



### Humphreys' Veterinary Homeopathic Specifics

Frederick Humphreys founded the Humphreys' Homeopathic Medicine Company in New York city in 1853. Frederick descended from a very distinguished family. He could trace his ancestors back to William the Conqueror of England. His family's American history started with the arrival of Michael Humphrey who settled in Windsor, Connecticut in 1640.

Frederick was born in Marcellus, New York on March 11, 1816. He was the son of Dr. Erastus Humphreys. His youth was spent in Auburn, New York where he attended Auburn Academy. At the age of sixteen, he joined his uncle and brother in the clock business. In 1835 he returned home to manage his father's farm. In 1837, at the age of 21, he married Cornelia Palmer. The couple moved to Chillicothe, Ohio soon after the marriage to be near Cornelia's father. It is in Chillicothe that Frederick entered the Methodist Episcopal ministry. Sadly, his wife died in 1840 and Fredrick returned to Auburn to the life of an itinerant preacher.

In 1843, Frederick married his second wife, Frances Jefferson of Ludlowville, New York. By 1844, the 28 year old

Frederick had given up the ministry and moved to Utica, New York to join his father's medical practice. The Pennsylvania Homeopathic Medical College in Philadelphia was the next stop for Frederick Humphreys. He entered the College in 1848 and graduated with the degree of Doctor of Homeopathic Medicine in 1850. Three years later, Dr. Humphreys and his family moved to New York City where Frederick became quite a sensation within the Homeopathic community. He established a large and successful medical practice, helped form the New York State Homeopathic Medical Society, and became an important member of the American Homeopathic Institute.

In 1854 his professional life took a major change as he started the production and sale of medication of his own invention. Dr. Humphreys called his medicines Homeopathic Specifics. Very simply, homeopathy is a medical treatment of disease giving the patient very tiny doses of drugs which produce symptoms similar to the disease being treated. The drugs then stimulate the body to "cure" the disease. Professionally, Dr. Humphreys then had to fight against such name calling as "fraud" and "quack".

The ten medicines commonly included in the stable case and the problems each cured were:

- A.A.: Fevers, Congestion, Inflammation
- B.B.: Strains, Lameness
- C.C.: Distemper, Strangles, Influenza
- D.D.: Worms, Bots, Grubs
- E.E.: Coughs, Heaves, Broken Wind [Fig. 5]
- F.F.: Colic, Belly-ache, Diarrhea
- G.G.: Miscarriage, Retained After-birth
- H.H.: Kidney, Urinary Diseases, Dropsy
- I.I.: Eruptions, Mange, Grease, Thrush
- J.K.: Indigestion, Constipation, Paralysis (originally labeled J.J.) [Fig. 6]

The "Special" medicines produced, but not included in the stable case:

- L.L.: Masturbation or Self-Abuse in Colts or Stallions
- M.M.: Sterility or Failure to Breed in Cows
- N.N.: Sexual Weakness, or Impotence in Stallions
- T.T.: Lock-Jaw, Tetanus, Convulsions



**Figure 1 (L) and 2 (R):** Two examples of middle size veterinary bottles. The early bottle has the word "Specifics" above the horse and in the company name at the bottom. The later example has had the bottle mold altered to remove the word "Specifics" from both locations. Note that while the size of the bottles is identical, the early example has a much taller neck.



**Figure 3:** Wide mouth Cure Oil jar. One jar was included in every Humphreys' stable case. Labeled examples are very uncommon and can sell for several hundred dollars.



**Figure 4:** Advertising trade card c.1890 for Humphreys' Cure Oil. This wonderful horse image has made this card one of the most sought veterinary trade cards.

His company prospered and made Dr. Humphreys a very wealthy man indeed.

The Humphreys Homeopathic Medicine Company entered the production of veterinary medicines around 1860. While his human remedies were numbered, his veterinary cures were lettered. Ten medicines were commonly produced for animals. Four other "Special" medicines were made, but were not commonly available without special order. Humphreys' veterinary remedies could be purchased individually or in a stable case. The stable case was designed to be an emergency case, held ready to treat any horse ailment that arose in the stable. The stable case was a locking, wooden box which held one each of the Humphreys' remedies, a jar of Cure Oil, a Humphreys' manual of diagnosis of diseases and treatment, and a glass medicator for counting out the drops of medicine necessary to treat the animal. The Humphreys' manual also contained a folded stable chart which was often nailed to the wall of the stable for quick reference. [See table on previous page.]

Stable cases were produced in three sizes, to hold the three sizes of Humphreys' Veterinary Remedies produced. The largest veterinary bottles are 2"x 2" x 6 1/2". They are embossed with the horse head design, commonly seen on the small Humphreys' bottles. Early examples have the word "Specific"

in their embossing [Figure 1] while later examples have had this word removed from the bottle molds [Figure 2]. This change was most likely due to the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906 which prevented medicine makers from using the word cure in their remedy names or advertising. "Specific" was a common synonym for cure at the time. The middle size Humphreys' bottles are 1 3/4"x 1 3/4"x 5 1/2" and had the same embossed changes as the large size bottles. The small size bottles are 1 7/8"x 1/2"x 3 1/2". These bottles, without labels, are probably the most common veterinary patent medicine bottles available today. The very first veterinary bottles Humphreys produced were simple embossed: HUMPHREYS' / VETERINARY / SPECIFICS. At that time, there was no horse head embossing on the bottle. The design of the horse embossed on the back of the small bottles varied greatly with time. Ten different horse designs have been identified by collectors. Some of the changes are very minute, while others are quite extreme. The rarest variation and most different, is the left facing horse with the wild and woolly mane.

