

Just Add Water: How Early Advertising Shaped Cocoa Powder Diversity at Apex, Arizona

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Abstract

Anthropology

Apex, Arizona was a company lumbering town that was in operation between 1928 and 1936. The population of Apex mainly consisted of working men and their families. While some brands found at Apex, such as Calumet Baking Powder, seem to have a complete monopoly at the site, there were multiple brands of powdered cocoa drink found, including Walter Baker, Hershey's, and Ovaltine. Due to the high quantities of these brands found at the site it is likely that all three were sold at the company store. An explanation for the large variety in cocoa based products is due to the marketing strategies of the companies at the time.

Advertisements in the 1920s

The 1920s was a boundary pushing decade and is often considered the "Golden Age" of advertising. Companies began to stray away from mass marketing and began focusing on specific demographics (Socolof, 2023). This was mainly due to new industrial advances in both packaging and distribution techniques.

Companies were now able to mass produce products while also being able to safely and quickly transport them to a larger area and consumer base (Annalect, 2015). Consequently, this resulted in multiple brands trying to sell similar products to the same consumer bases. Companies needed to separate their products from their competitors to ensure their product was being sold. Advertising shifted from just simply introducing products to consumers to convincing them that they needed to purchase their product or that theirs was superior to the competitor. Many companies did this by market segmentation, targeting specific demographics as opposed to mass marketing. This was often done by advertising in newspaper and magazines that already targeted the specific demographics (Socolof, 2023).

Many new advertising techniques emerged during this time, most notably the use of color, illustrations, and vivid storytelling (Socolof, 2023). By creating engaging narratives and characters, consumers would have a positive association with the brand and, when faced with multiple choices in the store, would be more likely to choose that product over similar ones. These strategies are still used today and are still effective, with 71% of consumers choosing name brand beverages over generic brands according to a 2023 study by Purdue University (Koppes, 2023).

Cocoa Powder Distribution at Apex

At Apex, Arizona a total of 20 cocoa powder cans and lids have been found. Ten (50%) of the artifacts were Hershey's brand. Six (30%) were Ovaltine. The remaining four (20%) were Walter Baker (Figure 1). Majority of the artifacts were solitary lids with the remaining artifacts being full cans with lids attached. This is due to the fact that the labeling on the cans themselves would have been paper and would have disintegrated leaving the cans themselves unidentifiable. There were no variation of can types or styles found within the respective brands.

In total, half (10/20) of the cocoa products were found in Loci J and V, both houses that belonged to prominent Scandinavian Laborer families (Maddock, 2024). The Hershey's artifacts were most commonly found near the Matson House (Locus V) with a total of four (40%) found in that area. Half (2/4) of the Walter Baker artifacts were found near Erikson's house and garage (Locus J). A third (2/6) of Ovaltine artifacts were also found near the Erikson house (Locus J) with another third (2/6) found near the Matson house (Locus V). The remaining Hershey's artifacts were found in loci U, E, S, R, G, and A. The other two Walter Baker artifacts were found in loci C and S. The remaining Ovaltine artifacts were found in loci S and G.

Methods

First a comprehensive search of the Access databases from the past three years of fieldwork was conducted to identify all cocoa powder artifacts that were found at the site.

Then, a literature search was conducted via Google and Google Scholar to locate sources pertaining to the history of the three brands and the history of advertisements in the 1920s.

Finally, Google was used to precure advertisements from Hershey's, Walter Baker, and Ovaltine that dated between 1910 and 1936. Majority of the advertisements were found on pinterest and etsy. All of the advertisements that were found were then analyzed to find common advertising strategies within each brand.

