

## Why So Many Coca-Cola Starr X Openers?

By John Eblen

*The answer and history behind “why are there so many Coca-Cola STARR X stationary openers made by the Brown mfg. company found more readily than any other opener they produced?”*



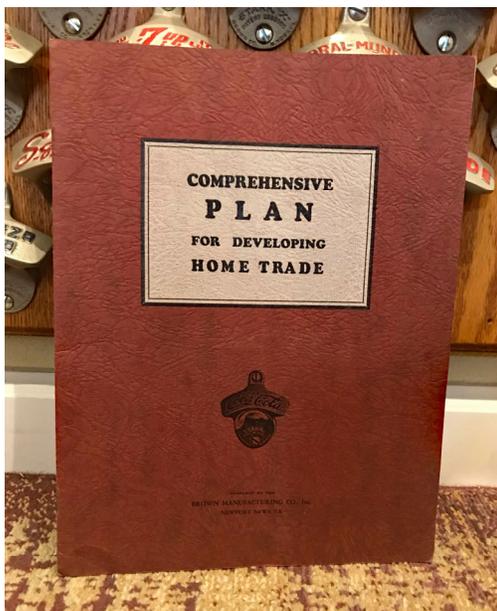
When antiquing or roaming flea markets, my wife and I jokingly rate the days success by how many STARR X Coca-Cola wall mount openers we came across during our search. If there wasn't at least one, we don't call it a very good day.

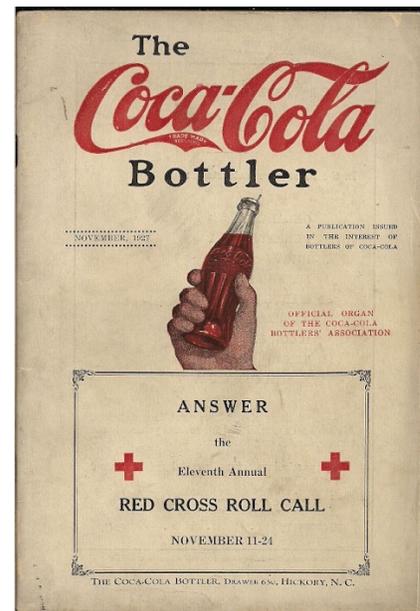
Brown mfg. company was founded and owned by Raymond Brown. He also had the nickname of being called Raymond Coca-Cola Brown. That was because he owned the Coca-Cola distributor franchise in Newport News Va. before and during the time he founded and owned Brown mfg. company.



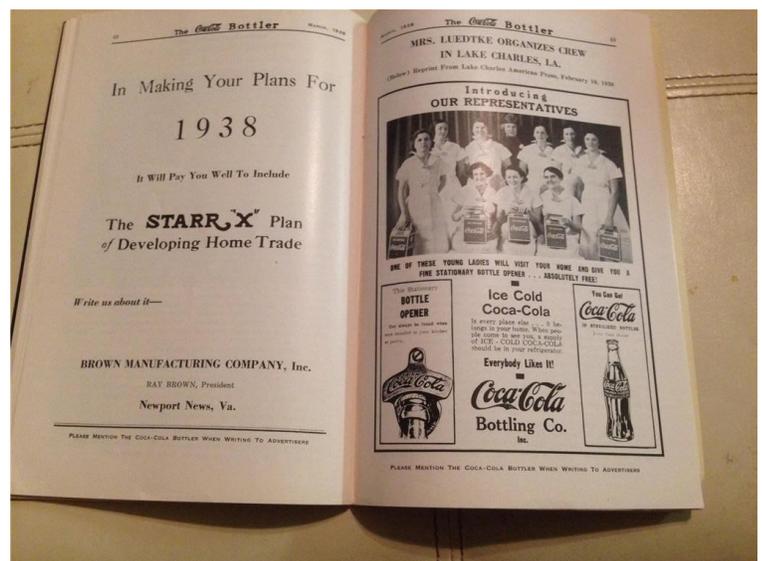
Raymond Brown

He was a very inventive individual with many ideas and knew how to market products especially bottle openers. He crafted an idea one day on how to marry his two companies to promote and increase his business at the same time. In the early 1930's Brown came up with a





strategy what he called “Developing Home Trade” and named it the STARR X PLAN. It outlined a complete comprehensive plan which focused on hitting the streets with people (mainly women) going door to door in town and outlying areas, offering to install a “free of charge” Coca-Cola Starr X stationary bottle in their homes. This gave the opportunity for the ladies, who where also the main bottle opener installers, to promote the Coca-Cola product to whoever was home. Housewives were the main target to engage with in hopes the influence of a free openers installed would encourage them into signing-up to becoming a new Coca-Cola home delivery customer. His Starr X plan was so successful in growing his business he offered it to other Coca-Cola distributors as way to increase their business output. It was received very well by the other owners and was put to use in many distributorships throughout the country. It was a win-win for Brown since he provided and sold all the Coca-Cola Starr X openers needed to supply each distributor who put his Developing Home Trade Plan to work. There are many stories printed in the early 1930’s Coca-Cola Bottler magazines telling of the success implementing Brown’s plan.





To meet this growing demand Brown ramped up his output of Coca-Cola Starr X openers from about 1931-1940. It is documented Brown could produce 20,000 openers a week and It's also documented a normal foundry casting batch total was around the 1200-1500 range at a time. Raymond Brown said by working overtime it exceeds

this production total during the busy season. I believe this 20,000 total was for his entire bottle opener catalog of styles, including advertised soda /beer bottle openers, he offered. Still a large number of them were Coca-Cola Starr X openers to support the Developing Home trade marketing idea. The overall success of his single brilliant idea more than likely boosted his profits and at the same time put thousands of Coca-Cola openers everywhere with the Brown mfg. company name. I think his



plan went a bit further and immortalize the Brown mfg. company, Newport News, Va. Name as being "The Go To Opener" and capitalized on the growing overall stationary bottle opener market which exploded during the end of prohibition and pre and post WWII war years. Just about every middle aged and older person today grew up using one in their lifetime at one time or another. They became a standard everyday house-



hold item to have placed everywhere that was necessary to open a bottle. Raymond Brown's simple but effective idea created a great marriage for success.

Now you have some background on the man himself including a little history about the Brown mfg. company and its Coca-Cola connection both located in Newport News Virginia back in the early days. I hope I've also expanded your knowledge and understanding on why the Starr X Coca-Cola bottle openers are so prevalent.

Remember, when you're out looking for bottle openers and you can't find a least one Coca-Cola wall opener, it's going to be a real slow day. *Happy Hunting!*