

**Historical Hobbies  
for the Pharmacist**

# Historical Hobbies for the Pharmacist

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editors

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## Introduction

This booklet contains the proceedings of a 1993 symposium in Dallas, Texas, sponsored by the American Institute of the History of Pharmacy. The session was organized and chaired by George Griffenhagen. This was the second symposium on the subject; the first was held in 1973 and led to the publication of the first edition of *Historical Hobbies* in 1974.

This wholly revised book covers some of the same areas most interesting to pharmacist-hobbyists: stamps, ephemera, artifacts, antiques, and books. It begins with an essay by the award-winning historian, James Harvey Young, who comments on his long avocation as a collector of pharmaco-historical items. According to Young, pharmacy collectibles "can quicken the heart with the thrill of the chase and can inform the brain, adding new dimensions of knowledge and perspective." We are sure that this book will be a fine starting point for anyone interested in pursuing the broad spectrum of pharmacy's historical hobbies.

*Gregory J. Higby*  
*Elaine C. Stroud*

## CHAPTER ONE

# One Collector's Experience: A Case History

by James Harvey Young

**A**s a historian concerned with food and drug regulation and with health quackery in America, I share some of the zeal of pharmacists who collect ephemera related to drugs. Moreover, ephemera constitute for me a significant segment of source material for the history I write. Let me rely on my experience since 1937 to suggest six categories of pharmaceutical ephemera and comment on how I have acquired what I have collected. My collecting as well as my history, let me say with gratitude, have been greatly aided, through most of this span of years, by the always ready and cordial counsel of that consummate collector, the epicure of ephemera, William H. Helfand.

First, then, among categories, patent medicine containers. The bottles and boxes, often with wrappers or packaged pamphlets, make both a colorful and an informative nucleus for a collection. My first major find came in a drugstore of ancient lineage that had just closed in the 1950s in the town of Virden, Illinois. The nostrums I acquired weighted down the trunk of our car as the family drove home to Georgia. Besides national brands, there were neighborhood proprietaries, like Richmond's Celebrated Nervine made in Tuscola and allegedly used in the leading lunatic asylums in the land. The second large accretion came from a friend of mine who was a pharmaceutical company detailman. His territory was the

Catskills. He eagerly made my cause his own and sent me boxes of loot gathered as he made his mountainous rounds. Other friends, learning of my interest, added items to my collection. When it came time to design my book on American patent medicines prior to regulation, entitled *The Toadstool Millionaires*, I had a row of bottles photographed for use on the book's endpapers (figure 1.1). Of course, I continued to collect. After George Griffenhagen and I had written our article on the old English patent medicines in America, republished in 1992 in *Pharmacy in History* after a third of a century, George gave me a Turlington's Balsam vial. L. E. Bush, Jr., a correspondent of mine who became physician in our embassy in Saigon during the Vietnam War searched out proprietaries in the city's shops and mailed them to me just before Saigon fell into enemy hands. Based on my experience, my advice is: Collectors, tell your friends about your hobby. The rich dividends may surprise you. Occasionally I have bought a bottle at an antique show, for example, an Atlanta-made gonorrhea cure, Palmer's Hole in the Wall (figure 1.2). In Hadacol's heyday, I purchased a bottle at a drugstore to get the box top that would admit me to the Atlanta performance of Dudley LeBlanc's mammoth re-creation of the old-time medicine show (figure 1.3). The night I went, the emcee was Jack Dempsey, and Hank Williams—who currently is appearing on a postage stamp—and Minnie Pearl helped sing the Hadacol theme song, "What Put the Pep into Grandma." Almost all of my collection of patent medicine bottles, I should say, was gathered up by



Figure 1.1.



**Figure 1.2.**

Michael Harris, when the American Institute of the History of Pharmacy met in Atlanta, and personally carried up to the Smithsonian.

Second to the tangible medicine containers themselves come promotional materials for them, a sprawling category of great fascination because it was patent medicine proprietors who pioneered the psychology of advertising, blazing trails that all hard-sell marketers were eventually to follow. Some lithographic posters were true works of art. In a print shop in New York, I found a multi-colored lithograph of a Civil War Zouave promoting Radway's Ready Relief. Critics of quackery also resorted to prints. I bought an eighteenth-century English etching that takes shrewd and satirical aim at the rich variety of then current charlatans. And Bill Helfand gave me for my collection a copy of the famous James Gillray print that pillories the late eighteenth-century American import into Britain, Elisha Perkins's metallic tractors.

Chromolithography brought smaller trade cards by the millions, examples of which may still be purchased at flea markets where I got most of mine. Through time, trade cards exhibit many moods and modes of grabbing the observer's attention. Columbus approaches the American shore and finds that Ayer's Sarsaparilla has beat him to the new land. Ayer can also appropriate the sentimental family atmosphere of the Victorian era. Lydia E. Pinkham links her Vegetable Compound for women to the nation's greatest technological achievement of the late nineteenth century, the Brooklyn bridge (figure 1.4). More accurately, one of Lydia's sons comes down from Massachusetts to open up the New York market and seeks to get a real sign hung from the true bridge but finds the cost prohibitive, so he issues a trade card instead.



**COMING!**

SENATOR L. ...  
SENSATIONAL NEW

**HADACOL  
CARAVAN  
SHOW**

presenting

**86** FAMOUS FEATURED  
**STARS**

in over **14** SCINTILLATING  
**ACTS!**

**BOX TOP ADMISSION:**  
**1** FOR CHILDREN | **2** FOR ADULTS

DAZZLING FIREWORKS DISPLAY  
GIANT PARADING TRUCKS

SPECIAL PRIZES FOR CHILDREN  
who turn in greatest number  
of box tops in each show city!

<b>1<sup>ST</sup> PRIZE</b> UNITED FORT	<b>2<sup>ND</sup> PRIZE</b> BICYCLE	<b>3<sup>RD</sup> PRIZE</b> TOY CAR
--	--	--

Figure 1.3.

Earlier, patent medicine promoters began to issue almanacs, a form of advertising that remained all through the year and rivaled the Bible in prevalence as reading matter in American homes. I was given a sizable collection by a recently retired antiquarian book dealer whom I had patronized. On another occasion, in Pittsburgh

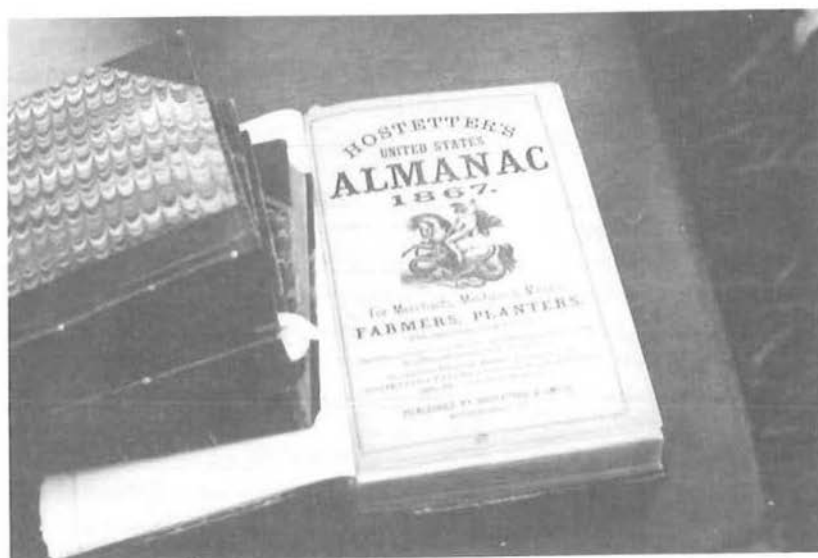


**THE GREAT EAST RIVER SUSPENSION BRIDGE.**

CONNECTING THE CITIES OF NEW YORK & BROOKLYN.

*The Bridge crosses the river by a single span of 1595 ft. suspended by four cables 15 inches in diameter. The approach on the New York side is 270 ft. the approach on the Brooklyn side is 180 ft. Total length 2885 ft. from high water to roadway 120 ft. from roadway to top 157 ft. From high water to centre of span, 135 ft. Width of bridge 33 ft. Total height of towers 272 ft.*

**Figure 1.4.**



**Figure 1.5.**

in the 1950s, I was given several bound volumes of Hostetter almanacs from the company's own archives (figure 1.5). The successor entrepreneurs who were trying to revive public interest in this famous eighty-proof Bitters hoped that what I might write would help their commercial mission. This did not happen. The 1886 almanac was published in nine languages: German, French, Welsh, Norwegian, Swedish, Dutch, Bohemian, Spanish, and English, with a separate English edition for California.

I am still seeking stereopticon slides that depict drugs. I have a small collection relating to the growing, harvesting, and processing of foods, but drugs seem not to have made it into this early form of three-D illustration.

Clipped advertisements from newspapers and magazines come, of course, within the promotional category. From the *Ladies' Home Journal* for 1924, I took a pitch for Listerine, whose makers had forsaken curing the dread diseases to concentrate on curbing halitosis. Beneath the picture of a distraught young woman was lettered out one of the famous advertising slogans of all time: "Often a bridesmaid but never a bride." And to return to Hadacol, I cut from the *Atlanta Journal* during 1950 an advertisement in which promoter Dudley LeBlanc brazenly paired himself with Abraham Lincoln (figure 1.6).

Pamphlets and books about drugs are a third category, a wide-ranging one indeed, spanning the boundary between ephemeral and more lasting documents. William Swaim, in the early nineteenth century, had been a bookbinder before becoming a patent medicine proprietor, so his treatise promoting Swaim's Panacea was a bound volume (figure 1.7). Criticisms of Swaim and his Panacea were launched by medical societies in Philadelphia and New York in pamphlets that remained unbound. All these publications I acquired in second-hand bookstores in New York.

I have a shelf of books assembled through the years that together provide a sort of index to proprietary medicines, containing brief material, mostly critical, about them. The works include an edition of Charles Oleson's *Secret Nostrums* formula book, the three American Medical Association *Nostrums and Quackery* volumes, two similar books published by the British Medical Association, John Phillips Street's *The Composition of Certain Patent and Proprietary Medicines*, several editions of the American Pharmaceutical Association's *Handbook of Non-Prescription Drugs*, and George Griffenhagen's indispensable assemblage of Henry Holcombe's articles from philatelic journals about the history of firms that issued pri-



*"It is true that you may fool all of the people some of the time; you can even fool some of the people all of the time; but you can't fool all of the people all of the time."*

*"You were right, Mr. Lincoln,"*

says Senator  
Dudley J. LeBlanc



20,000,000 bottles of HADACOL have been made and sold thus far in 1950. This is a record for any product but it is even more unusual when you consider that HADACOL is advertised in only 22 states.

Advertising has sold the first bottle of HADACOL to many folks; HADACOL is a very meritorious product and the results it has obtained have made possible the sale of these 20,000,000 bottles in 10 months.

Faith has been an important factor in the development of HADACOL — faith made possible its creation and the faith the American people have placed in my product has been responsible for its growth. I pledge to the American people that the faith they have placed in HADACOL will never be violated.



Truthfully,

DUDLEY J. LeBLANC, President  
THE LeBLANC CORPORATION

# HADACOL

© 1950, The LeBlanc Corporation

Figure 1.6.

A TREATISE  
ON  
**SWAIM'S PANACEA;**  
BEING  
A RECENT DISCOVERY  
FOR THE CURE OF  
**SCROFULA OR KING'S EVIL,**  
**Mercurial Disease,**  
DEEP-SEATED SYPHILIS, RHEUMATISM,  
AND  
**ALL DISORDERS**  
*Arising from a contaminated or impure state of the Blood.*  
WITH  
CASES ILLUSTRATING ITS SUCCESS.

---

PHILADELPHIA :

Clark & Raser, Printers, No. 33, Carter's Alley.

1824.

Figure 1.7.

vate die proprietary medicine stamps in Civil War and Spanish-American War days. I turn to these sources frequently in trying to answer letters or phone calls asking for information about specific proprietary medicine brands.

The range of books, old and new, from fiction to monographs, with some relevance to drugs, or quackery more broadly, or other aspects of food, drug, device, and cosmetic regulation, goes beyond the purse of the most affluent collector to acquire. Through visits to antique bookstores and perusal of dealer's catalogs, I have gotten my share and have much enjoyed doing it. These include Samuel Thomson's *New Guide to Health, or Botanic Family Physician*, S. Weir Mitchell's fictional *Autobiography of a Quack*, H. G. Wells's novel *Tono-Bungay* about a rascally nostrum promoter, and Grete de Francesco's *The Power of the Charlatan* in English translation and in the original Swiss edition. Indeed, my book cases overfloweth.

A fourth category of collectibles for pharmacists is business papers, including old prescriptions, like those David Cowen and his collaborators have subjected to computer analysis to see if therapeutic practice in the mid-nineteenth century conformed to contemporary medical theory. My foray into this field consists of the purchase from a dealer in the mid-fifties of a small collection of nineteenth-century correspondence that came from Birchall and Owen, an Illinois drugstore. In 1985 an article based on this material was published in *Pharmacy in History* as "The Marketing of Patent Medicines in Lincoln's Springfield." Abraham Lincoln bought ledgers for his law office from Birchall and Owen but apparently not drugs. From another druggist, Charles Coreau, who was Lincoln's next-door neighbor, I discovered on a recent visit to Springfield, the future president purchased castor oil and cough candy. This pathway deserves further exploration.

A second small collection of business papers was given me by the man, a friend of mine, charged with disposing of the archives of an Atlanta drugstore chain when it went out of business. The documents consist mainly of Patent Office forms from the turn of the century signifying that various proprietary medicine labels devised by chain officials had been duly registered. This proprietor, Joseph Jacobs, was one of the "Three Atlanta Pharmacists" I profiled in 1989 in *Pharmacy in History*.

