

## Nothing does it like 7-UP in Bella Vista!

Those who have been residing in Bella Vista for more than 8 years may remember the 7-UP bottling plant building, which was located between the 800 blocks of Carpenter and Montrose Streets. Before it was razed and re-purposed into 25 townhouses in 2013, the plant was a humble example of South Philadelphia's 20th-century vernacular architecture, and a symbol of its Italian entrepreneurial heritage. (1)

7-UP was created in St. Louis, MO, by the Howdy Corp. Finding incredible success with the Howdy Orange drink, Charles Leiper Grigg, the corporation's founder, started experimenting with lemons and limes and, in 1929, believed he'd concocted the great "Uncola." By 1936, the citrus soda had done so well that Grigg changed the name of the company to The Seven-Up Co. After WWII, his tonic had become the third-most successfully selling soft drink in the world. (2)

To market and distribute the emerging soda product, Anthony Imbesi founded the 7-Up Bottling Company in Philadelphia in the 1930s. The extended Imbesi family would become nearly synonymous with the soft beverage industry in the mid-Atlantic region, owning plants in Camden, Wilmington, Baltimore and Salisbury, MD. (1)

When Anthony's son John took over 7-UP Philadelphia, the company had moved its operations to Conshohocken and in 1995, it was acquired by locally based Beverage Enterprises.

A fun fact: 7-UP hired Disney to create the *Fresh-Up Freddie* character.



**Fresh-Up Freddie.** Character created by Disney as an advertising spokesman for 7-UP in 1957. He was voiced by Paul Frees. He was eventually replaced by another 7-UP mascot named Spot. (4)

The closest the South Philly 7-UP facility came to historic recognition was a 1995 nomination to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission to erect a marker outside the plant. The nomination, submitted by historian Celeste Anne Morello, was rejected because the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission "doesn't endorse products," as Morello reported to the *Philadelphia Daily News* at the time. (1) Celeste Anne Morello is best known for her written account of the Philadelphia mafia. (3)

Before the 7-UP plant, in the 1880s, there had been a small Weiss beer brewery for about seven years. It ceased to be a brewery and was possibly used because of its bottling facility.

In 2013, the developer US Construction turned the dilapidated lots at 816 Carpenter St. into 25 townhomes. The project united a few vacant industrial spaces that included the 7UP plant and was named Mildred Court. In 2011, US Construction had built a slew of houses across the street in an empty lot that was once the home of Our Lady of Good Counsel Roman Catholic Church, erected to accommodate a growing Italian immigrant population. The church was closed in 1937, partly due to declining parish enrollment, despite a long dispute with the Archdiocese's largely Irish-American leadership. It was demolished soon after. (1)



Photo: Peter Woodall



Former 7-UP Bottling Plant at 816 Carpenter St.  
Photo: Google Maps

## References

- (1) <https://hiddencityphila.org/2013/11/former-7-up-bottling-plant-on-its-way-down-25-townhouses-coming-up/>
- (2) <https://southphillyreview.com/2014/01/09/7up-plant-goes-down/>
- (3) Celeste Anne Morello. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celeste\\_Anne\\_Morello](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celeste_Anne_Morello)
- (4) Fresh-Up Freddie. [https://disney.fandom.com/wiki/Fresh-Up\\_Freddie](https://disney.fandom.com/wiki/Fresh-Up_Freddie)

If you are familiar with the history of a Bella Vista building (still in use or demolished) and would like to contribute a short article to our newsletter, please contact Marie Germain at [mgermain99@hotmail.com](mailto:mgermain99@hotmail.com).