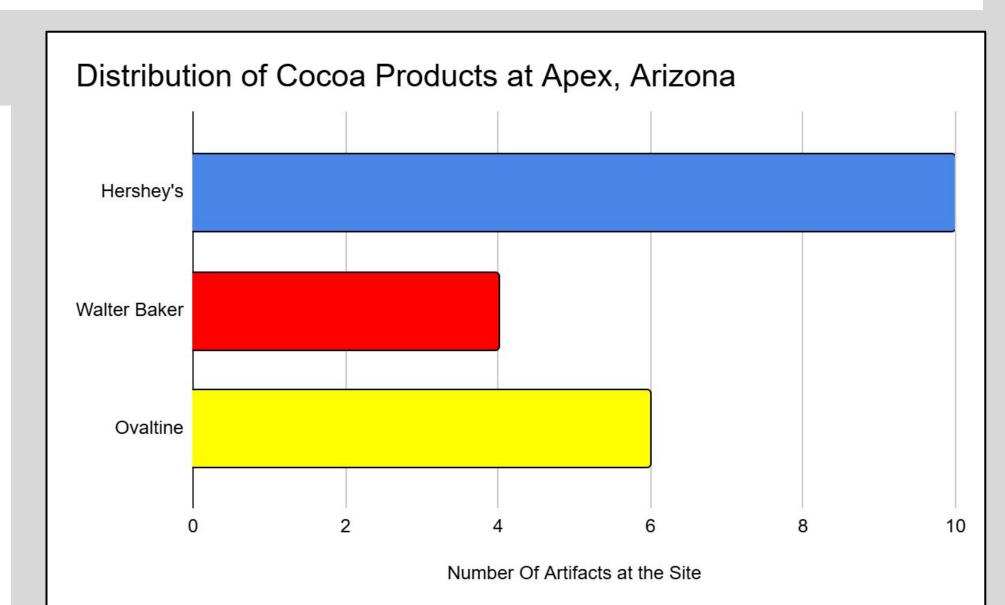


Figure 1: Hershey's makes up 50% of the cocoa artifacts found at the site (10/20), Ovaltine makes up 30% of the artifacts (6/20), and Walter Baker makes up the remaining 20% (4/20).

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Photos of Apex artifacts were taken by Apex, Arizona Archaeology Project personnel

Hershey's advertisement: https://www.pinterest.com/pin/113997434310393885/ Walter Baker advertisement: https://itoldya420.getarchive.net/amp/media/bakerscocoa-b2462d

Ovaltine sleep advertisement: https://www.pinterest.com/pin/ovaltine-1936--262194009543029717/

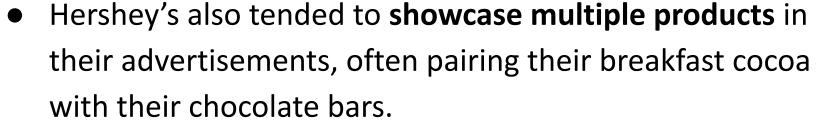
Ovaltine colds advertisement: https://www.reddit.com/r/vintageads/comments/whv32n/advertisement_for_ovaltine_c_1920

Hershey's

The Cocoa Products

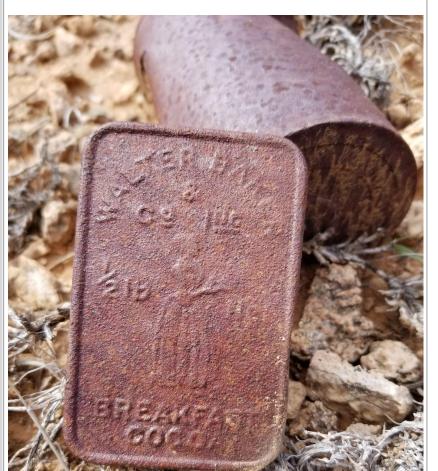
Advertisement Strategies

 Hershey's advertisements from this time period were characterized by their use of children.



- Figure 2 was originally used as an individual advertisement before the image was adapted for the cover of a cookbook in 1934 (Frederick, 1934).
- Hershey's directly addressed their competitors in a 1929 ad stating, "Look for the word "Breakfast" on the label. Cocoa not labelled 'breakfast' is inferior to real breakfast cocoa." (Hershey's, 1929).





