

CARROLL HISTORY JOURNAL

— THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CARROLL COUNTY, MD, INC. —

Editor's Note: In the days before government regulation of pharmaceuticals and modern miracle drugs, the public relied upon herbal remedies and patent medicines. In this special issue, we present two research efforts into locally purveyed medicines.

"A REMEDY OF GREAT POWER": CLERGY, DOCTORS, AND THE PATENT MEDICINE PEDDLER

BY MELVIN L. BASHORE

"I have given your 'Balsamic Cough Syrup' a fair trial, and am happy to say that I have never tried any thing that relieved me so soon," attested Rev. H.P. Jordan in an 1854 *Gettysburg Compiler* newspaper advertisement for *Shriner's Balsamic Cough Syrup*. "I have also given it in my family, with the same good effects in every instance," he continued. "It is certainly a most excellent remedy, and ought to be in every family. The exceeding low price at which it is sold places it within the reach of all."

Hanson Perry Jordan, born in Carroll County in 1818, was a Methodist Protestant Church clergyman residing in Worcester County, Maryland, in 1850. His favorable product endorsement, submitted on December 22, 1852, was spotlighted in the advertisement text by the bold banner "**Testimony of Clergymen.**" It appeared alongside the endorsements of two other clergy with Carroll County roots. Rev. Solomon Sentman, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Taneytown from 1841 to 1858, had sent Shriner his product endorsement on November 6, 1849, followed on February 4, 1852, by that of Rev. John C. Owens, a Church of God minister.

Why would a minister of God, held in high regard by his congregation and community, permit his



A variety of patent medicine bottles once lined the shelves of mid-to-late 19th century apothecaries or drug stores. (Courtesy of the editor)

name to be associated with the marketing of a commercial cough medicine? Why would such a man risk bringing discredit to his name and church by agreeing to endorse some businessman's wares that might amount to nothing more than snake oil?

Marketing experts attest to the effectiveness of using product testimonials to increase sales. Religious leaders have the power within their communities to shape attitudes, opinions,

SHRINER'S BALSAMIC

Cough Syrup.

If properly and perseveringly used,
NEVER FAILS TO CURE
Coughs and Colds, Consumption, Bronchitis,
Asthma, Spitting of Blood, Bleeding at
the Lungs, Pain and Weakness of the
Breast, Difficulty of Breathing,
Hoarseness, Whooping
Cough, &c., &c.

Price 37½ per bottle, or 3 bottles for \$1.
Prepared by W. E. SHRINER, Druggist
and Chemist, Westminster, Md.

And sold by storekeepers and dealers in
medicines in all parts of the country.

Testimony of Clergymen.

This is to certify, that on the recommenda-
tion of a regular and skilful physician, we have
used the "Balsamic Cough Syrup" prepared
by W. E. Shiner, in our family, and find it to
answer well the purposes for which it is pre-
pared. S. SENTMAN,
Pastor of Lutheran Church, Taneytown, Md.
November 6, 1849.

Gettysburg Compiler, January 30, 1854

behaviors, and practices. So, in the absence of movie stars and popular athletes in the 19th century, obtaining the testimonial of such a leader would have been a master stroke of marketing genius. People listened to them. Why wouldn't a savvy businessperson get them to endorse products?

Of the three Carroll County clergy involved in the ad campaign, Sentman was the most prominent. He served as pastor of the Trinity Lutheran Church in Taneytown for 17½ years, preaching his farewell sermon on June 29, 1858. During his tenure, "there were 1125 baptisms, 25 of whom were adults, 608 confirmations, 400 funerals, 179 marriages" and 625 members in the congregation at the time of his departure. His testimonial would have lent stature to the cough relief potion for a great number of potential buyers.