Regulatory materials relating to drugs constitute a fifth collecting category. Many public documents like the hearings and reports of congressional committees can be secured by purchase from

the Superintendent of Documents or without cost by request from one's senator or representative. Among those I acquired was the multivolume set of hearings conducted by Senator Estes Kefauver prior to enactment of the 1962 amendments to food and drug law that contained the proof-of-efficacy provision regarding the release of new drugs. When I began research, the Food and Drug Administration records officer gave me indexes to the first 20,000 Notices of Judgment published at the conclusion of cases brought under the 1906 Food and Drugs Act. The indexes are a most useful part of my reference shelf earlier mentioned. That records officer, John McCann, also gave me two volumes of guides to the decimal index system by which the Bureau of Chemistry, later FDA, began about 1920 to file its miscellaneous records. Case jackets and the records of dealing with companies that are regulated form separate archival series. The miscellaneous records, as of the time of my indexes, ran from 000.1, charts showing agency organization, to 883.93, ammonia water, the 900's being left open for use by the branches of FDA. One of the index volumes is numerical, the other alphabetical, from abalones to zylose sugar. Of course, the numbering system has been periodically updated. Such volumes are indispensable in planning research related to Food and Drug Administration regulatory activities.

Sixthly, and finally, and sadly, as all collectors know, not every item that one desires can be acquired. A rare prize may be available but too costly, or it may already be securely in the possession of another collector, a library, an archive, or a museum. Sometimes, in such cases, one's purpose may be served, if only second best, by acquiring an image. Documents, including pictorial ones, may be photographed or photocopied in some other way. Occasionally, the collector's own camera may get the job done. For example, I photographed a mammoth poster on the wall of an old country store in the mountains of north Georgia showing George Washington, the Father of Our Country, in the act of promoting an expectorant and a vermifuge. And I captured on film a medical mountebank vending his dubious wares in a Renaissance Italian city, the scene a vignette in a broader urban design on antique wallpaper exhibited in a wallpaper museum in a castle in Kassel, Germany.

Sometimes images come from life. The Italian mountebank may be deemed an ancestor of American medicine showmen. This mode of nostrum promotion flourished in the late nineteenth century and dwindled almost to extinction during World War II. In the autumn of 1979, the Smithsonian Institution focused its folk-

culture attention on folk medicine. Included was a revival of the old-time medicine show guided by Brooks McNamara, author of the excellent historical volume on the subject, *Step Right Up*, and by William Helfand. The show was presented by real entertainers and spielers called back from retirement. Rehearsals were held in the Harrington Hotel. I was in Washington to participate in a symposium on folk medicine, so I observed rehearsals and attended the first performance on the Mall, making images of what took place. First came entertainment: music by Greasy Medline, Snuffy Jenkins, Pappy Sherrill, and Hammie Nixon; then a skit by Mrs. West, Bronco West, and Bob Noel. Finally, Doc Milton Bartok made his lugubrious pitch. Later, it needs to be added, the show moved to a North Carolina village where it was filmed for television, then traveled to New York City for a run at the American Place Theatre on 46th Street.

Bottles and boxes, promotional materials, books and pamphlets, business papers, regulatory documents, and images, six allied categories of intriguing collectibles for pharmacists. They can quicken the heart with the thrill of the chase and can inform the brain, adding new dimensions of knowledge and perspective.



Figure 1.8. Medicine showman Doc Milton Bartok makes his pitch.





## CHAPTER TWO

# Collecting American Pharmaceutical Antiques

by Michael Robert Harris and Charles G. Richardson

**H**OW does one decide on the type of pharmaceutical antiques to collect? A little deliberation will reveal that the possibilities are almost endless. The selection will be determined by several factors including personal interest, time available, space available to display a collection, and financial considerations.

There are several major groups of pharmaceutical antiques. Some of these arbitrarily selected groups are glassware, patent medicines, soda fountain items, health care items sold in pharmacies, advertising items, tools and implements, and products of pharmaceutical companies. A collector could restrict his or her collection to a major group such as these or could select a sub group to further limit the scope of the collection, for example, within the glassware category one could select glass-labeled shelf bottles. Within the category of tools and implements one could collect only pill-making devices.

Another approach is to collect what other people are not, such as less ornate items, post-1920 artifacts, or current material. For example, a collection of professional or OTC drug samples starting with the 1950s through to the present makes a very graphic and colorful collection that reflects the changes in advertising and the influences of the FDA on medicine marketing.

Selecting such parameters for collecting could make the collection more enjoyable and certainly more manageable than collecting

all categories, unless of course the object is to recreate a period pharmacy setting.

Even with selected parameters, collectors usually branch out and add a few other items to complement their collection. For example, advertising trade cards or medical almanacs could complement a patent medicine collection. Wooden pill boxes could complement a collection of pill-making devices. A mortar and pestle or show globe could complement any type pharmaceutical collection.

People who have limited space to display a collection can still enjoy the hobby. A collector has many small items to select from: medicine glasses, medicine spoons, powder folders, pill boxes, spatulas, patent medicine vials, pill finishers, pill silverers, and many others.

A collection can be based on (a) a particular historical period or (b) artifacts made of a particular material such as brass or (c) items from a specific locality or (d) all the various examples of an object such as all pill-coating devices.

After determining the type of collection, how does the collector get started? Try to make as many contacts as possible with other collectors with similar interest. Peruse the classified ads in collectors' publications and contact the collectors. Let them know you have similar interest, perhaps asking if they have duplicate items for sale or trade. You may find some who look upon you as competition and offer little assistance, but most collectors share information and welcome contact with their fellow collectors. Place your own classified ad in collectors' publications.

Auctions of pharmaceutical collections take place infrequently, perhaps only once or twice a year, but they offer the best opportunity to add to a collection. These auctions usually accept absentee bidding through a catalog issued prior to the auction. The auctions are usually advertised in all major antique publications.

Make contact with people in the pharmacies in your area, and let them know you are a collector of pharmaceutical items. Have calling cards made and imprinted with your collecting interest, and distribute them liberally. This will prove productive even though it might be months or years before you have the first response from some of these contacts.

Contact all of the antique shops and antique malls in your area. Tell them of your interests, and leave your calling card. Dealers do save these cards and some also maintain their own list of items wanted by local collectors. Most antique shops and practically all



**Figure 2.1.** *Shelfware and pharmacy stock bottles offer a varied collectable that covers over 200 years of history. Label style, type of glass, closure, and the names of therapeutic substances offer many themes for collecting. Dating from left to right: 1890, 1890, 1940, 1910, 1860. (Photographs by Rick Vargus. Courtesy of Medical Sciences Division, NMAH, Smithsonian Institution.)*

antique malls distribute free sample copies of collectors' publications.

One good source of pharmaceutical antiques is dealers who specialize in medical/pharmaceutical antiques by mail order. There are several such dealers currently in business and all of them publish catalogs. Don't overlook dealers who only advertise "medical antiques" or "scientific antiques"—these catalogs usually also contain pharmaceutical items.

Flea markets are not a good source of pharmaceutical collectibles, however, one can occasionally find patent medicines, and domestic medicine items such as vaporizers, invalid feeders, and bedpans at flea markets.

After deciding on the type of pharmaceutical antiques to collect and finding sources, you probably will want to know how much the items you find are worth. The main factor in determining value of a pharmacy antique is the condition of the item. There are other factors that influence the value of an antique. Objects that have the original container are worth more than the same item without its container. Items that are identified by a maker's name are generally

worth more than a similar item without the name. Markings such as patent dates and patent numbers tend to increase the value of an object. Implements that still have the written directions for use are more valuable than the same item without the directions. The presence of a proprietary tax stamp would increase the value of a patent medicine. There are numerous other factors that influence the value of a collectible that will become apparent to collectors as they become more involved in the hobby.

Price guides are available, and may accurately represent market prices when published, but are soon obsolete. Visiting antique shops and antique shows and noting prices can be of assistance. Another way to keep abreast of prices is to subscribe to the catalogs distributed by mail order dealers who specialize in medical/pharmaceutical antiques. Priced auction catalogs are also very useful, but unless one has attended the auction, the condition of items must be accepted as described in the catalog.

Once you have acquired several pieces there is the equally challenging aspect of study and care of your collection. This process starts when you first encounter each piece. We recommend a bound book in which all the pertinent information is to be kept, backed up by a cross-referenced card file duplicating this information and stored separately. The information kept in the book and cards should include:

1. The date of acquisition.
2. The dealer's name or source, including the full address.
3. A complete description of the object, to include major measurements, markings, etc.
4. Hearsay information supplied by the source. This is an important item and should include any information the source is able to give. Often hearsay evidence is later proven incorrect but in some cases it is correct and leads to more accurate information. Until time can be found to accurately document a piece thoroughly all information given should be included. All doubtful material should be clearly labeled. Being challenged to supply adequate historical data on an item stimulates further research, and learning is the most beneficial aspect of collecting.
5. Purchase price. This is a good reference for future purchases, for sale, or for evaluation of your collection if donated to an institution.
6. List all preservation and restoration done on a specimen such as application of oils, dressings, refinishing, gluing of joints or broken parts, etc.

A collection that is fully documented and recorded is of ten-fold value over a random group of unidentified objects.

Once the primary source information is recorded, the researching and dating of the artifact takes place. Drug trade catalogs are the primary reference source. They often provide the date, the price at the time of manufacture, a line drawing or photograph of the artifact, and a list of related items. Catalogs published after the 1870s are readily available, while those pre-dating this year are scarce. The largest collection of trade catalogs on American pharmacy is the 200-plus volumes held at the F. B. Power Pharmacy Library of the University of Wisconsin in Madison, Wisconsin. As a general reference on trade catalogs, refer to Lawrence B. Romaines's *A Guide to American Trade Catalogs*, Bowker Company, New York, 1960. Locating an illustration or listing in a catalog does not give you a specific date of manufacture for an artifact. A mortar in the style shown in the 1911 Whittall Tatum Catalog, for instance, might have been made as early as 1894 or as late as 1916. One type of instrument could have been made over a period of twenty or more years depending on its design and nature. (This is especially true for mortars since shape and form have changed very little over the years.)

Here are examples of the value of marked artifacts. If a company mark is stamped on a mortar, you can then begin to ascertain its date by learning the date the company was founded. Better still, you may be able to look at a complete series of the company's catalogs, and note the first and last dates the item is mentioned. This will give you the date range of the artifact. If an artifact is stamped with a patent number and/or date, a great source of information is obtained by acquiring a copy of that patent. Do so by sending the number, date, and description of the item with one dollar to the United States Patent Office. On imported items the inscription "Made in . . ." or some identification of country of origin usually indicates an item made after 1893. In that year Congress passed a law requiring imported objects to be marked with their country of origin.

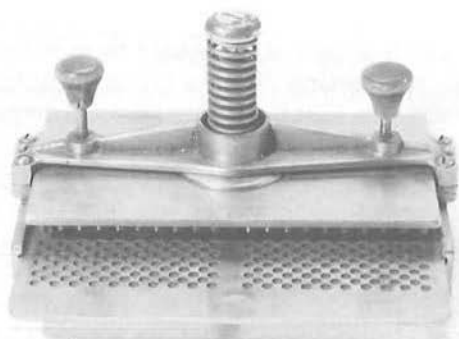
There are many secondary sources available for identifying and dating artifacts. Textbooks on the practice of pharmacy supply illustrations and information on the use of a large range of items. Parrish's *Treatise on Pharmacy*, Remington's *Practice of Pharmacy*, and Husa's *Pharmaceutical Dispensing* are just three texts that in their many editions cover over 110 years of pharmaceutical practice. The advertisements in trade journals provide another reference source. *The Oil, Paint and Drug Reporter*, *Drug Topics*, and *Pitts-*



**Figure 2.2.** *The United States Pharmacopeia has helped to set American pharmaceutical standards since 1820. Very few of these standards have survived. These samples from the 1950s were in the personal research effects of Dr. Robert Leonard, the last Dean of the George Washington University School of Pharmacy. (Photographs by Rick Vargus. Courtesy of Medical Sciences Division, NMAH, Smithsonian Institution.)*

burgh Druggist or Meyer Brothers Druggist are just a few of the many journals in this field. They are full of illustrations, prices, and commentaries. These journals are more readily available than are the trade catalogs and in many cases they are just as good if not better than the catalogs. Museum catalogs, articles, and books on specific collections and types of artifacts comprise another great source for identifying objects. The back numbers of the American Institute of the History of Pharmacy journal, *Pharmacy in History*, list many of these references. It is imperative to have access to a good reference library to do accurate and thorough research. But just a few of the above references can provide a general guide for research.

An aspect of collecting antique objects that all collectors need to be aware of is reproductions and fakes. In the area of pharmacy



**Figure 2.3.** *Colton tablet triturate machine used at the Boericke and Tafel homeopathic manufacturing facility from 1950 to 1979. Industrial manufacturing equipment is more difficult to collect due to availability and size. (Photographs by Rick Vargus. Courtesy of Medical Sciences Division, NMAH, Smithsonian Institution.)*

antiques, there are several types of objects that have been and continue to be reproduced and sold as either reproductions or sold as genuine. When an item is a reproduction and it is sold as genuine, then it is considered a fake. The problem is that many reproductions get into circulation (pharmaceutical companies have produced a large number of reproduction pharmacy objects as promotional items) and the inexperienced collector might not know that they are reproductions. Due to the limited space of this chapter, we can only point out the type of objects that are often reproduced and to warn the collector to be aware and to read about the objects in which they are interested so they have knowledge to make intelligent decisions. There are some excellent bibliographies available to the collector on pharmacy objects. Also being in contact with advanced collectors, dealers, and museum curators will help you to learn more about the objects you collect.

The pharmacy objects that are most often reproduced are usually made of metal, glass, and pottery, and they have intrinsic beauty. Therefore we find a large number of brass mortars, ceramic European apothecary jars, and glass containers (molded and free blown) being reproduced. The metal mortar is still produced all over the world even today for culinary and domestic purposes. The collector needs to be aware that of all the metal mortars produced



over the past 500 years, only a small percent of them were used in pharmacies. Collector beware.

Apothecary jars have a different story from mortars. They have never gone out of production. Several potteries in Europe continue to make apothecary jars, first for pharmacists to decorate their pharmacies in the late nineteenth century, and now for private collectors to decorate their homes. The quality of these reproductions ranges widely. Some are easy to detect after you take time to read several of the illustrated catalogs of apothecary jars that are available. Other reproduction jars are so well duplicated that only an advanced expert in the field can detect the fake. Fifteen years ago, D. A. Wittop Koning of Holland and Wolfgang Hagen-Hein of Germany reviewed the famed Squibb European Apothecary Collection at the National Museum of American History and pointed out eight fakes (reproductions) in that collection. This periodically happens as new knowledge about objects comes to light. The reproductions in the Squibb collection are now prized as reproductions of original jars.