 Walter Baker's cocoa powder advertisements during this time period consisted of people wearing clothing associated with the upper class, and doing upper class activities such as

- These ads were known for their use of the mascot, "La Belle Chocolatiere", or "the chocolate girl". "La Belle Chocolatiere" was originally painted in 1744 by Swiss artist Jean-Etienne Liotard and depicts a **maid** holding a tray with a cup of hot cocoa and a cup of water. Walter Baker adopt "La Belle Chocolatiere" as their mascot in 1881 (Curator's Choice,
- Their advertisements also often highlighted the health benefits of their products (figure 3). Although, not to the extent that Ovaltine did.

Ovaltine



 Ovaltine had the most diverse advertisements over the three brands with their advertisements falling into two main categories: health benefits when made hot, and as a recreational summer drink when prepared cold.

- The main characters in Ovaltine advertisements also tended to be **younger women.**
- Ovaltine was originally created by a pharmacist as "a nourishing elixir for the healthy and the ailing, for young and old, for athletes and couch potatoes" (Heim, 2019). This is shown in many of their advertisements (figure 4).
- Unlike Hershey's and Walter Baker advertisements, Ovaltine advertised their cocoa as a cold beverage, not only a hot one. These advertisements mainly consisted of a young woman enjoying the beverage outdoors, as seen in figure 5.



Figure 3: Walter Baker's Cocoa

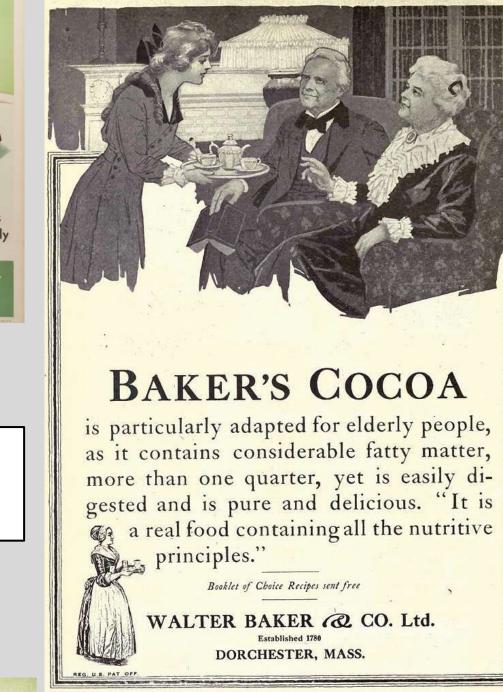
issue of Overland Monthly

Advertisement found in the January 1919

Hershey's Baking and Drinking Chocolate (circa 1920s)

Figure 2: An advertisement promoting

both Hershey's Breakfast Cocoa and



IF YOU CAN'T

Figure 4: An advertisement promoting Ovaltine as a remedy for insomnia (circa 1936)



Figure 5: An advertisement promotion Ovaltine Cold (circa 1920s)

Conclusions

The reason that Hershey's, Walter Baker, and Ovaltine cocoa products are all found at Apex is due to the fact that all of the brands marketed their products to different demographics—men, women, children, upper management and common laborers.

- Hershey's mainly advertised their product as a drink for children and often advertised multiple products together.
- Walter Baker advertised to the wealthier population and heavily used their mascot, "La Belle Chocolatiere".
- Ovaltine advertised their products mainly by highlighting the health benefits and the fact that it was also good cold, something that was not advertised by either Walter Baker or Hershey's.
- Demographics in the ads were largely white, as was majority of the population of Apex.

Fieldwork at Apex has not been completed and that this data is based off of the first three years of data collected from the Apex, Arizona Archaeological field school. There are still two more years of fieldwork left to complete at the site and it is highly likely that more cocoa products will be found. Also, it is not known where the company store was located or for certain what was regularly stocked at said store. My research provides a foundation to help interpret future finds at the site.

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