Is it possible to question the authenticity of the testimonials because of their similarity and tone? They appear counter to the character expected from a clergyman, and the verbiage, in some respects, sounded more businesslike than a pious pastor might have written. Sentman's testimonial reads: "This is to certify, that on the recommendation of a regular and skilful

physician, we have used the 'Balsamic Cough Syrup' prepared by W. E. Shiner, in our family, and find it to answer well the purposes for which it is prepared." The testimonial of J.C. Owens, the Church of God minister, states: "I have formed a very high opinion of your 'Cough Syrup.' Mrs. Owens was afflicted with a very severe cold, attended by an extreme cough. The taking of the one bottle which you ordered Mr. Gore to give me, relieved her entirely. I therefore can recommend it to the public as a superior article for affections of the lungs." These endorsements read more like advertising copy than the advice of clergymen.

If we accept these clergymen testimonials as *bona fide*, they raise other questions. Did they get paid? Did they give their endorsements without prompting? Jordan stated that he gave his endorsement without being asked. "Pardon the liberty I have taken in thus giving my experience in the use of the Syrup unsolicited by you," he wrote. Did Shiner make a generous offering to their churches, thus prompting a reciprocal endorsement by the ministers? One can only speculate on their motivation to agree to be a part of Shiner's marketing plan, although competitors, like *Peruvian Syrup*, *Bull's Cough Syrup*, and *Read's Syrup of Liverwort for Coughs and Colds*, also had ads that either listed ministerial approval or testimonials.

The endorsement of these clergymen for Shiner's cough syrup appeared in an advertisement in another Pennsylvania newspaper in 1857, the *York Gazette*. However, in addition to testimonials of Carroll County clergymen, the ad contained the product endorsement of three physicians including Dr. John Swope of Taneytown. "I can recommend it as an excellent remedy for coughs, colds, bronchial inflammation, &c.," wrote Swope. "I have prescribed it in my practice for several years, and with good effect." When he died in 1871, his obituary extolled his virtues. "His name was lisped as a household word of endearment, not only in the cottage of the humble and the lowly, but also in the mansions of the rich and the cultivated!" Swope's support would have offered exceptional merit as an endorsement for Shiner's product.

Shriner began seeking out the endorsement of physicians as early as 1852. He received a marketing boost from James H. Dyerman, M.D., a Cumberland, Maryland, doctor who said he had never endorsed "any popular medicine," but tested it to great effect in his practice, saying "it is a remedy of great power." Prefacing Dyerman's endorsement, John B. Boyle, Clerk of the Circuit Court of Carroll County, attested to the authenticity of the testimonials collected by Shriner. "I hereby certify, that I have examined a large number of certificates and testimonials exhibited to me by W. E. Shriner, relative to the merits of the several medicines prepared by him," attested Boyle, "and I take pleasure in stating that they are from men of the highest standing and respectability, and therefore, worthy of all confidence."

Shriner's Balsamic Cough Syrup sold for 37 cents a bottle or three bottles for a dollar. While his balsamic cough syrup was Shriner's most successful product, it was only one of numerous patent medicines that he concocted and marketed enthusiastically. And like most medicine advertising of the period, his claims probably exceeded the effectiveness of his products. His promises for relief or cure from various diseases ranged from being simply unproven to blatantly fraudulent.

Although his customers acclaimed Shriner's cough syrup for its effectiveness in treating tussis, he also purported it was beneficial in remedying other, unrelated ailments. In the first identified advertisement and in later ads, Shriner made some broad-reaching assertions besides "It never fails to cure Coughs and Colds." He added that its restorative powers also cured "Consumption, Bronchitis, Asthma, Spitting of Blood, Bleeding at the Lungs, Pain and Weakness of the Breast, Difficulty of Breathing, Hoarseness, Whooping Cough, &c."

What were the ingredients of Shriner's products? Many patent medicines of this era were a mixture of vegetable compound and as much as 50 percent alcohol dosed with morphine, opium, or cocaine. It is understandable how people, through "self-medication" and a naiveté about opiate addiction,

**SHRINER'S
INDIAN VERMIFUGE,**

TO DESTROY AND EXPEL WORMS.—Better testimony than was ever offered in favor of any Vermifuge!!!

Recommendations of Physicians.

We, the subscribers, Medical Practitioners, having been made acquainted with the composition of "Shriner's Indian Vermifuge," take pleasure in recommending it to the public as a valuable remedy for the expulsion of Worms, it being both safe and effectual.