Glass vials and molded bottles are often reproduced for sale in museum antique shops or gift stores. Free blown vials or bottles are almost impossible to tell from eighteenth- or nineteenth-century vials and bottles. Reproductions of molded nineteenth-century bottles can often be detected by the mold seam on the side of the bottle running all the way through the lip of the bottle. Nineteenth-century bottles had their lips applied after the body of the bottle was formed and therefore the seam produced by the mold stopped below the lip. Other common glass items that are being duplicated today are eye cups. Beware of eye cups that are not light green, cobalt blue, or flint glass (colorless).

Paper items are replicated occasionally. Posters, trade cards, and other graphics have been reproduced as "collectibles." At recent auctions, the authors have seen objects that are questionable as to their authenticity. They were wooden signs, show globes, and wooden drawer apothecary chests. Remember the best defense against buying fakes is to read about pharmacy objects and to study other collections. The more objects you see that are genuine, the easier it is to identify reproductions and fakes.

Having invested time, effort, and possibly money in a collection, care and preservation should be considered. The storage of a collection varies with the type of specimens. Metal requires different methods of preservation than does wood, wood requires different methods than paper, paper different methods than leather, and leather different methods than metal. In general avoid fluorescent

light, excessive humidity or dryness, temperature fluctuations, air pollutants, and handling. All of these things seem impossible if a collection is to be used and enjoyed. Indeed, although these requirements are not met in most museums, let alone in private collections, they should be required for ideal storage conditions. The actual methods of achieving these requirements are outlined in the books and articles on conservation listed in the accompanying bibliography. For general guidance to conservation we would recommend the books by Guldbeck or Plenderleith.

The following "Dos" and "Do Nots" are being followed at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History to conserve its large and varied collections:

**DO NOT** touch brightly finished metals with bare hands. Finger prints leave oils that will corrode the surfaces of the metal leaving permanent proof of mishandling. **DO** wear cloth gloves when handling all metal objects.

**DO NOT** use abrasives of any kind on any specimen, no sandpaper or emery, no scouring powder, no metal polish. They all damage the original surface.

**DO NOT** use tape of any kind. The tape can remove the finish or if left on for a period of time could react with the artifact thereby destroying the surface. Cellophane and masking tape do not belong near a collection!

**DO NOT** refinish—try to preserve the original finish when possible. It maintains the integrity and historical importance of the artifact. Keep faith with the past.

**DO NOT** pick up an item by its handle or appendage. Lift it below its center of gravity. Support the artifact at all times.

**DO NOT** wash off original labels or remove tags. They are an essential part of the specimen.

**DO** read recommended conservation texts to find the best method of preservation or conservation. First try the procedure on a small part of the artifact, then wait a few days to see if the process is compatible with the specimen. **DO** wait until you have satisfied yourself that you have found the best conservation procedure. A few extra weeks wait will not alter the life of a specimen.

**DO** act in such a way as to consider that the artifact has to last forever. It can and should. The accompanying bibliography of conservation will direct you to reliable sources.

The collector of pharmacy artifacts should be aware of the safety considerations in handling and storing medicines and chemicals.

We refer the reader to an excellent series of articles on the topic in the Autumn 1991 issue of *Caduceus*, Vol. VII No. II.

Associating with other pharmaceutical collectors could increase your enjoyment of the hobby. We do not know of any national association of pharmaceutical collectors, but there is an association of medical collectors. Since there is a considerable overlap of interest between these two collecting groups the serious pharmaceutical collector might consider membership in the Medical Collectors Association. Another national association that may prove beneficial to collectors of pharmaceutical *glassware* is The National Federation of Historical Bottle Collectors, and for the collector interested mainly in *scales* and related items there is The International Society of Antique Scale Collectors. For a listing of other collectors' associations see *Encyclopedia of Associations*, which is available in the reference section of most public libraries.

Collecting can be a personally and professionally rewarding pastime. Private collections are often the resource for museum collections. More than half of the pharmacy museums now in existence in this country had their basis in a private collection. The individual collector is a prime source for objects for museums. Over half of the pharmacy objects in the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, are from private collections. Therefore the private collector can act as the "grass roots" of the historical collections of the nation. You have an important opportunity to influence what is preserved for the future and what will be the material legacy of American pharmacy. Knowing and understanding the past leads to a perspective on and view to the future.

## Conservation of Antiques A Brief Bibliography

### General:

- American Association for State and Local History. Technical leaflets and books on wide range of topics-Preservation, Administration, and Conservation. AASLH, 1400 Eighth Ave. South, Nashville, TN 37203.
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**Conservation Suppliers**

Aiko's Art Materials  
3347 North Clark Street  
Chicago, IL 60657  
312-404-5600

Japanese Handmade Papers

Archivart Products  
Division of Heller & Usdan  
7 Caesar Place  
Moonachie, NJ 07074  
800-333-4466

Archival Paper Products

Art Preservation Services  
539 East 81st Street  
New York, NY 10028  
212-988-3869  
Products for Environmental Control

BookMakers  
6001 66th Avenue, Suite 101  
Riverdale, MD 20737  
301-459-3384  
Book and Paper Conservation  
Supplies

Conservation materials, Ltd.  
P.O. Box 2884  
Sparks, NV 89431  
702-331-0582  
General Conservation Supplies

Conservation Resources  
International Inc.  
8000-H Forbes Place  
Springfield, VA 22151  
703-321-7730, 800-634-6932  
General Conservation Supplies

Hiromi Paper International  
1317 Abott Kinney Blvd.  
Venice, CA 90291  
213-396-7900  
Japanese Handmade Papers

Hollinger Corporation  
P.O. Box 8360  
Fredericksburg, VA 22404  
703-898-7300  
Archival Paper Products

Light Impressions Corp.  
439 Monroe Avenue  
Rochester, NY 14607  
800-828-6216

General Conservation Supplies

New York Central Art Supply  
62 Third Avenue  
New York, NY 10003  
212-473-7705  
Japanese and other Handmade  
Papers

Paper Technologies  
25801 Obrero Drive, Suite 4  
Mission Viejo, CA 92691  
714-768-7497  
Archival Paper Products

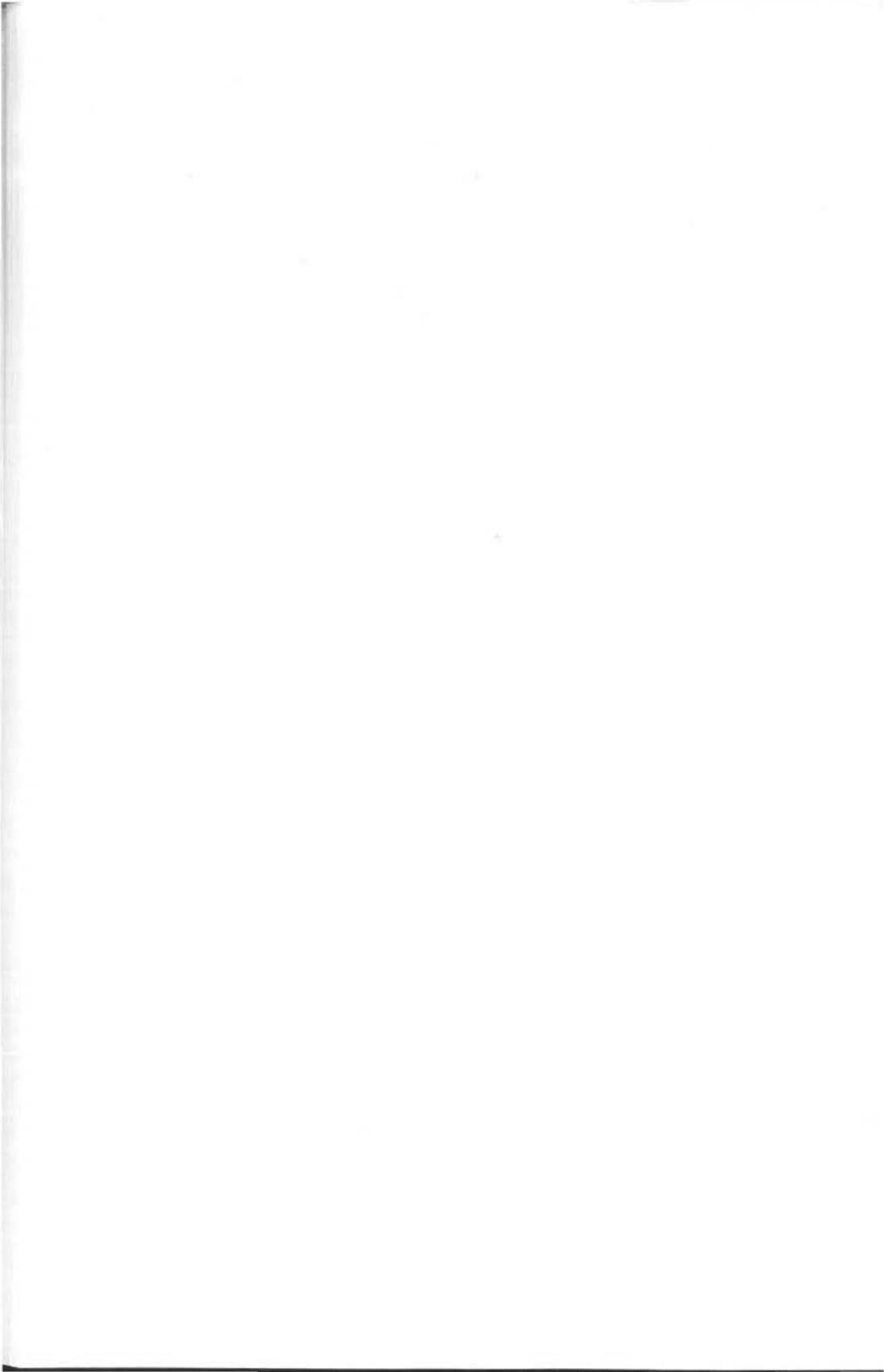
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213 West 35th Street  
New York, NY 10001  
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General Conservation Supplies

Taylor Made Company  
P.O. Box 46  
Lima, PA 19037  
215-459-3099  
Mylar Products

Tesfabrics, Inc.  
P.O. Box 420  
Middlesex, NJ 08846  
908-469-6446  
Untreated Fabrics

University Products  
P.O. Box 101  
Holyoke, MA 01041  
413-532-3372, 800-628-1912  
General Conservation Supplies



## CHAPTER THREE

# Pharmaceutical Archaeology

by Allen Vegotsky

**P**HARMACEUTICAL archaeology may be viewed as a blend of historic archaeology and the history of pharmacy. Within this context, it is possible to examine pharmacy-related artifacts from archaeological sites and interpret their significance. Historic archaeology in North America starts with the period of European colonization about 500 years ago. Although this period is covered amply by books and written documents, archaeology provides a very candid peek into history and sometimes provides a new and different interpretation. At typical historic sites in North America, an archaeologist might unearth any combination of artifacts including construction materials, such as bricks; metallic objects, such as nails and tools; ceramic artifacts of many different types; animal bones; bottles, etc. The challenges for the historic archaeologist are numerous: to search the written records related to the site; to create in essence a three-dimensional map of the site, locating structures and artifacts along surface grids and also according to their depth below the surface; to identify, count, and preserve artifacts found; and to interpret the significance of the site. Pharmaceutical and medical artifacts, especially patent medicine bottles or sherds of these bottles, are fairly common at historic sites. What follows is a review of several historic archaeological sites to illustrate the kinds



of pharmacy-related artifacts found and to consider the potential contributions of pharmaceutical or medical historians.

The Public Hospital site in Williamsburg, Virginia, was located just outside of the historic area of Colonial Williamsburg. This hospital, erected in 1773, was the first institute for the mentally ill in North America, and was popularly known as "bedlam" or "mad-house." The hospital partially burned down in 1885, was rebuilt, and continued in use until the 1960s. The site was excavated by Ivor Noel-Hume several years ago. It is of interest, because a wide array of medicine-related artifacts were recovered. In addition to hospital glassware and medicinal bottles, the excavation yielded a scarifier (an instrument used for bleeding patients), a brass beam and pan from an analytical balance, and a tourniquet clamp, to mention just a few. Virtually every excavation provides some artifacts that are difficult to interpret. For example, at the public hospital site, a small aqua-colored sherd from a medicinal vial was found with a fraction of its embossed name intact. The embossed letters were on three lines and looked like the figure below. A pharmaceutical historian might infer that the bottom line represents the city, Philadelphia, which was often abbreviated as "PHILAD<sup>A</sup>," indicating where the product was manufactured or marketed. The top line appears to be the name of the medicinal and the most likely word that fits the letters is "CARMINATIVE." Examination of the aqua vial containing this compound showed a pontil scar at the base indicating that it was quite old, probably middle or early nineteenth century. Examination of the literature on pontiled medicinal bottles provided only two possible patent medicines consistent with all the data: the compound was most likely either Dr. Jaynes's Carminative Balsam or Louden & Co.'s Carminative Balsam, both of which were manufactured in Philadelphia in the early nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Another example of a puzzling medicinal bottle is shown below (fig. 3.2). This very dark green bottle was excavated at a site in Quebec by researchers in the Canadian Park Services. Bottles of this type date from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth cen-

... INATIVE  
 ..... M  
 ..... D

*Embossed letters on a sherd from a medicinal vial.*



**Figure 3.1.** *Avocational archaeologists at an historic site in Harrison, New York.*

tury. Of interest is the seal on the shoulder of the bottle with the insignia, "GR," which stands for "George, Rex" or "King George."<sup>2</sup> It is suspected that such bottles stored pharmaceuticals for the military, but the contents remain a mystery.

