our plan was to walk up the railroad to Shreveport and catch a dray wagon to Japan. My friend said he knew a short cut through the woods, and so we crossed the railroad and started through the woods.

Fortunately for us, Edward Zoder, a local teenager, had asked us where we were going and believing we were far enough away from home, that it didn't matter, we told him. Following us through the woods he soon caught us and suggested that we might get pretty thirsty on our trip and he thought it would help a lot if we'd go with him to Mr. Jim Beaird's Bottling Works and get a soda pop before leaving on our journey. Sounded like a good idea to us, so we came with him for our soda pop. I remember I drank a cream soda. A short time thereafter we were on a dray wagon, but this time we were heading home to our worried parents. Then I remember well that my mother "neltted my legs" with a peach switch. I will never forget my first trip to the Coushatta Bottling Works.

I have been unable to get much information on this, the first manufacturing business in Coushatta. It was built, owned and operated by Mr. James F. Beaird, the father of Mrs. Nealy Beaird Townsend of Coushatta, who came here from Minden, I believe the business was started in the spring of 1904 and lasted for just a few years. Mr. Beaird made his own syrup, mixed it with the necessary carbonation, and capped it with a stopper or cap, made inside the bottle, attached to a sturdy wire with ridges, resembling a hair pin, and this pin protruded from the top of the bottle and after the bottle was filled, a foot pedal operated the contraption that pulled the pin up which had the effect of closing the bottle.

To open, the pin was pressed down by a light blow with the palm of the hand. A number of flavors were offered the customers, including Lemon, Strawberry, Orange and Cream. Some of those who worked for Mr. Beaird during this time were Dr. I.S. Huckabee, Hargrove Thornton and Rufus Lovett. It's location was in the Green Warehouse below Stephens & Company, next to Budget Furniture.