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| Samuel Swope, M. D. | } Taneytown, Md. |
| John Swope, M. D. | |
| Wm. Reindollar, M. D. | |
| Wm. Zollickoffer, M. D. | } Uniontown, Md. |
| Richard Hammond, M. D. | |
| J. J. Weaver, M. D. | |
| H. F. Zollickoffer, M. D. | } Middleburg. |
| Jno. E. H. Ligget, M. D. | |
| Wm. White, M. D. | |
| E. J. Cook, M. D. | } New Windsor. |
| E. Lincoln Brown, M. D. | |
| Thomas Simm, M. D. | |
| O. H. Owings, M. D. | } Liberty, Md. |
| Thomas Sappington, M. D. | |
| Sidney Sappington, M. D. | |
| Reuben Sidwell, M. D., | Johnsville, Md. |
| James M. Geyer, M. D., | Woodshoro', Md. |
| G. R. Sappington, M. D., | Unionville, Md. |
| Wm. A. Mathias, M. D., | Westminster, Md. |

Be particular to ask for *Shriner's Indian Vermifuge*, and take no other. Price 25 cents per bottle.

WHOLESALE AGENTS:—William H. Brown & Brother, No. 3 S. Liberty street, Baltimore; C. P. Rogers & Brother, corner of Market and Howard streets, Balt.; C. A. MORRIS & Co., York, Pa. Dec. 13, 1853.—6m.

York Gazette, December 13, 1853.

might become dependable users of the products. However, Shriner's ads stated that his *Balsamic Cough Syrup* was "purely a Vegetable Compound. It is pleasant to take, and never does injury."

By at least 1854 Shriner had also developed a potion, *Shriner's Indian Vermifuge*, selling for 25 cents a bottle, that he claimed was effective in destroying or expelling worms from the intestines. Shriner may have used locally grown and distilled wormseed oil, a traditional medication introduced to pioneers by American Indians. He asserted that 19 Maryland physicians had endorsed the medicine, 12 of whom practiced in Carroll County. They included Samuel and John Swope of Taneytown, J.J. Weaver in Uniontown, John E.H.

SHRINER'S
MASTER OF PAIN.
THE GREAT EXTERNAL REMEDY,
For Sprains and Bruises, Burns and Scalds,
Rheumatic and Neuralgic Pains, Swellings,
Stiff Joints, Paralysis, or Numbness of the Limbs, Pains in the Breast, Side or Back ;
Sore Throat, Tooth-Ache, Frosted Feet, &c., &c.,
And for the Relief of Pain Anywhere and Everywhere.

The Bedford Inquirer, November 16, 1860.

Ligget in Middleburg, and William A. Mathias in Westminster.

In 1860 Shriner introduced a pain relief ointment called *Shriner's Master of Pain*. He claimed it was an all-around pain reliever for burns or scalds, toothache, headache, rheumatism, sore throat, and frosted feet. He said that he didn't care for the name given it on the label. "I did not give it this name—I don't like the name," he explained. "When I first commenced making it it was without name or label. I made it and sold it by the ounce at my Drug Store. I had no idea then of making a business of it. Some who bought it called it Master of Pain, and by this name it became known for many miles round. And finally, when I had a label printed I was compelled to adopt the name, for by that name it was known. After all, the name is not so very inappropriate. It is used to alleviate or remove pain." He candidly admitted, "Sometimes it will cause pain, but the result always is freedom from pain."

Who was this W.E. Shriner, developer of a cough syrup elixir, deworming tonic, and other medicines, as well as a marketing wizard extraordinaire? He was a druggist and chemist residing in Westminster. Genealogical research reveals that William E. Shriner was born in Maryland in 1825. Nothing is known about his life until his marriage to Elizabeth J. Parish on February 12, 1850, in Frederick County, Maryland. To this union were born seven children, only three of whom lived past 1900. Interestingly, more is

learned about Shriner's first 15 years of his life and working career from his newspaper ads than from any other documentation.