The Greenwich Mews Site of New York City was excavated in 1987 under the direction of Dr. Joan Geismar.<sup>3</sup> This site is located in Greenwich Village not far from the Hudson River. The excavation focused on two privies that serviced middle or working class apartment dwellers in the middle and late nineteenth century. Dr. Geismar described the privies as "time capsules for nineteenth-century life of ordinary people." Privies are often exceptional sources of preserved artifacts, and this five-day excavation yielded over 3000 artifacts. The artifacts were then catalogued and interpreted. Among the medicinals found were Dr. Porter's Stomach Bitters, Dr. Hooker's Cough Medicine (two bottles), two bottles embossed "New York Medical University," Osgood's India Cholagogue, and Mrs. Hayes Dysentery Syrup. Some other medicinals appeared to be more popular with one or more of the residents. For example, four bottles of a compound made by W. Fisher and five bottles of Radway's Ready Relief were found. Many of the



**Figure 3.2.** *Pharmaceutical bottle with unknown function*

patent medicines of the *laissez-faire* era prior to the Pure Food and Drugs Act were marketed as panaceas. Radway's Ready Relief was advertised as a cure for rheumatism, cholera, diarrhea, influenza, diphtheria, asthma, burns, headaches, dizziness, nervousness, and restlessness, among other ailments. At fifty cents a bottle, it had to be a bargain! In fact, an 1865 newspaper ad for this product read "One fifty cent bottle of RADWAY'S READY RELIEF will do more good, and can be used for more purposes, than ten dollars expended for any other medicine in use."<sup>4</sup> Among the many fascinating observations resulting from the excavation of Privy #2 were preserved eggs from the whipworm (*Trichuris trichiura*), and the finding of raspberry and grape seeds, corn grains, and clove.<sup>5</sup>

For the medical historian, there are many research questions that are suggested by an excavation such as this. For example, what did these medicines contain? Where were they manufactured? How



**Figure 3.3.** *Privy #2, excavated to a depth of four feet. The excavation continued to a depth of 9.2 feet.*

were these medicines advertised? Could they have had beneficial effects? Do the medicines provide clues to possible diseases or medical problems of the residents? Were people using more patent medicines than prescription medicines?

Some forty miles north of Greenwich Village on the Hudson River is the location of another interesting site located in Tarrytown, New York. This site, named after the Requa family, the original occupants, was researched by the Louis A. Brennan Lower Hudson Chapter of the New York State Archaeological Society and sponsored by the Tarrytown Historical Society. It was my privilege to be one of the participants in this project. While the site dates back to the early eighteenth century, the medicinal bottles found at the site were mainly from the middle and late nineteenth century. Unlike the other sites discussed, the Requa site was related to a small one-family residence. Since the family history was studied using genealogical tools (i.e., census records, town and church directories, oral history), there is the potential to relate the medicinal bottles found at the site to a small number of individuals. One hundred nineteen medicinal bottles or sherds were excavated and identified. One of the more striking findings from the research on

these bottles was that almost half of the identified medicines were the products of just five pharmaceutical firms, and for each of these five companies, the residents used a variety of their products. In other words, the residents were brand conscious. One of the pharmaceutical companies was owned by Dr. A. Hilliard Flanders, and his products bore the name of Dr. Rush (after Benjamin Rush, who had died many years earlier). Based on the bottles found at the Requa Site, some of the products of Dr. Flanders consumed were Rush's Sarsaparilla and Iron, Rush's Bitters, Rush's Buchu and Iron, as well as Rush's Lung Balm. All told, the Rush medicinals line accounted for eight of the 119 medicinals found at the site. One might guess that this brand loyalty is related to advertising. It is notable that the Rush medicinals and some of the other more heavily used patent medicines consumed at this site were featured in very popular, free almanacs.<sup>6</sup>

Another area of possible interest to pharmaceutical or medical historians is the changing style of medicinal bottles. Such changes can be used to estimate the date of the site or of a particular stratum within a site. Researchers at Environment Canada—Canadian Park Services have considered the evolution of the medicinal vial. A very crude vial was found in the wreck of a British fishing vessel and dated to 1690. The shape of the vial evolved considerably over time, and these changing styles can be used as tools to date archaeological sites or to date artifacts in a particular soil level or stratum.

Pharmaceutical historians might wish to consider the changing inventory of the drugstore as a function of time. A torpedo-shaped bottle was excavated in Quebec City by Canadian Park Service archaeologists and bears the name of a major nineteenth-century Quebec druggist. It contained a soda or mineral water. Bottles of this type were kept on their sides to keep the cork moist and thus prevent excessive loss of carbon dioxide. Sodas and mineral waters of many different bottle shapes are common at nineteenth-century historic sites. Advertisements of that period remind us that once soft drinks were meant to be "tonics."

These are but a few examples of pharmacy-related artifacts recovered at archaeological sites in the United States and Canada. Such findings suggest many interesting questions related to their significance. The interpretation of such artifacts can benefit from input by experts on pharmaceutical and medical history. If you wish to make a contribution in this area, there are several steps you may take. You may wish to affiliate with local or state archae-

ology groups. There are many state archaeological organizations and they include both avocational and professional archaeologists. State archaeological organizations typically sponsor a journal and provide members with an opportunity to attend annual meetings. Local chapters of the state organization are sprinkled throughout the states. A typical chapter has monthly slide presentations, educational programs geared for the novice, and often takes on field projects. To locate such groups, check with nearby museums, historic societies, archaeology or anthropology departments of nearby universities, and so on. Both state organizations and local chapters emphasize both prehistoric and historic archaeology. There is a national organization, the Society for Historical Archaeology, that focuses on the archaeology of American historic sites. This organization also has annual meetings, a newsletter, and an excellent quarterly journal, *Historic Archaeology*.<sup>7</sup>

Finally it should be noted that archaeology just like pharmacy rests on a solid ethical foundation. Our archaeological resources are inevitably diminishing. Sites are lost because of development (buildings, roads, etc.) and looting. It is important that excavations be done under the direction of qualified archaeologists to assure a good research design and a commitment to gathering, interpreting, and publishing findings, and when feasible and appropriate, an effort toward preservation and restoration of historic sites. The avocational archaeologist should seek to collaborate with professional archaeologists.

### Notes and References

1. R. Frederick Nielsen, *Great American Pontiled Medicines* (Medford, New Jersey, 1978). The two possible patent medicines are listed on p. 61 (No. 336) and p. 72 (No. 395). Dr. D. Jaynes' Carminative Balsam is the more common of the two and thus is more likely to be the identity of the sherd. Richard E. Fike, *The Bottle Book* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs M. Smith, Inc., 1987), pp. 25-26. Both products were manufactured beginning before 1850 and continuing for many years.
2. Olive R. Jones and E. Ann Smith, *Glass of the British Military* (Ottawa, Canada: Parks Canada, 1985), p. 95. These bottles have finishes (i.e., area of mouth of bottle) similar to English wine bottles of the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century. The "GR" insignia is often found on military items such as firearms and buttons suggesting a military relation for these bottles. The bottle shown in the figure was found in the Richelieu River.
3. Joan H. Geismar, *History and Archaeology of the Greenwich Mews Site* (New York City, Site report, 1989).

4. David Singer, *Perspectives in Newspaper Advertisements: Glass Containers and Their Contents* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Data Publishing Co., 1982), p. 74.
5. Geismar, *History* (n. 3), pp. 231-242. Three soil samples from Privy #2 were analyzed and all three showed low concentrations of *T. trichiura* eggs.
6. More data on the Requa Site excavation were presented at an earlier meeting of the AIHP. A more complete report on the medicinals from that site is in preparation.
7. Inquiries about this organization may be sent to the Society for Historical Archaeology, P.O. Box 30446, Tucson, AZ 85751. Back issues of *Historic Archaeology* would be a good place to begin reading about this subject. There are two "classical" books by Ivor Noel-Hume that provide an introduction to the field, namely: *Artifacts of Colonial America* (New York: Knopf, 1970) and *Historical Archaeology* (New York: Knopf, 1969). A few examples of more recent books on this subject are: Leland Ferguson, *Uncommon Ground* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992); James L. Michie, *Richmond Hill Plantation: 1810- 1868* (Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Co., Publisher, 1990); Stanley South, *Archaeology at Santa Elena* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1991).

### Acknowledgments

This report was made possible by the contributions of many people. I would particularly like to acknowledge the article by Jacob L. Grimm entitled "Amateur Archaeology" in the previous symposium on *Historical Hobbies for the Pharmacist* published in 1973. This paper was helpful to me in planning my talk and paper, and remains remarkably current in its outlook. For the information on the Public Hospital Site in Williamsburg, Virginia, I am indebted to William E. Pittman, Curator of Archaeological Collections in the Department of Archaeological Research, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. All of the information on Canadian sites was based on research done by workers at Environment Canada—Canadian Parks Service. In particular, I am grateful to Catherine Sullivan and Olive R. Jones for use of their slides and publications. The material and data on the Greenwich Mews Site were graciously provided by Joan H. Geismar. Finally, I would like to acknowledge all the hard workers in the field and laboratory from the Louis A. Brennan Lower Hudson Chapter of the New York State Archaeological Society, mostly avocational archaeologists, for making it possible to analyze the 119 medicinal bottles of the Requa Site.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# Pharmaceutical Ephemera

by William H. Helfand

**E**PHEMERA is defined in most dictionaries as anything short-lived or transitory; the word comes from the Greek noun *ephemeros*, meaning of or for only one day. A formal librarian's definition is "current material, usually pamphlets and clippings, of temporary interest and value. Similar material of the past which has acquired literary or historical significance."<sup>1</sup> It is therefore somewhat of a contradiction to consider ephemera as objects worth saving and collecting, for their utilitarian purpose is usually anything but that. Obviously, medals, engravings, and books are meant to be collected, while paper labels, billheads, and tickets of admission are not. Yet somehow, perhaps because of their often crude and unselfconscious nature, ephemeral objects have a directness and a charm that more sophisticated artifacts may not, and this has led some people to collect them in a way for which they were never intended. There are perhaps as many reasons for this as there are collectors and it is not possible to easily articulate the explanation, although many have tried.<sup>2</sup> Certainly the attractiveness and artistic appeal of some items such as engraved trade cards or lithographed sheet music covers is important as is the content itself of other material, and of course there is also the contribution to a fuller understanding of social history that plays a valued part in some collections.

This value in clarifying and explaining historical processes and events is often critical, and specific items have enabled more than a few scholarly studies to illuminate aspects of certain subjects in



dramatic ways. For example, price lists of pharmacists or wholesale druggists can aid in understanding the economics of the drug trade, prescriptions can reveal some understanding of certain prescribers, varied illnesses or even of specific patients, and advertisements can be studied as clues to the careers of both charlatans and patent medicine manufacturers. In an example tracing the history of the medicine show, the author, Brooks McNamara, made extensive use of a

... scrapbook, which may have been assembled by a showman who styled himself *The Great Cummings* or *Diamond Bill Cummings Ph.D.*, (and which) contains about eighty pages of clippings, labels, flyers, and other medicine show items, most of which appear to date from the first quarter of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup>

Among the items from the scrapbook was a receipt for a license given to a pitchman in Burlington, Vermont, in 1922 so that he could sell his liniment (the license cost \$2.00); a contract form sent by the Oregon Indian Medicine Company in advance to prospective hotels for the lodging of its traveling teams; and handbills offered to purchasers of its products by the proprietors of the German Medicine Company for the purpose of building attendance for sales presentations. There is no reason why this material should have been kept, but thanks to its availability our knowledge of the medicine show is now much more nearly complete than it might have been.

The broadsides, receipts, and advertisements in the scrapbook are true forms of ephemera, as are the papers that one discards and many other types of temporary and anonymous materials. The railway tickets, want ads, election posters, and the bags, boxes, cartons, and wrapping papers that accompany the purchases we make every day are included in the classification. So also are paper match box covers, menus, invitations, and the posters designed for use on billboards, in subway stations, and on buses and taxis. Ephemera obviously is plentiful.<sup>4</sup> Objects of value in themselves or designed to be of value are not ephemera. Thus, paper money is not, while sheets of paper designed to look like money and carrying advertising for a patent medicine, are. Most ephemera is printed—on paper, cardboard, plastic, or sheet metal, for example—and frequently carries advertising, for a product, an event, or a cause (e.g., “Fight Venereal Disease”). With its interest in both commercial and professional matters, it is not surprising that the

field of pharmacy contains many types of objects which can be classified as ephemera, and it is also understandable that there are collectors who, at various times and places, have been attracted to such material.

Although it is impossible to make a rigorous definition, pharmaceutical ephemera may broadly be divided into six categories:

### **Pharmaceutical Ephemera**

#### **1. Advertising media**

Advertising cards, almanacs, brochures, calendars, giveaways (including fans, pencils, pens, playing cards, toys, and games), match covers, pamphlets, paper money, tokens, engraved and chromolithographed trade cards.

#### **2. Correspondence materials**

Envelopes, greeting cards, letterheads, post cards, valentines.

#### **3. Legal documents**

Acts, bills, certificates, decrees, diplomas, indentures, inventories, licenses, petitions and proclamations, prescriptions, checks, stock certificates, wills.

#### **4. Notices**

Announcements, broadsides, circulars, flyers, handbills, invitations, package inserts, posters, programs, prospectuses.

#### **5. Packaging materials**

Bags, bottles, cartons, boxes, jars, wrapping paper.

#### **6. Others**

Admission tickets (to courses, meetings, events), badges, buttons, billheads, catalogs, invoices, labels, menus, price lists, show bills, songs, vignettes.

