

Doctors, Drugs, and Pioneers

Long before the coming of the pioneers the Indian practiced the art of healing in Iowa. When Black Hawk's father was wounded by the Cherokee, the Sauk chief sped to his side. According to Black Hawk: "The *medicine man* said the wound was *mortal!* from which he soon *died!*"

The secrets of the Indian medicine bag were not unknown to Iowans, many of whom swore by such nostrums as *Clemens' Indian Tonic* which was an "infallible" cure for chills, fever, and ague. If a prejudice existed against Indian tonics, the pioneer druggist could always supply alternative cures of American, European, or Asiatic origin.

Some pharmacists claim the first Iowa drugstore was set up at Burlington in 1833 with a \$16,000 stock brought from Ohio. Nothing more is known of this venture, but beginning with 1836 Iowa newspapers began advertising drugstores. Some of these were operated by doctors; others by general storekeepers. In 1836 J. M. Salmon alighted from a steamboat at Fort Madison and opened his Good Samaritan Drug Store.

On July 10, 1837, Dr. J. M. Campbell informed readers of the *Burlington Advertiser* that he had a "large assortment" of drugs and medicines to sell

cheaply. In this same paper J. Hall stated he would fill prescriptions neatly at a low price. Among his numerous fresh drugs mentioned were Cephalic snuff for headache, court plaster, Slippery Elm bark in flour, sulphur, genuine Windham's pills, Bateman's drops, Preston's smelling salts, saltpeter, hoarhound, Electric anodyne for toothache and earache, and Jujube paste for coughs and hoarseness.

Most drugs arrived by steamboat from Saint Louis or Ohio River ports. Thus on May 11, 1836, Timothy Mason advertised in the *Du Buque Visitor* the receipt of soda and Seidlitz powders together with cases of "superior" lemon syrup, Congress powders, French cordials, and anise seed, by the steamboat *Cavalier*.

The variety drugstore was well established before 1846. At Burlington, Lamson and Girvan were selling their New York and Boston dry-goods, hardware, cutlery, and Queensware, together with drugs, medicines, paints, and dye-stuffs. At Bloomington (now Muscatine), W. Hollingsworth filled prescriptions and sold drugs, medicines, paints, perfumery, and dyestuff in conjunction with books and stationery.

In 1845 B. Sanford informed readers of the *Davenport Gazette* that he could furnish physicians and families favorable to the "Botanic System of Medicine" with almost every necessary

article including Bayberry, Cayenne, Hemlock bark, Composition, Nervine, No. 6, Boneset, G. Myrrh, Gold Thread, and Golden Seal. Charles Lesslie, Sanford's competitor, dealt in drugs, patent medicines, chemicals, and a score of other things.

Although the first drugstores were located along the Mississippi, the pioneer druggist swiftly followed the squatter inland. On October 23, 1840, William Gobin of Rochester in Cedar County was advertising drugs and medicines in an Iowa City paper. By 1848 Fenimore & Peterson of Iowa City advertised their stock as containing 500 ounces of quinine, 60 pounds of English and American calomel, 75 pounds of Peruvian bark, 500 pounds of Epsom salts, 300 pounds of flour sulphur, 75 pounds of carbonate of soda, 50 pounds tartaric acid, 40 pounds pulverized ipecac, 50 pounds pulverized rheumatism root, 50 pounds extract of logwood, and 500 pounds of alum.

Prior to the Civil War, restrictive legislation was passed against poisoning and the sale of poison. As early as January 25, 1839, the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Iowa prescribed stern punishment for persons guilty of poisoning. The Code of 1851 made such acts punishable by imprisonment in the penitentiary not exceeding ten years and by a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars. The same Code also declared: "If

any apothecary, druggist, or other person, sell and deliver any arsenic, corrosive sublimate, prussic acid, or any poisonous liquid or substance, without having the word 'poison' and the true name thereof written or printed upon a label attached to the vial, box, or parcel containing the same, he shall be punished by fine not exceeding one hundred dollars nor less than twenty dollars." The work of a state toxicologist is an outgrowth of such early laws.

As the years passed Iowa druggists were quick to recognize the need for well-trained pharmacists. The organization of a State Pharmaceutical Association in 1880, and the founding of a Department of Pharmacy at the State University in 1885, are but steps in the growth of a profession. When the 70th annual meeting of the Iowa State Pharmaceutical Association was held at Des Moines in 1949, Governor William S. Beardsley (himself a druggist) was a principal speaker. In addition to the governor, John P. Berg, Luke Vittetoe, and Harlan L. Pote were druggists serving in the 53rd General Assembly. It is not unusual for both the Senate and House of the General Assembly to list a Pharmacy Committee.

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