For several years, Shriner had been afflicted with tuberculosis, then called consumption. Despite his ills, he was trying everything he could to keep it at bay. He tried to stay active, looking to sell his Westminster properties and move out of town as 1866 drew to a close. Later that year, and before he sold his home, he bought a 127-acre farm in Pleasant Valley, Carroll County. That large property had on it a two-story brick home, large barn, out-buildings, orchards, and timber lands.

Shriner was quickly losing the battle to his illness. He had served for a period as a justice of the peace for Westminster District in Carroll County but resigned at the end of 1866 "on account of bad health." The *Democratic Advocate* published a public notice of his "bad health" a mere day before he died at his home on January 4, 1867. He was 41.

Shriner's Balsamic Cough Syrup enjoyed surprising longevity and satisfactory sales in drug stores in many states, continuing to claim a place on shelves in Maryland, South Carolina, Virginia, North Carolina, Delaware, and elsewhere. Advertisements for the popular medicine were found in newspapers for at least 15 years after Shriner's death. However, they lacked the testimonial flair of ads displayed when he was alive and tended to be straight-forward or bordering on cute. For instance, an ad for Shriner's Cough Syrup in the *Catoctin Clarion* of Mechanicstown, MD, read: "Mother, my little trote is sore, dit me a ittle bottle of Shriner's Cough Syrup, I think it will ture me to night."

Carroll County clergymen and physicians played a significant role in endorsing patent medicines produced by a Westminster businessman and sold successfully for over three decades. Helping to market such a product was most unusual for clergy and, to a lesser extent, uncommon for physicians. But Shriner was successful in obtaining their help and, in so doing, showed himself a masterful marketer and an accomplished entrepreneur.

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About the Author: Melvin L. Bashore retired from the Church History Library of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 2013. He served the Church as a librarian, historian, and curator of historic sites for 38 years, is widely published in scholarly historical journals, and has received numerous honors and awards. He continues to publish articles across a broad spectrum of historical topics in journals throughout the country.

PATENT MEDICINES, REMEDIES, AND CURES IN 19TH-CENTURY CARROLL COUNTY

BY MARY ANN ASHCRAFT AND MARI BETH WELCH BRAINERD

Patent medicines such as *Shriner's Balsamic Cough Syrup* date back to the late 17th century. "Letters patent" were granted by the English crown and guaranteed the medicine maker a monopoly over the registered formula. Over time, all pre-packaged medicines sold over-the-counter without a doctor's prescription came to be known as "patent medicines," and many of these remedies and cures made their way to the colonies. After the Revolutionary War, locally-produced remedies and cures advertised as patent medicines mushroomed in the United States, but very few of them were actually patented. During the Civil War the federal government did, however, issue stamps to tax patent medicines, along with many other proprietary articles, to fund the war effort.

The Smithsonian Institution, which has an on-line exhibition of its special collection of patent medicines dating from the 1800s to the present day, identifies the second half of the 19th century

as the "golden age" of American patent medicines. According to the curators, the era's "rapid increases in industry and manufacturing, urban living, advertising in national newspapers and magazines, and the absence of drug regulation all contributed to a boom in the production and consumption of patent medicines."

Medical theory and practice in the 19th century, before the advancement of the germ theory of disease



McKellip's Pharmacy in Taneytown offered a wide assortment of patent medicines, including his handcrafted *Cholera & Diarrhoea Syrup*. (HSCC Collection)

and the adoption of principles of hygiene and antiseptics in treating wounds and preventing infection, left doctors ill-equipped to treat the growing health problems that accompanied increased industrialization, urbanization, and world travel. As a result, there was a growing market for over-the-counter patent medicines, bypassing doctors as the curative gate-keepers, and promising panaceas and cures “for what ails you.” Before the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906, which resulted in the establishment of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the makers of these “cure-alls” could concoct any claims they wished for their product, opening the door to great exaggeration. More concerning, patent medicines often contained dangerous levels of alcohol, opium, and other narcotics, and these potentially addictive and deadly ingredients were often not revealed to the consumer.