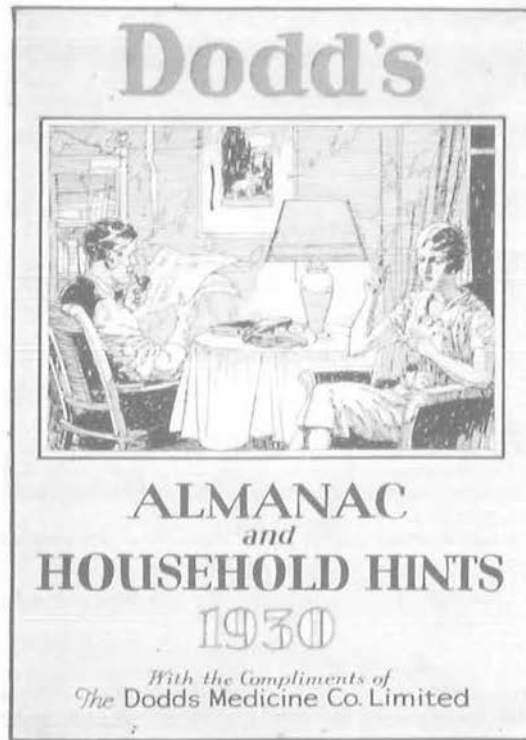
### **Advertising Media**

Carriers for advertising are the largest and most varied category of ephemera. The promoters of nostrums and patent medicines have long been extremely creative in their choice of materials to carry their printed message and there is not much that has not been tried at least once.<sup>5</sup> Pamphlets, booklets, and brochures of all types have been employed—as diaries, almanacs, calendars, cookbooks, joke-books, songbooks, coloring books, children's story books, dream books, and not unexpectedly, health books. And in addition to these, advertisers have found other media including match covers, balloons, cards of all types, tokens, and paper money. In the United States this last category first became important during the Civil

War when currency was in short supply and "scrip" was issued by various merchants, including apothecaries and druggists. Then, in the years following the war, bills of various denominations were printed purely as ads. Some of these closely resembled official currency with carefully drawn engravings of George Washington or the ubiquitous American eagle, but there was usually an easily recognizable difference to prevent confusion. For example, a bill for Perry's Family Ointment drawn against the "United States" was for "100 years in use" and "by 100 families in Europe" rather than for \$100.<sup>6</sup> Others were more fanciful, as the \$3 bill issued by "Dr. Chamberlin's Electrical Bank of Health,"<sup>7</sup> the one simply for "77" (not dollars) drawn against the "United Stands" for Dingen's Napoleon Bitters,<sup>8</sup> or the 1837 dollar bill for Penny's Receipt for the Cure of Hydrophobia, which warned that "Ardent spirits must not be drank for three months after taking."<sup>9</sup>

Almanacs were not indigenous to the United States, but no other country could rival it in either the quantity or variety of patent medicine almanacs produced. Although advertisements for medicines had previously appeared in other almanacs (the earliest had been issued even before Benjamin Franklin), the first to be offered by patent medicine manufacturers themselves came out in the 1840s. By the end of the century, led by those printed by the Ayer, Hostetter, and Jayne companies, the number of annual copies of these booklets reached into the millions. Ayer's almanacs alone were published in as many as twenty-three different languages in certain years and production runs exceeded 15,000,000 several times. The editions of *Hostetter's United States Almanac for the Use of Merchants, Mechanics, Farmers and Planters, and All Families* covered the period from 1861 to 1910, and more than 10,000,000 copies were printed in each of the years between 1875 and 1900.<sup>10</sup> Although there were variations in size, topics covered, and originality, the typical patent medicine almanac

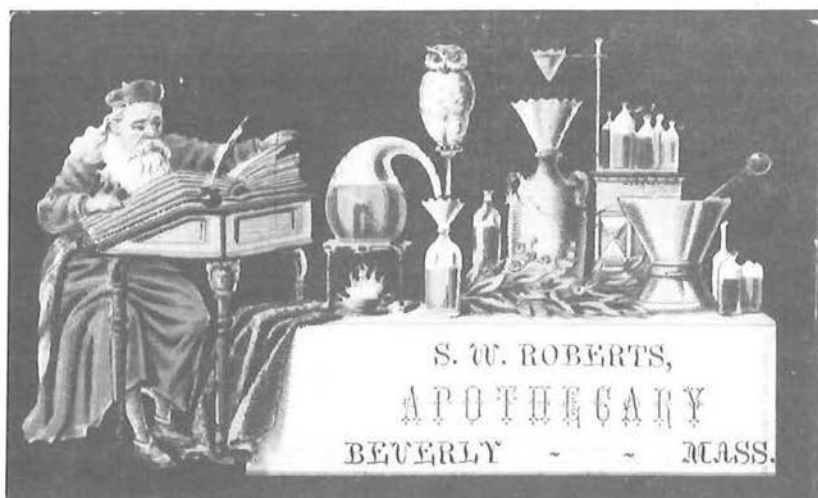
followed a fairly traditional format. There were the usual astronomical data, the rising and setting of the sun, the phases of the moon, the position of the planets. . . There was often advice to the farmer and housewife, sometimes cartoons, and nearly always jokes . . . The reader would not go far without encountering a message from the sponsor. For the nostrum proprietors did not forget that the purpose of the whole venture was to sell their products, and each small raft of wisdom or amusement was floated in a vast therapeutic sea.<sup>11</sup>



**Figure 4.1.** *A nineteenth century almanac, full of practical information on the weather, crops, first aid, dates of significant events, etc., yet really designed to carry advertising for proprietary medicines.*

The pharmacist's trade card was originally developed to give directions on how to find the shop and information on the items for sale. In doing so, many of the cards, particularly British examples, carried illustrations of architectural scenes, pharmaceutical equipment, reproductions of engravings, or listed specialty products available. Some continental European trade cards were very elaborately engraved.<sup>12</sup> Those that were created by imaginative professional artists—William Hogarth and Paul Revere each produced trade cards—have enhanced the commercial purpose of these advertisements by adding a new dimension of artistic merit. Modern business cards

of small dimensions, bearing only the name and address of the company and its representative, would never have sat-



**Figure 4.2.** *A stock trade card, published by J. H. Bufford and Sons, Boston, in 1876, providing space for the shopkeeper, in this case a pharmacist in Beverly, Massachusetts, for his name and address.*

ified the shopkeeper of the eighteenth century. He wanted the public to know, in no uncertain terms, what he sold and, preferably, to judge from an engraving what a wide stock he carried or the professional service he could render.<sup>13</sup>

In recent years the term “trade card” has been applied to the small, highly decorated card, usually chromolithographed (the French word for these cards is “chromo”) given away by the pharmacist to advertise his pharmacy or, much more frequently, a patent medicine. These cards were first issued in the 1870s when inexpensive methods of commercial color lithography became available, and the standard form presented advertising copy on one side and an attention-getting illustration on the other. Such trade cards and large lithographed posters were the only means of color printing available to advertisers until the last few years of the nineteenth century. Thousands of examples of these colorful cards exist, largely from the United States and France, but there are trade cards from other countries as well. Unfortunately over the years, partly as a result of the popularity, especially among children, of the Victorian pastime for pasting cards in albums or scrapbooks, it may be difficult for modern collectors of such cards to locate fine or

unusual impressions.<sup>14</sup> Several important collections of trade cards currently exist in public and private hands.<sup>15</sup> Of all the publishers of such cards the unquestioned winner both from the viewpoint of quantity as well as quality is the Liebig Company, whose Extract of Beef was promoted as an aid to digestion for the weak, the anemic, and those suffering from stomach complaints. A collector could easily devote his entire attention to Liebig cards only, for at least 5000 sets, each containing six or more different cards, have been issued in several languages since 1872 when the first cards



**Figure 4.3.** A "chromo" showing the statue in Paris of Pierre Joseph Pelletier and Joseph Bienaimé Caventou, pharmacists who isolated quinine and other alkaloids, at the same time serving as an advertisement for a firm marketing chocolates.

appeared.<sup>16</sup> But the Liebig cards are mainly historical and educational; they are not nearly as provocative as those, for example, advertising Dr. Thomas' "Eclectic Oil." (It will positively cure "Toothache in 5 minutes, Backache in 2 hours, Lameness in 2 days, Deafness in 2 days") or the "Carolina Tolu Tonic" ("Sure cure for malaria").

Few claims could surpass those made for Dr. Kilmer's Female Remedy which could cure "headache, catarrh, ovarian dropsy, tumors, cancer, hemorrhage or sleeplessness." Kilmer's recommendation to mothers was to "Give it to your weak and delicate daughters. Not a vestige of impure blood can escape its healing and purifying influence."<sup>17</sup>

A variety of other cards, folders, and mailing pieces have also been used to promote drug products, using interesting variants as tricks to attract attention such as moistening a surface to make words or colors appear, or the ignition by a match or cigarette to spell out a message of the name of a product.<sup>18</sup> Certain calendars and advertising cards, particularly those for dentifrices and powders, were scented, but these examples could not endure and could not possibly be found today.

### Correspondence Materials

Ephemera is more than just advertising. Materials used in general correspondence such as letterheads and envelopes are also a source for items of pharmaceutical interest. So also are post cards, greeting cards, and valentines. The degree of interest in any letterhead or envelope is directly related to the artistry of the illustrative material or the printer's choice of various type faces. Until about 1803 the influence of the printer was minimal but after the first real display typeface (Fat Face) was created, the jobbing printer became an important factor in design, and the ever-growing range of different display letters lent spice to such printing and composition that had not previously existed.<sup>19</sup> Beyond the general stationery requisites of letterheads and envelopes is another category worthy of special attention. This is the Civil War envelope, used in the United States as a carrier of propaganda for both sides; often the caricatures or illustrations used for this purpose covered more than half of the available surface, thus leaving little room for the written message. At least twenty of these envelopes have medical or pharmaceutical themes.<sup>20</sup> Illustrated post cards have been available for only one hundred years (the postal card in its non-illustrated version first

appeared in Great Britain in 1870), but since many of them have a photograph or drawing of a scene with pharmaceutical significance, they are important to the overall subject.<sup>21</sup> There are various subjects—pharmacies, dispensaries, pharmacists, events in the history of pharmacy, paintings, and sculpture relating to pharmacy. Fortunately, there have always been collectors of post cards and the field, in a way similar to postage stamps, is being continually renewed since new cards are always being issued. Of course, as in most areas of ephemera, it is the early material that is most in demand.<sup>22</sup>

Greeting cards having some pharmaceutical component run the gamut from those Christmas cards where Santa Claus is a pharmacist mixing up a prescription of good health for all, to those where the pharmacist or someone else is offering a remedy for the patient to "Get Well Soon." Certainly the most valuable of the artifacts in this class are valentines, especially those of the "comic," meaning insulting, type. Usually these sheets present a caricature of a pharmacist accompanied by a short verse, such as

Oh curse ye, you your patients kill  
With nauseous draughts and filthy pill  
Tho' you to death yourself should pine  
you ne'er shall be my valentine.<sup>23</sup>

Another valentine from the late nineteenth century in the collection of the Wellcome Museum is an endearing message from the pharmacist's wife,

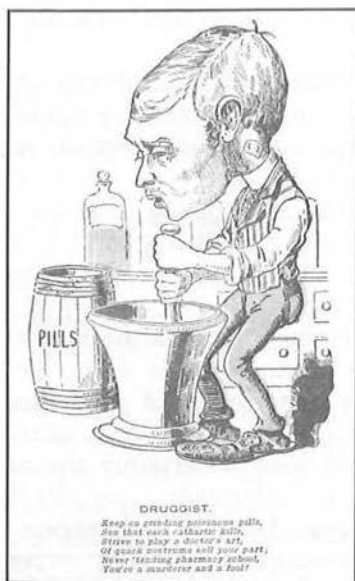
Nauseous as your drugs may be  
Yet you are nastier far to me  
Perchance you'd think a wife when taken  
Like a draught should be well shaken.

Unlike your draughts, it would not do  
At night to take a dose of you  
For such a choice ever scorning  
I'd find you would not work 'till morning.<sup>24</sup>

### Legal Documents

Certain legal documents properly fall into the class of ephemera but in most cases only after they have served their original purpose. A stock certificate for a patent medicine firm had a definite value when originally issued, but after the business closed the certificate

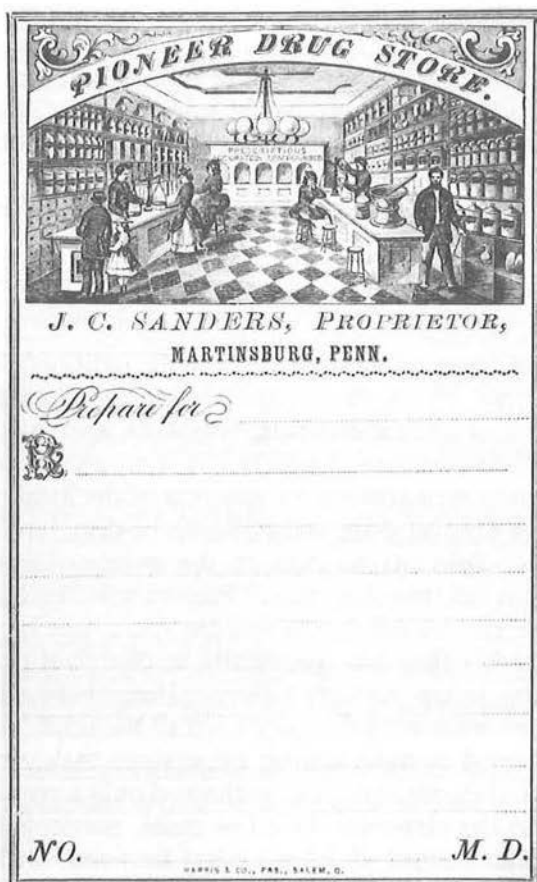




**Figure 4.4.** A color lithographed comic valentine, designed to be sent anonymously to the druggist of one's choice on February 14th.

could still be appreciated for its engraved illustration or perhaps for its calligraphy. Similar observations could be made about canceled checks or the “scrip” mentioned above; in both of these cases the legal or monetary value of these papers was never intended to be other than ephemeral. The pharmacist’s license or diploma, as well as the license certificate, or permit, necessary to operate a pharmacy also becomes a part of the world of ephemera after it has ceased to have functional worth.<sup>25</sup> What is the value today of a 1993 narcotic tax stamp? Or one from 1921?

Acts, proclamations, and decrees are still other documents that are relevant, for usually they were issued to deal with a temporary situation. Hundreds of such laws exist in many countries and some of the earlier ones have been printed with the loving attention and care that befits an official statement. At times these Acts are directly concerned with pharmacy (e.g., Acts to regulate the prescribing of certain products) while at other times the relationship is only tangential. In a very special category are those documents such as the edicts issued in the thirteenth century by the German Emperor Frederick II to regulate the practice of pharmacy; their contents,



**Figure 4.5.** A unique prescription blank showing, in great detail in a small (4.2 by 7.2 cm) space, the interior of the pharmacy of J. C. Sanders, Martinsburg, Pennsylvania.

unlike those of most ephemera, are more important than the paper they were written on.

