

[Bradham, Caleb Davis](#) [1]

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## Bradham, Caleb Davis

by Elizabeth H. Copeland, 1979

**27 May 1867-19 Feb. 1934**



[2]Caleb Davis Bradham, founder of [Pepsi-Cola](#) [3], pharmacist, and Shriner, was born at Chinquapin, [Duplin County](#) [4], the son of George Washington and Julia McCann Bradham. He was of English and Scotch-Irish descent, and his American background included a great-great-great grandfather, John McCann, who was an officer in George Washington's army. He attended several North Carolina academies before entering [The University of North Carolina](#) [5] in 1886. After three years he left to study medicine at the University of Maryland. Before he finished his funds gave out, and he returned home to teach in the Vance Academy in New Bern, a private school run by Appleton and Augusta Oaksmith.

Bradham continued to be interested in medicine, and after two years he went back to Maryland and



entered the College of Pharmacy. Upon completion of those studies, he purchased a New Bern drug store and established "Bradham's Pharmacy," where the Pepsi-Cola story began. It was his pleasure to concoct soft drinks for the friends always gathered around his soda fountain. With his medical background and his knowledge of compounding prescriptions, it was natural for him to experiment with new flavor combinations. In the late 1890s he produced a beverage of his own creation and began offering it at his fountain. It was successful immediately and his friends promptly named it "Brad's drink." In 1898, however, for reasons no one knows, young Bradham changed the name to "Pepsi-Cola."

In 1902, the year he married Sarah Charity Credle of New Bern, he turned his drug store over to an assistant in order that he might devote all his time to developing Pepsi-Cola into a full business. His application to register "Pepsi-Cola" as his trademark was filed 23 Sept. 1902 and is the earliest dated document in the history of the company. The U.S. Patent Office accepted the mark and registered it on 16 June 1903. In April of the same year the trademark was registered in the Office of the Secretary of State of North Carolina.

Bradham formed the first Pepsi-Cola Company in December 1902, and it became a corporation under the laws of North Carolina. It began in the back room of the drug store and was an immediate local success. He mixed his syrup, packaged it, and went out to build sales. He was a popular man and a superb salesman, and it was not long before his drink became a nationally known product. He franchised other territories in rapid succession until, by the end of 1910, there were at least three hundred bottlers spread over twenty-four states. He continued to prosper until after [World War I](#) [6]; then, despite a hard fight, the rise and fall of the sugar market caused his twenty-year-old company to fail. At this time, the technology of bottling had not been perfected, and Bradham knew little of [advertising](#) [7] and marketing. It was said that "he had a modern business in the wrong decades; he was a third of a century ahead of his time."