Advertisements in local newspapers from the 1840s to the end of the century reveal that most towns of any size in Carroll County supported one or more drugstores, and some of them were not only selling patent medicines produced elsewhere but also ones developed locally, such as a remedy manufactured by Taneytown druggist John McKellip, whose store at 7 Frederick Street opened in 1853. One of his popular drugs addressed a common affliction – bowel troubles. During the Civil War, thousands of soldiers suffered from debilitating bouts of diarrhea.



John McKellip's house and store in Taneytown.

Everybody should have a supply of

McKELLIP'S

Cholera & Diarrhoea Syrup

The Great Remedy for all Bowel Complaints.

Prepared Only By

J. McKELLIP, Druggist,
TANEYTOWN, MD.

The Carroll Record, August 10, 1895.

McKellip's Cholera & Diarrhoea Syrup did offer some of them an effective cure. However, that is most probably because McKellip's medicine included morphine as a prime ingredient, and we know today that such opiates often cause constipation as a side effect.

An article in the *Commercial and Industrial Review of Northern and Western Maryland* recounts an incident that occurred after the Battle of Gettysburg. As Union troops passed through Taneytown, “a soldier sprang from his seat on a battery, to thank Mr. McKellip for the bottle of this remedy, which had been given him saying it has saved my life—at the same time handing him a confederate sabre picked up on the battle-field. To our mind no better testimonial could be given, and no greater amount of respect could be bestowed upon any one.” Recommendations such as this by physicians, clergymen, celebrities, and others frequently accompanied patent medicine advertisements in newspapers.

A Uniontown druggist, C.A. Gosnell, manufactured the patent medicine *Anti-Dyspeptic Bitters*. Advertised in the *American Sentinel* as “warranted to cure Dyspepsia, Flatulency, Constipation, Acidity of the Stomach, General Debility, Loss of Appetite, Nausea, Heartburn, &c.,” it was sold by Henry L. Shriver, a competitor of W.E. Shriner, “at his new Drug Store, West End, Westminster.”

Two Westminster druggists who advertised their businesses in 1860 issues of the *American Sentinel* were the above-mentioned Shriver, who offered “Drugs, Medicines, Fancy Articles, Notions,” and

Dr. Joshua W. Hering, who advertised first as "Hering Drugs" and later as "Hering and Trumbo," offering "Drugs, Medicines & Chemicals" at No. 2 Carroll Hall, located at 179 East Main Street. Hering, who had studied medicine under Dr. William A. Mathias, received a medical degree from the University of Maryland. He began his practice in Westminster but also bought an established drug store in the Carroll Hall building, knowing he could not depend on his fledgling medical practice for total support. When his practice grew so large he could no longer give attention to the drug business, Hering sold the pharmacy to his brother Frank in November 1860.

By 1866 A.H. Huber owned Hering's old store and promised "physicians' prescriptions neatly and accurately compounded." That business remained at Carroll Hall for decades. In addition to carrying typical drugstore staples, Huber was making and selling *Hering's Compound Syrup of Blackberry Root*. Another local product on his shelves was a salve made by Dr. Francis Butler and L. Evans, "one of

CENTRAL DRUG STORE

OPPOSITE CATHOLIC CHURCH,

Main Street, Westminster, Md.

JOSEPH B. BOYLE,

SUCCESSOR TO WELLS BROS.

DEALER in Pure Drugs, Medicines, Chemicals, Perfumery, Fancy Articles, Hair and Tooth Brushes, Combs, Toilet Soaps, Segars, &c. Also Trusses and Shoulder Braces.

PURE WINES and LIQUORS

FOR MEDICAL PURPOSES.

Patent Medicines, Horse and Cattle Powders, &c. A fine assortment of STATIONERY.

Physicians' orders promptly filled and Prescriptions carefully and accurately compounded. mar 17-tf

Democratic Advocate, November 15, 1879.



A. H. HUBER

(Successor to HUBER & ROYER,)

No. 2 Carroll Hall, Westminster,

DEALER IN

DRUGS, CHEMICALS,
PATENT MEDICINES,
FANCY ARTICLES,
PERFUMERY, &c.