Prescriptions are a special case. Certainly they are important legal documents but this consideration varies considerably by country, for not all governments (e.g., France, Mexico) require that the pharmacist keep them on file. It is not easy to determine just when a prescription falls into the ephemera class, but it would obviously be some time after its period of legal usefulness is over. As with letterheads and envelopes, some of the prescription blanks are

worth keeping because of their engraved illustrations or unusual type faces. The prescription blank for a product containing wine or alcohol written under the National Prohibition Act during the 1920s has some historical and social importance. Other prescriptions are worth holding onto because of their association with well-known physicians or patients. Items of this type, however, begin to encroach on the manuscript field and may not truly be ephemera.

### Notices

Some of these legal documents, especially petitions and proclamations, also fall on the borderline between the group discussed above and that of announcements, handbills, and posters used to draw the reader's attention. Usually this is an event such as a sale of the contents of a pharmacy,<sup>26</sup> a meeting of the local pharmaceutical society, a film on drug abuse. Some posters for fund raising events (e.g., the fight against cholera, the raising of money for the Red Cross) also fall into this class.<sup>27</sup> Posters advertising drug products should be considered ephemera, but there may be some question as to whether they are specifically in this class or are part of the advertising group discussed above. Here there are many examples and new ones are being produced all the time. These posters were not expected to have lasting value since they were designed to be used out-of-doors and could withstand only a very brief period of exposure to the elements. In a few cases, particularly those reflecting the later output of Jules Chéret between 1895 and 1905, such advertising posters were meant to be collected, but these were certainly an exception to the general ephemeral nature of this medium.<sup>28</sup>

Package circulars and prospectuses comprise a very large group within this class of ephemera. Today the package insert in the United States is a formal objective scientific document, and obviously one that will have great value to those collectors of pharmaceutical ephemera who will appear a hundred years from now. But such constraint was not always the case, and the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century examples are full of imaginative and fanciful claims. "Man is subject to only one real disease, that is, to the impurity of the blood," read the accompanying insert to a package of Morison's Pills in the 1830s, and the brochure went on to say that:

**G. GROVES,**  
**CHEMIST and DRUGGIST,**

**T**AKES the earliest Opportunity of informing the Inhabitants of SLEAFORD and its Vicinity, that he has entered upon the Shop of Mr. BLAZE, and laid in a fresh Assortment of every Article in the *Drug and Chemical* Business, in their true and genuine State, and that no Pains shall be spared in the compounding and preparing them.

It is solely on the Quality of his Goods, aided by his own Exertions to please, that he builds all his Hopes of Success, which he is confident he cannot command, but pledges his Endeavours to deserve.—Physicians Prescriptions made up with the most scrupulous and minute Attention. The Faculty supplied with Drugs at nearly the LONDON PRICES, and Gentlemen in the farming and grazing Line with Sheep Ointment warranted to cure, and all such Medicines for Horses and Cattle, as have stood the Test of Experience.

N. B. Paints, Oils, Colours, &c. &c.

APRIL, 1802.

THORNILL, PRINTER, SLEAFORD.

**Figure 4.6.** An engraved broadside, published in 1802, announcing the change in ownership of a drug and chemical business in the British town of Sleaford.

**Parrish's**  
**School of Practical Pharmacy.**

To the Session, 1869.

S. J. Stevenson

Edward Parrish Lecturer.

Numerous Practical Demonstrations.

**Figure 4.7.** The admission ticket to a series of lectures in 1869 given by Edward Parrish in his School of Practical Pharmacy.

These pills cure in all cases and cannot be taken to excess. Experience which is the touchstone of all human knowledge has long borne testimony to the fact; and extensive use of them has already verified its truth in this country.<sup>29</sup>

### Packaging Materials

Packaging materials provide an abundant source of supply for the seeker of ephemera. Bottles are among the most popular and several sub-groups within this varied field are of specific pharmaceutical interest. Bitters bottles are among the most widely sought after; hundreds of different bottles in various shapes and sizes have been identified and comprehensive finding and classification lists have been published. Some of these bottles are embossed with their names and those of their manufacturers (e.g., Old Dr. Townsend's Celebrated Stomach Bitters) while others have embossed illustrations as well.<sup>30</sup> In addition to bitters bottles are other valued groups such as sarsaparillas, tonics, and poison bottles, the latter curious because of their unique shapes. Boxes, especially those printed with illustrations and product claims or those produced in novel shapes and sizes are another attractive group. Most of these worthy of keeping were made of tin or other sheet metal; perhaps many readers will recall the ubiquitous "Sucrets" tin that was a latter day carryover of this type of packaging; these have now become ephemera, for contemporary packages are made of plastic. Ceramic jars for a wide range of products, tooth pastes, ointments, salves, poultices, etc., are among the most charming and valuable pieces to be found in this group today. Indeed, as one author notes, their collecting may become an obsession because

the variety of colors, of designs and the subjects depicted have a fascination for many. . . . The pots and lids of china (glazed earthenware) were first labeled only with paper labels to indicate their contents, but before the end of the eighteenth century both black printing and blue printing of the lid, under the glaze, had become possible by applying prints to the lid.<sup>31</sup>

Because this enabled manufacturers to create their own illustrations for pot lids, the variety of their decoration made them highly attractive and they began to be treasured even more than the goods inside. Today these pot lids have been carefully cataloged and illustrated while the rest of the jar is often discarded.<sup>32</sup>

### Other Ephemera

Beyond these identifiable classes there is still a large group that defies careful classification yet contains some of the most interesting items of all. In this group are objects such as admission tickets to pharmacy schools, to specific courses, or perhaps to some graduation; membership cards in clubs and societies or menus for banquets having some pharmaceutical interest. I have one of these which my father had carefully preserved from his senior class banquet of the Department of Pharmacy of the Medico Chirurgical College, held at the Hotel Continental in Philadelphia in 1916. Neither the college, the hotel, nor the lengthy menu (Blue Points, Creme St. Germaine, Fried Fillet of Sole Tartare, Turkey, Mixed Salad, Ice Cream, Assorted Cakes and Demi Tasse, etc., . . .) exist today. And there are certainly other items like this, just as illuminating of a period more than seventy-five years ago.

Invoices and billheads are similar to other stationery in that they can at times include a worthwhile engraving or lithographic illustration. Further, the items they identify and the prices they indicate augment their value as documents useful to our understanding of their time. They can also give some idea of the type of business that was conducted, and if it is possible to study such invoices over a period of time, they might also indicate something of the evolution of certain businesses and business practices. In commenting on some eighteenth-century billheads, one author has noted,

Apart from the bill heads, the items listed, besides the prices charged, are a commentary upon the times, for instance the fulsome prescribing of never-ceasing boluses, cordials, syrups and draughts, with which even children were dosed.<sup>33</sup>

Wholesalers' and manufacturers' catalogs are established pieces of ephemera too, and are most useful in charting changes in pharmaceutical practice over time. They are also valuable reference sources in identifying shapes, designs, and dates of introduction of eighteenth and nineteenth century products, decorative objects, and pharmaceutical equipment.

Drug catalogs and product lists were prepared in several European countries long before they first appeared in the United States. Here, the first catalog was published sometime between 1757 and 1760 as the *Catalogue of Druggs, and of Chymical and Galenical Medicines, Sold by John Tweedy at his shop in Newport Rhode*



**Figure 4.8.** A lithographed invitation, in black, white, and gold, to the 1888 commencement of the Pittsburg College of Pharmacy.

*Island*.<sup>34</sup> Catalogs with illustrations are, of course, the most revealing, and these, beginning with the catalogs of the wholesalers Bullock and Crenshaw in the 1850s, provide abundant source material for an understanding of nineteenth-century American pharmacy. There are several extensive holdings of these catalogs in libraries and institutions in the United States, and there is also a good bibliography.<sup>35</sup>

The list of material goes on: price lists, tax lists, vignettes, buttons, badges, labels. Labels are certainly a type of printed ephemera of great importance to the pharmacist, and both for their design and their content they can represent a field worthy of being collected. American examples do not seem to have reached the same heights of delicacy and beauty as did the French, Italian, or British. A comparison of labels may give clear evidence of the type of

pharmacy and the location in which it was practiced during the years when such material was in use.

The earliest pharmacy labels date from the eighteenth century and were printed from wood engravings. As Leslie Matthews has written,

Labels, in different styles of printing, shapes and colours are to the collector of antiques of the pharmacy what crests from notepaper and book plates are to those interested in heraldry and geneology. Labels tell us of the days not so long ago when Sasafras Oil, Syrup of Buckthorn or Yellow Basilicon Ointment were regularly bought, when Henna Powder, for rinsing the hair at home, had its vogue, or when Amber Oil: Not to be taken and Carbolic Acid: Poison, were necessary household purchases.<sup>36</sup>

And, finally, songs. Not, of course the music from operas by such important composers as Haydn, Mozart, or Donizetti, but rather the music hall offerings that were designed to last a few weeks or months at best. Songs, with such titles as *Medicine Jack*, *Doctor Compis Mentis*, *The Drug Store*, and *When a Man's a Little Bit Poorly*, fall into this category, as do those promoting or discussing the merits of products, real or imaginary, such as *Morison's Pills*, *Dr. Munyon*, *Aspirine*, and *Aspirine et Pyramidion*.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, one might even include the more than 100 different songs that were distributed as premiums for their labels by Bromo Seltzer, St. Jacob's Oil, Beecham's Pills, and other products, even though the songs themselves had no pharmaceutical significance. There were, however, elaborate advertisements for the products that accompanied the songs.

If ephemera had no other purpose but to preserve the fanciful texts that accompanied some of these songs it would have well served all of us. Here, as an example of the genre, is the concluding verse of the eight that attested to the virtues of *Morison's Pills*:

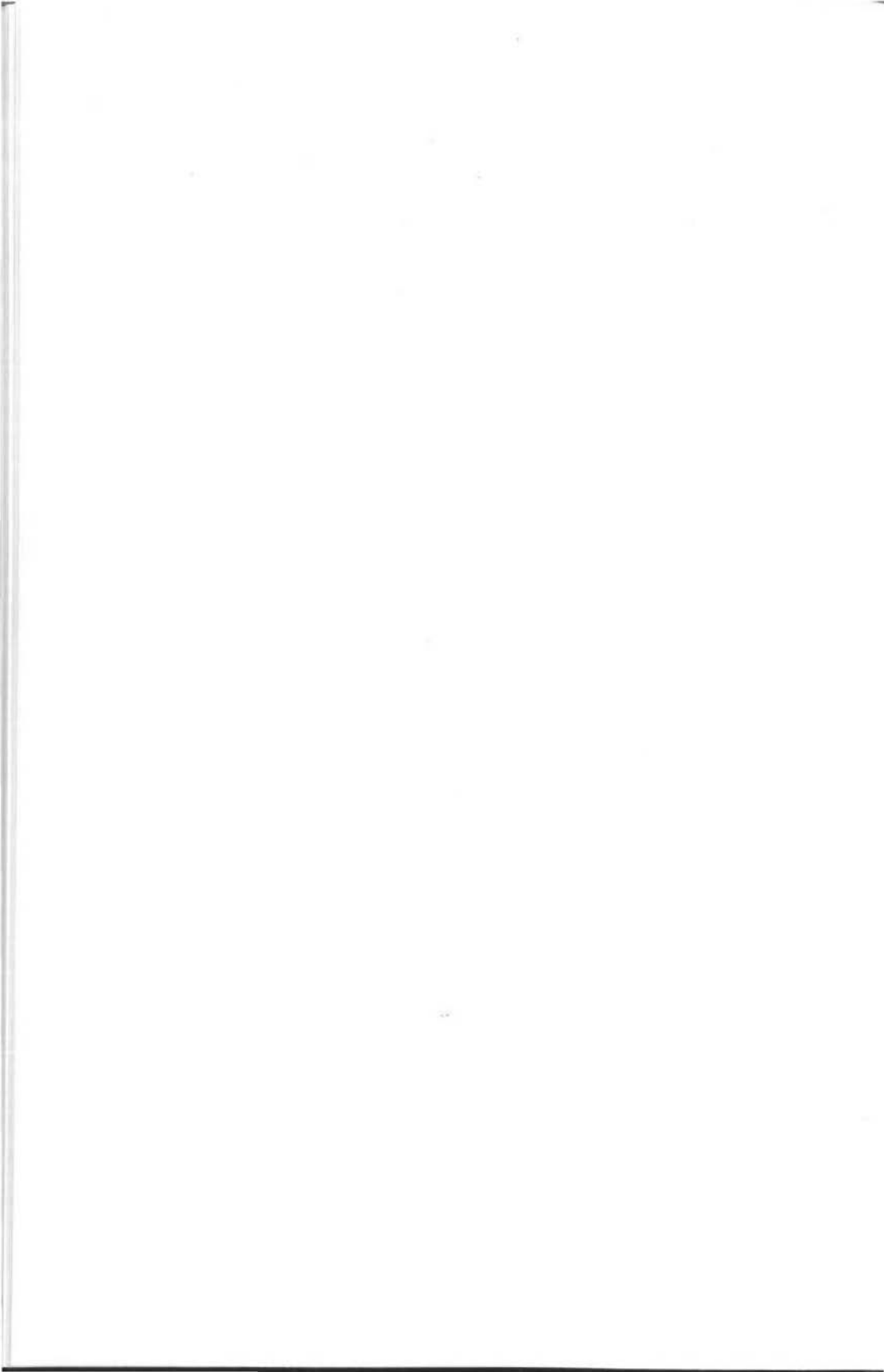
Let us hope that their benefits will ere too late  
Purify the abused in Church and in State . . .  
Get rid of pluralities sinecures . . . tax . . .  
And abolish forever Political Quacks.  
In time every evil its remedy brings  
This maxim holds good both with Peasants and Kings,  
Like the life-office then where each coffer soon fills  
Let us offer a bonus . . . on . . . Morison's Pills.<sup>38</sup>



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## CHAPTER 5

# Pharmaceutical Philately

by George Griffenhagen and Kenneth Lohr

“Every pharmacist should have a hobby to take his mind off his business cares, to make him forget himself and to help him enjoy his living of life. A pharmacist with a hobby can never tire of life. He always has something of interest to himself. My particular hobby for years has been philately—stamp collecting to you. Stamp collecting is one of the greatest pleasures of my life. There is much to see and learn from these small fragments of paper. Stamps tell the story of humanity. They tell the story of geography, art, science, sculpture, sports—in short the entire history of the world—in graphic form.”

**T**HIS is good advice today, but these words were particularly appropriate during the depression years of the early 1930s when they were written by pharmacist Herbert C. Raubenheimer and published in the July 15, 1933, issue of *The Practical Druggist*. Of course, Dr. Raubenheimer was suggesting pharmaceutical philately.

It was Sir Rowland Hill who introduced the first official adhesive postage stamps in Great Britain, issued May 6, 1840. The “one penny black” and the “two penny blue” stamps were imperforate (i.e., they had to be cut apart by scissors or other means) and they met with tremendous success. The public bought them not only for postal use but also for admiration and for their value as

souvenirs; hence stamp collecting commenced with the very first issues.

But Sir Rowland Hill did not invent the postal system. It was rather a major improvement over the prior era of stampless covers (folded letters). Postal systems go back thousands of years. Well known are the posts of the Persian kings in the sixth century B.C., of which the Greek historian Herodotus wrote the now famous quotation, "Neither snow nor rain, nor heat nor gloom of night stay these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." The pharaohs of ancient Egypt established postal systems, as did the ancient Greeks and Romans. Augustus created the "cur-sus publicus" of the Roman Empire using special couriers and relay rest stations along the roads connecting Rome with the provinces. The system decayed and vanished in Europe during the Dark Ages, but Marco Polo described in 1298 the marvelous courier system of Kublai Khan in China. And in the Western Hemisphere, the Incas and Aztecs used runners in their highly efficient postal systems.

Duke Visconti of Milan established a postal system in 1385 on which letters bore inscriptions (similar to later postmarks) such as a stylized gallows as a warning to tardy couriers, or stirrups commanding speedy transportation by horseback. By the close of the fifteenth century, the posts by relays of mounted couriers were fully established under German Emperor Maximilian I. As early as 1489, one Johannet Taxis appears in the accounting books of the Austrian court at Innsbruck; and during the following century the Taxis family expanded post routes from the Netherlands, Germany, and Austria to France, Spain, and Italy.

Overseas postal systems were initiated by Italian states, particularly Venice, whose fleets of ships carried on extensive commerce with Turkey, Greece, Egypt, North Africa, Spain, Portugal, and England. Though extremely rare, many of these letters are of direct pharmaceutical interest since they involve the shipment of drugs and spices. One of the earliest known letters of the Venetian ship postal system, dated 1392, was mailed by a merchant in La Tana (now Asove, Russia, and then the most distant trading station of Venice connecting with the caravan route to India and China) describing the prices of quicksilver, sulfur, and wax.

While embossed postmarks were in use in the fifteenth century, it appeared as a complete novelty in England when postmaster general Henry Bishop issued in 1671 the following decree: "A stamp is invented that is put upon every letter showing the day of the month that every letter comes to the office, so that no letter Carryer

may dare to detain a letter from post to post, which before was usual."

The famous "Bishop" postmark was in use at least a decade earlier, and many such letters extant are of pharmaceutical interest. One such letter in the collection of the late Desmond Lewis of Great Britain, dated January 11, 1664, ordered a "Toad Stone" which was reputed to counteract poisons. Eighteenth-century letters in the same collection include orders from various British "chymists" for such medicinal concoctions as "Venice Treacle," "three pints of Tincture of Bark," and "three or four gallons of Syrup e Rhamna."

If the possibilities of collecting letters of this type seem limitless, consider another important development which took place—the appearance of the Black Death. As the wave of plague swept Europe, Venice took the first steps, in 1348, to safeguard her citizens. A sanitary council was formed to quarantine ships and their crews and cargoes. It was assumed that plague was caused by some live infectious matter ("contagium vivum") and so inanimate articles as imported merchandise as well as letters were submitted to disinfection. Dr. Karl F. Meyer records in his definitive book, *Disinfected Mail*, the most common method employed from the fifteenth century onward was sprinkling with vinegar or immersing the letter in vinegar. This was frequently followed by fumigation using the smoke from burning straw, tobacco, sulfur, pitch or gun powder, or by steam from camphorated vinegar. Fumes generated by burning juniper or other aromatic herbs was also employed in Hanover in 1680; and in Malta, fumes from burning myrrh, benzoin, fragrant gums and resins, and aromatic vegetable substances with minerals was employed. A mixture of sulfur, saltpeter, and wheaten bran was extensively used in the German states. Aside from the visible damage caused by such disinfection, the letters can be identified from the slits or perforations made by postal officials to permit the fumes to penetrate the contents, and by special hand-stamp cancellations which are listed by Dr. Meyer. This is a fascinating, but rather expensive, aspect of pharmaceutical philately.

### Postage Stamps

With the introduction of the first adhesive postage stamps in 1840, a new era in collecting commenced. At first, philatelists were interested in obtaining one specimen of every stamp issued by every country. Then, as more and more countries adopted the use of the postage stamp, it became impossible to "collect the world." There



**Figure 5.1.** *Pharmacy in the U.S. was recognized with the issuance of this 1972 postage stamp creating much interest in pharmaceutical philately.*

were too many stamps and many of them cost far more than the average collector could afford. So collectors turned to collecting stamps of a single country or groups of countries that had a geographical or political association. Still later, the philatelic world experienced a trend towards the collection of stamps of certain types (such as regular issues, commemoratives, semi-postals, air mails, postage dues, or special deliveries). But all the time, the increased number of stamps being issued made it more difficult for the collector to keep up with his ambitions.

Reverend Henry H. Higgins proposed in the June 1, 1863, issue of the *British Stamp Collector's Magazine* that stamps might be collected by the illustration appearing on each stamp such as "portraits" or "the families, genera, species, and varieties recognized in zoology and botany." But it was not until the turn of the twentieth century that philatelic journals began to generally promote this form of stamp collecting which became known as "topical collecting" in the U.S. and "thematic collecting" in Great Britain. Collections were formed, variously entitled "Modes of Travel as Depicted on Postage Stamps" (1903); "Religious Emblems on Stamps" (1904); "The Philatelist's Zoo" (1906); and "Mythology and Philately" (1906). The first English-language topical handbook appeared in 1920, entitled *Ship Stamps of the World* by Joseph Ward.

In 1929, medical historian Fielding Garrison introduced medical philately as a legitimate branch of medical history ("A Brief Note on Medical Philately," *Annals of Medical History*, NS1, 451-452, 1929). Then in 1933, Herbert C. Raubenheimer introduced pharmaceutical philately with a series of articles in *The Practical*

*Druggist* describing "materia medica" and famous personalities related to pharmacy pictured on postage stamps. Raubenheimer gave some sound advice which bears repeating today:

I would advise everyone attempting to collect stamps to have a philatelic library and also to read the latest philatelic news. I would like to remind the pharmacists collecting these stamps to have a good home for them. A word of advice: Don't have your collection looking "cold" by merely mounting the stamps on blank album leaves. A collection of pharmacy stamps must have an eye to the dramatic and consider the following features as important. First, have an attractive arrangement of your stamps under each subdivision; second be neat; and last, have an intelligent and accurate write-up concerning each stamp. In other words, give your collection a character of its own—an air of distinction.

Little further was published on pharmaceutical philately until the 1950s, except for an interesting series of articles by George N. Malpass published in the *American Journal of Pharmacy* (1941–1944) and the *Weekly Philatelic Gossip* (1941–1944). One reason for the rather slow movement toward pharmacy and medicine as a "topical" subject is given in the introduction to the first book published on the subject (W. J. Bishop and N. M. Matheson, *Medicine and Science in Postage Stamps*, Harvey & Blythe Ltd., London, 1948):

Until comparatively recent times stamps of medical and scientific interest were few, but within the last twenty years they have been issued in large numbers. This increase is due, on the one hand, to the many issues of Red Cross and Tuberculosis stamps, and on the other hand to the fashion for commemorative and anniversary sets. . . . The number of stamps coming within the field of medicine and science is sufficient to give scope to the most ardent collector. Those who have no special knowledge of the history of medicine or science will find it an alluring task to identify and annotate their stamps; the expert will find plenty of puzzles and much scope for research in this particular field.

One major movement toward topical collecting started with a vision of a Milwaukee, Wisconsin, school boy as early as 1944. On September 12, 1949, this germ of an idea had grown to a point where Jerome Husak founded the American Topical Association. Today this organization is the largest in the world devoted to topical



collecting. In December, 1952, Wilson A. Swanker, a noted plastic surgeon and medical topicalist, founded the Medical Subjects Unit of the American Topical Association, and authored in 1954 the first of a series of ATA Handbooks on medical subjects, including a "check list" of "Medical Botany." Melvin Jean Andrews, then a senior at the College of Medicine, Howard University, launched the ATA Medical Subjects Unit's newsletter called *Scalpel and Tongs* and immediately started publishing items of pharmaceutical interest.

Also in 1955, the American Institute of the History of Pharmacy gave official recognition to pharmaceutical philately when the AIHP invited Smithsonian curators Franklin Bruns (philatelic and postal history division) and George Griffenhagen (then curator of the division of medical sciences) to compile a selective bibliography on the subject which served as the basis of a panel discussion entitled "History Hobbies for the Pharmacist," and to answer the increasing number of inquiries.

A Thematic Group on Medicine of the Fédération Internationale de Philatélie, headed by German physician Rudolf Wallossek, initiated a publication entitled *Navicula* in July, 1962. The publication combined watercraft and medicine, and commencing with the July 1964 issue, Hanover pharmacist Walter Maiwald commenced a regular section on pharmaceutical philately. *Navicula* was last published in July, 1970, as a medium for pharmacy and medicine topicals, replaced in May, 1971, by *Philatelica Medica*, the official revue of Thematic Groups "Medicine" and "Pharmacy" of the Thematic Commission, International Federation of Philately.

By 1960, the flood-gates were unlocked, and publications on pharmaceutical philately flowed from the pens and typewriters of many pharmacist-philatelists (such as Pierre Julien of France; Walter Maiwald of Germany; Ernst Schlunegger of Switzerland; and Henryk Szancer of the U.S.A.; among others). Dr. S. Gutmann and Apotheker W. Maiwald authored the first separate booklet on pharmaceutical philately (*Geschichte der Pharmazie in Philatelistischer Sicht*, Germany), while the first separate publications on drugs on stamps were authored by Tom King (*The Philatelic Herbalist*, Great Britain, 1961); Walter Maiwald and Walter Herz (*Homöopathie und Briefmarke*, Germany, 1962 and 1968); Emory E. Cochran (*Philatelic Therapy*, U.S.A., 1964); and Jehan Daubresse (*Les Plantes Médicinales*, Belgium, 1966).

The first American Topical Association handbook devoted to pharmaceutical philately was authored by George Griffenhagen and

published in 1967 under the title of *Drugs and Pharmacy on Stamps*. In addition to featuring the "Pharmacopeia Philatelica," the handbook describes personalities associated with pharmacy (by Henryk Szancer), private die proprietary medicine tax stamps (by Varro E. Tyler), and drug advertising on postage stamps (based on the research of Pierre Julien).

Upon the death of Walter Maiwald in 1979, pharmacist Thomas Siegel of Munich, Germany, commenced authoring the "Motivgruppe Pharmazie" section for *Philatelia Medica*. Pharmacist Tom Wilson founded the British Medical Philately Study Group in 1982, and has since served as editor of their periodical, *Medi Theme*, which includes numerous articles of pharmaceutical interest. Pierre Julien continues to author a column entitled "Pharmacie et Philatélie" in the French *Revue d'Histoire de la Pharmacie*, while George Griffenhagen has authored a regular column since 1987 entitled "Pharmacia Philatelia" in the International Pharmaceutical Federation's *International Pharmacy Journal*.

More recent books dealing with pharmaceutical philately include *Pharmaceutical Philately* by Marcus Olli (Association of Finnish Pharmacies, Helsinki, Finland, 1989), and *Pharmaceutical Philately*, by George Griffenhagen (American Topical Association Handbook #114, Johnstown, Pennsylvania, 1990). The American Institute of the History of Pharmacy has also published a *Pharmacy in Philately Album* by George Griffenhagen; the 72 three-hole-drilled album pages provide illustrations and descriptions for 435 postage stamps and five items of postal stationery from 112 countries.

### Drug Advertising on Postage Stamps

The earliest attempt to use a single postage stamp for advertising grew out of an acute shortage of small change in the United States during the Civil War. The use of actual postage stamps was substituted for money, but proved unsatisfactory as the mucilage on the back caused them to stick together and they became soiled and torn in handling. John Gault of Boston patented his idea of encasing these stamps and issued them in denominations from one to 90 cents. The reverse side was used for advertising Ayer's Cathartic Pills, Ayer's Sarsaparilla, Brown's Bronchial Troches, and Drake's Plantation Bitters.

The next step in using individual stamps for advertising was to print ads on the gummed side. Pears Soap did this without British

government approval in 1887. The post office told them to cease and desist in selling them for postage so Pears Soap Company continued to print their ads on the backs of British stamps and give them away as souvenirs.

New Zealand was the first government to sell advertising on the gummed side of their postage stamps. In 1893 they sold a block of twenty ads to Beecham's Pills, as well as ads for Bonnington's Irish Moss, Macbean Stewart's "New Cure for Asthma, Diphtheria and Croup," S. Myers & Co., Dentists of Christchurch/Nitrous Oxide, and Sunlight Soap.

The first postage stamp booklet was issued by Luxembourg in 1895, but Germany appears to have been the first country to include ads on the labels in the booklets. Lecin, a stimulating tonic, was advertised in 1906, while Bavaria similarly advertised Apotheker Walter's Bronchial-Tabletten in 1911.

Great Britain introduced postal booklets in 1904, but not until 1911 did they include commercial ads on the inside covers. Boot's Chemists so advertised in 1912; Pears Soap in 1913. For many years thereafter a large number of drug products were advertised on British postal booklets. British colonies of Bahrain, Barbados, British Guiana, Southern Rhodesia, New Zealand, and the Union of South Africa also carried a variety of drug ads.