PHYSICIANS' PRESCRIPTIONS neatly
and accurately compounded.

Depot for the manufacture of
*HERING'S Compound Syrup of Black-
berry Root.*

no30-tf

Democratic Advocate, January 11, 1866.

the best Liniments that has lately been presented for the cure of Haemorrhoids or Piles."

Other patent medicine manufacturers in mid-19th century Westminster include S.A. Foutz, who offered "Foutz's Mixture: The best Liniment for Man and Beast now in Use!!" Testimonials accompanied Foutz's ads, such as this one from Jas. W. Miller, M.D. of Millersbury, PA:

Mr. Foutz, Dear Sir, -- I have examined your liniment or "Mixture," and used it in my practice, and found it to be an excellent remedy, and would cheerfully recommend it to the public.

Joseph B. Boyle, the inventor of *Boyle's Pectoral Syrup* and *Boyle's Liver Pills*, operated the Central Drug Store opposite Westminster's St. John Catholic Church by 1879. He sold patent medicines, drugs, chemicals, his own brand of rat poison, powders to treat cattle and horses, plus "Pure Wines and Liquors for medical purposes." Where Boyle, Huber, McKellip, Foutz, and others learned to produce patent medicines is unclear. Their advertisements did not mention any specialized training, although Boyle had gone to college, had two brothers who were physicians, employed a qualified assistant, and maintained a laboratory. Joshua Hering and Francis Butler were medical doctors.

By the 1880s, there were at least three druggists in Carroll County who were graduates of recognized

L. H. DIELMAN,
APOTHECARY,
 BANK BUILDING,—NEW WINDSOR.
 DEALER IN
Drugs, Chemicals, Patent Medicines,
Perfumery, Toilet and
Fancy Articles.
 SOLE MANUFACTURER OF
Baile's Liquid Horse Medicine
 AND
Snader's All Healing Liniment
 —
 Especial attention given to Physicians'
 orders and prescriptions.
 A full line of Fine Stationery constantly on
 hand. jan 1 tf

Democratic Advocate,
 January 21, 1888.

Westminster, advertised that he was a graduate of the Maryland College of Pharmacy. "Having had much experience in the Drug business, I flatter myself that all prescriptions will be filled with the utmost care. My stock of Drugs, Chemicals, Patent Medicines, Toilet Articles, Fancy Goods, etc., are all fresh, having been just purchased from the manufacturers. Night calls promptly answered, as I sleep in the store." In 1888 Mrs. Sallie Wilmer continued operating the Westminster pharmacy of her late husband, John W. Wilmer, by relying on the services of L.S. Gaskin, a graduate of the British School of Pharmacy who had previously worked in Baltimore.

Residents of rural areas such as Carroll County, dependent upon the services of doctors and druggists with less specialized training than urban

pharmacy schools. Louis H. Dielman operated a drugstore in New Windsor after graduating from the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, the first such institution in the United States. Louis Reindollar, who opened a drugstore at the corner of West Main Street and Pennsylvania Avenue in

doctors, likely bought a variety of drugs and patent medicines for themselves and their animals from hometown pharmacies. Many may have sent away for a cure which sounded promising in a newspaper. Testimonials, whether offered by doctors, ministers, or celebrities, still help to sell drugs. "Buyer beware" holds just as true today as it did 150 years ago.

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About the Authors: Mary Ann Ashcraft is a volunteer at the Historical Society of Carroll County and writes a monthly history-related column for the *Carroll County Times*.

MariBeth Welch Brainerd derives her interest in local history from her studies at the UCLA Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning. A graduate of Chicago Theological Seminary, she is training to become a Hospice Chaplain and volunteers at Dove House, part of BridgingLife (formerly Carroll Hospice).

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 The Historical Society of Carroll County, Maryland, Inc.
 210 East Main Street
 Westminster, Maryland 21157
 Phone: 410-848-6494
 Email: Info@HSCCmd.org Website: www.HSCCmd.org



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