Italy issued a set of postage stamps in 1924 carrying ads on the lower portion, one of which was for Siero Casali, advertised for the treatment of anemia, arthritis, rheumatism, gout, asthma, insomnia, and other afflictions of the nervous system.

Switzerland advertised Thermac-Pastillen in a 1921 stamp booklet, while Mexico included perfume ads in a postal tax stamp



**Figure 5.2.** More than 50 pharmacists have been commemorated on postage stamps. This 1970 French issue recognizes the discovery of quinine by Parisian pharmacists Caventou and Pelletier.

booklet of 1929. In 1933, Alfred Benzon used an entire Denmark stamp booklet to advertise drug products.

Commencing in 1927, Belgium issued a series of stamp booklets with ads for many drug products, including Scott's Emulsion, Sirop Manceau, Cachets du Dr. Faivre, and Red Pills.

But the most prolific of the countries carrying drug ads in stamp booklets was France. Starting in 1922, Dr. Franck's Grains of Health ads were carried on the booklet covers. In 1924, the margins surrounding the panes of stamps were used for ads for such drugs as Phosphatine Falières, Ricqles, Oxymenthol, Flaravene, Urodonal, Gyraldose, and many others. A few drug firms took over entire booklets, the rarest of which is Mineraline. Others included Phena and Laboratories Rolland which advertised Asceine (APC tablets) and Resyl (glyceroguiacolate for upper respiratory ailments).

Monsieur Freydier, manufacturer of Le Philopode tried to bypass the French post office, buying his own sheets and printing his own ads on three denominations of French stamps. Needless to say, the French post office wasn't happy losing the revenue, and put a stop to this private venture, making these booklets extremely rare.

### **Postal Stationery**

A wide variety of postal stationery, including postal cards, stamped envelopes, and postal letters issued by various governments around the world include another field for topical collectors. The first letter sheet was drawn by William Mulready and issued by Great Britain on May 1, 1840, with postage prepaid. A quantity of Mulreadys were purchased at face value from the post office, advertising was solicited from various firms which was printed on the blank space on the reverse side, and sold at less than face value to anyone who would use them. One such firm produced "The Envelope Select Advertiser" which contained ads for no less than eight different drugs in the June 6, 1840 issue.

When the U.S. issued its first postal card in 1873, many firms bought them up and printed their own ads on the reverse, a number of which included ads for various drugs. In 1887, the French "Carte-Lettres" were authorized by the government. These double-faced post cards were purchased by La Missive who procured advertising and sold the cards at one-third the face value. One of the first French drugs advertised on the French "Carte-Lettres" was Phosphatine



**Figure 5.3.** Drug advertising appears in many formats including Macbean Stewart's "Cure" printed on the gummed side of 1893 New Zealand stamps, and "Scott's Emulsion" on the tabs of 1929 Belgian stamps.

Falieres, "an ideal medicine for infants" and for "those afflicted with anemia," and Dr. Franck's "Grains of Health."

A real bonanza of pharmacy-related advertising can be found on postal cards of Belgium and Japan. In 1932, Armand Vertommen established "l'Agence de Publicités Officielles des Postes Belges" called PUBLIBEL. Between 1933 and 1989, this firm issued more than 5,000 different Belgian postal cards carrying advertising which the government sold to subsidize the postal service. Drug advertisements appearing on the PUBLIBELS include antacids (Festal, Meral, and Peceamag); cold remedies (Pectoral Dupuis, Pilule St. Roch, and Vick's Va-Tro-Nol); headache remedies (Aspro, Croix Blanche, and La Meuse); laxatives (Peristline, Pharmalax, and Red Pills); and vitamins (Maltovine, Panade, and Vitamor).

In 1981, the Japanese Ministry of Posts, faced with declining revenues, launched a similar postal card advertising program which they called "ECHO cards" to signify that these postal cards were economical and to suggest that they "echo" the message of the advertiser. Within ten years, the Japanese had issued over 5,000 different ECHO cards, many of which carry drug advertising. The ECHO cards mirror the typical home remedies of Japan such as *Rokushigan* (Pills of the Six Gods) containing musk, bezoar, and toad cake, and promoted "to strengthen the heart." Several Japanese pharmacies have even carried advertisements on ECHO cards.

But the largest variety of postal stationery of interest to the pharmacist-philatelist should be the so-called corner-cards, or envelopes which carry advertising on both the front and back (and in some instances so covered with advertising that there is but little room for the addressee and postage stamp). A history of the pro-

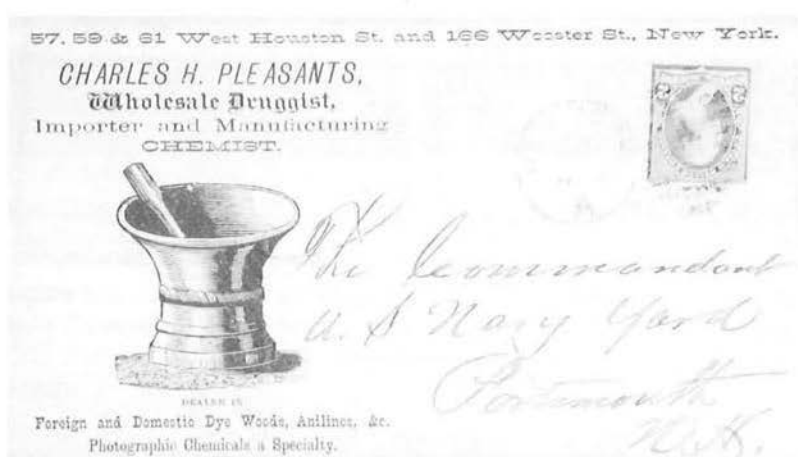


**Figure 5.4.** This Japanese postal card advertises "Pills of the Six Gods" and illustrates a "yangen," which has been used by Japanese pharmacists since the tenth century to grind drugs.

proprietary medicine industry in the U.S. (as well as in other countries) can be traced through such advertising covers which still are within the range of the average collector.

### Cancellations, Meters

The First Day of Issue cancel is probably the best known, particularly since the U.S. Pharmacy stamp was issued November 10, 1972. But many other events are commemorated by special cancellations in place of special commemorative postage stamps. Best known in Pharmaceutical Philately are the cancellations of international (as well as national) pharmacy meetings. For example, special cancellations have been provided for International Pharmaceutical Federation Congresses for many years. Germany has issued special cancels for Deutscher Apothekertag since 1937 except during World War II.



**Figure 5.5.** *Nineteenth-century advertising covers, like this one promoting a New York "wholesale druggist," offer an interesting addition to any collection of pharmaceutical philately.*

Other countries to issue special postmarks for pharmacy include Brazil ("Dia do Oficial de Farmacia"), France ("Journées Pharmaceutiques Française"), Italy ("Giorante Farmaceutische Italiane"), and Spain ("Semana de Dermofarmacia"). The Austrian Pharmaceutical Association even convinced their government post office to issue a pictorial postmark in 1989 reading "Pharmazie und Philatelie."

Pharmacies that have obtained recognition via postmarks include the 700th anniversary of the Trogir Pharmacy in Yugoslavia, and the 550th anniversary of the Municipal Pharmacy in Tallinn, Russia. Pharmacists whose likeness appears on pictorial cancellations include Jouvét, Lukasiwicz, Parmentier, Pelletier, Rozier, and Sertürner, among others.

Metered mail often carries slogans and advertising related to pharmacy, especially those used by pharmaceutical associations, pharmaceutical journals, and pharmaceutical manufacturing firms. Meters promoting "National Pharmacy Week" over the years make an interesting collection, and many individual pharmacies use such slogans on meters as "Buy At Your Pharmacy," "Service Is Our Middle Name," and "Your Health Is Our Business." In 1991, the German ABDA recognized the 750th anniversary of professional pharmacy with a meter. Individual pharmaceutical manufacturers have recorded significant events or anniversaries with meters in-

cluding Bayer, Hoechst, Lilly, Merck, Syntex, and Wyeth. The field is almost unlimited. Costs are nominal, although they are increasing, as popularity in collecting meters is on the rise. But unlike postage stamps and postal stationery, there is no catalog available to check for completeness or values.

## Revenues

The first revenue stamps originated in the Netherlands when the Dutch States-General in 1642 offered "a reward for the invention of any new tax beneficial to the revenue and not over burdensome to the citizens." It is reported that "some shrewd, deep-thinking person proposed a novel form of taxation by means of stamped paper." The proposal was adopted by the Dutch government, followed by France in 1673 and Great Britain in 1694. It was the Stamp Act on the American colonies which planted the seeds that altered the history of the country and thereby the whole world.



**Figure 5.6.** Metered mail often includes slogans such as this 1955 meter promoting National Pharmacy Week.



**Figure 5.7.** Medicine tax stamps offer another dimension as evidenced by this 1880 U.S. revenue used for Hunt's Remedy (left), and this Bromo-Seltzer 1898 U.S. revenue (right).



The first tax stamp designed for proprietary medicine was introduced in Great Britain in 1783, but a decree of Emperor Charles VI of Austria, dated September 7, 1720, imposed a tax stamp for hair powder and starch within the city of Vienna and suburbs. The stamp tax was extended to all cosmetics in 1787.

Great Britain's medicine stamp tax was in force from 1783 until repealed in 1941, during which time manufacturers were entitled to print their own ads on the stamps.

The United States imposed a medicine tax stamp on October 1, 1862, to raise revenue to meet the expenses of the Civil War, and proprietary tax stamps were issued. Then the U.S. government granted the privilege of preparing private die proprietary medicine tax stamps to firms who were willing to pay for the die charges. Two hundred and seventy-seven companies issued their own private stamps prior to the repeal of the stamp tax on March 3, 1883. From 1936 to 1942, Henry W. Holcombe published a total of 122 articles tracing the history of each firm, and these articles were brought together in a book entitled *Patent Medicine Tax Stamps* (Quarterman Publication, Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1979). Holcombe's original articles are summarized by George Griffenhagen, with details on the composition of the patent medicines, in American Topical Association Handbook #66 entitled *Private Die Proprietary Medicine Stamps* (1969, Second Edition 1991).

More than thirty countries have employed medicine tax stamps at one time or another, and these, plus U.S. narcotic tax stamps and state cosmetic and medicinal liquor tax stamps, are reviewed by George Griffenhagen in American Topical Association Handbook #76 entitled *Medicine Tax Stamps Worldwide* (1971). This is a new dimension in pharmaceutical philately covering unplowed ground. But be warned, medicine tax stamps (except for U.S. revenues) are hard to come by, although they are not usually expensive. It just takes a lot of searching.

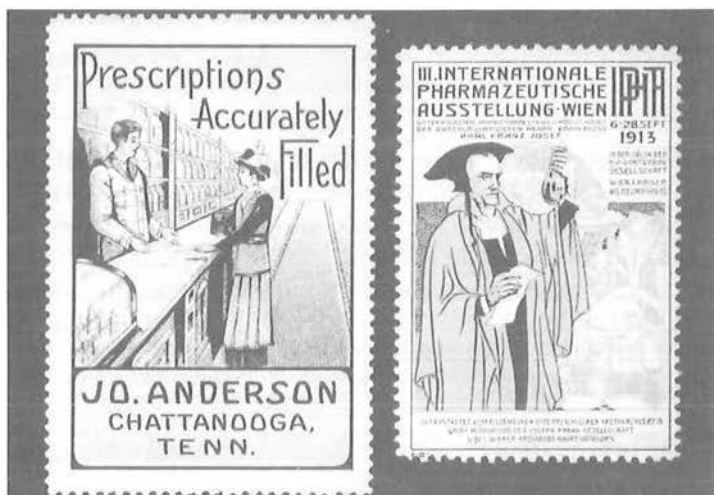
### Cinderellas

Like Cinderella in the fairy tale, seals and labels have suffered long neglect. But now the shoe—or perhaps it should be the slipper—is on the other foot, and these Cinderellas as they are called are gaining new friends. They include Christmas seals, and many types of propaganda labels. Included in this classification are seals for international pharmacy congresses and expositions. One of the earliest is

a label issued for the Second International Exposition of Pharmacy held in Prague in 1896.

Numerous seals were issued for use by pharmacies at the turn of the twentieth century with such slogans as "Prescriptions Accurately Filled," "In Business for Your Health," and "Trusted 1,000,000 Times." Some pharmacists, like those in Fresno, California, and Walla Walla, Washington, used a stamp-like image on their prescription forms. But the largest variety of pharmacy-related seals were issued by drug manufacturers to promote their products. Don't overlook the thousands of patent medicine trade cards, advertising posters, almanacs, calendars, and match boxes with pharmacy advertising.

A new collecting craze has recently appeared on the scene with the introduction of the technology of using magnetic, optical, or "smart" cards for making telephone calls. Many of the countries that now issue telephone cards sell advertising space on their pho-necards. Among the advertisements to be found on French Telecartes include Allergan's "Oxysept," Oberline's "Aspirine," Rhône-Poulenc's "Respirpal," and SmithKline Beecham's "Dextoma." British pho-necards promote Boot's Chemists, Glaxo, "Ibugel," and "Nurofen," while Indonesia pho-necards include advertisements for



**Figure 5.8.** Cinderellas include this 1899 seal issued for a Tennessee pharmacist (left) and for the 1913 International Pharmaceutical Exhibition in Vienna, Austria (right).



**Figure 5.9.** 1989 Austrian postal cancellation recognizing “Pharmazie und Philatelie.” The postage stamp was issued to honor the 1981 FIP Congress held in Vienna, Austria.

such products as “Divolar,” “Lessterol,” “Natur-E,” and “Stop Cold.” German phonecards advertise such products as “Hismanal,” “Imodium,” “Kalinor,” and “Novadral,” while Japanese phonecards promote dozens of home remedies.

While none of these items are considered to be “philatelic” in the classical sense, they certainly can enhance any pharmaceutical philatelic collection.

### Summary

Pharmaceutical philately reached a new level of appreciation with the issuance of the U.S. Pharmacy stamp on November 10, 1972. As you can see, the sky is the limit, subject to your willingness to search out the unusual, the time you desire to spend in researching unique “finds,” and the extent to which you want to financially invest in accumulating philatelic material. You won’t regret having followed Herbert Raubenheimer’s advice of sixty years ago. Try “Pharmaceutical Philately” as a hobby.

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