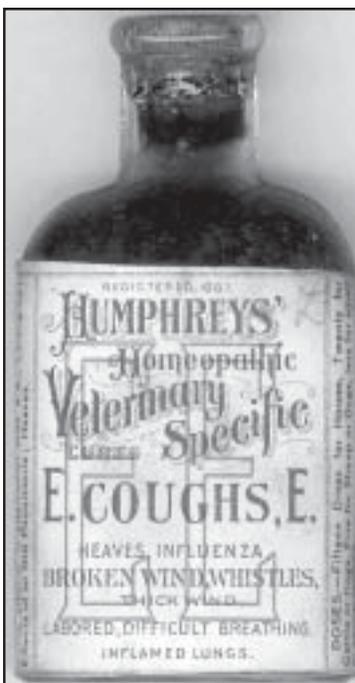
The Veterinary Cure Oil came in a square glass jar, 2 3/4" x 2 3/4" x 4 3/4", which had a large mouth [Figure 3]. This Oil was advertised as "Surpasses every

other application for allaying pain, arresting bleeding, arresting inflammation and promoting healing." Cure Oil jars are uncommon and missing from most collectors stable cases. The glass medicator, being the most fragile item in the stable case is also the rarest.

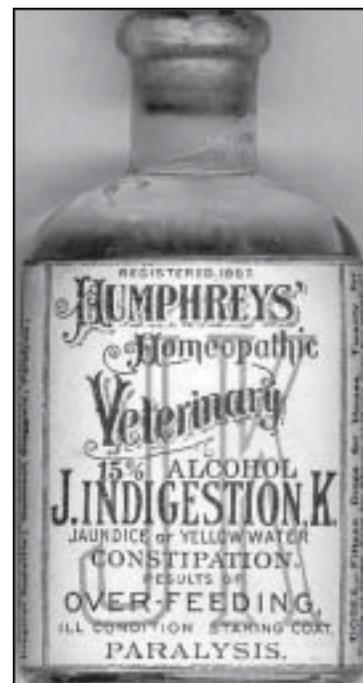
Over the years of medicine production, the labels on the cork top bottles changed. These changes were principally caused by government regulation. The following list of label changes, I believe, follows the years of production from earliest to latest. To my knowledge, dating these label changes with any degree of accuracy has not been done. As with any list, this one is most likely incomplete. Please contact me if you have any additional information about Humphreys veterinary bottles, their embossing, or their labels.

- 1) "Specific" on label with no alcohol percentage.
- 2) "Specific" used and 52% alcohol.
- 3) Without "Specific" but keeps 52% alcohol.
- 4) 52% blacked out and 15% overprinted.
- 5) 15% alcohol.
- 6) 15% and block letters used for name.

Dr. Frederick Humphreys, M. D. died in 1900 and was buried in Fort Hill Cemetery in Auburn, New York. The company he founded survived and



**Figure 5 (L):** Early labeled small bottle of E.E. Used to treat Coughs, Heaves, and Broken Wind in horses. This example has the word "Specific" and no alcohol percentage designation. This would be a c. 1900 example.



**Figure 6 (R):** Later small bottle for J.K. The word "Specifics" has been removed and the alcohol designation has been reduced to 15%. Most veterinary collectors today only collect labeled examples of the Humphreys' Veterinary Remedies. While many variations of the bottle embossing exist, collecting by embossing variation is currently neglected.

prospered with a decidedly military air in it's future leadership.

Frederick Erastus Humphreys was named after both his grandfather and his great-grandfather. He was born on September 16, 1883 in Summit, New Jersey. His father, Jay Humphreys was the son of Frederick Humphreys, the founder of the Humphreys' Homeopathic Medicine Company. Frederick E. attended the United States Military Academy at West Point. He graduated eighth in the Class of 1906. He entered the Corp of Engineers and was detailed to the Signal Corp.

In 1907, the Signal Corp established an Aeronautical Division and let bids for the construction and operation of flying machines. The Wright Brothers were the only bidders to successfully build a plane. Aeroplane #1 was accepted on August 2, 1909. It weighed 800 pounds, was driven by a 30 horsepower motor and cost the Army \$30,000. The Wright Brothers were also required to teach two officers to fly their plane. One of those officers was Frederick Erastus Humphreys.

Wilbur Wright gave Lieutenant Humphreys a little over 3 hours of flight instruction. He then sent him on his first solo flight that lasted all of three minutes. Two flights later, Lt. Humphreys was the Army's first "certified" military pilot. The date was October 29, 1909.

Frederick E. Humphreys resigned his commission in 1910 and joined the family business. He was a part of the business until his death in 1939. The last twelve years of his life he was President of the Humphreys Homeopathic Medicine

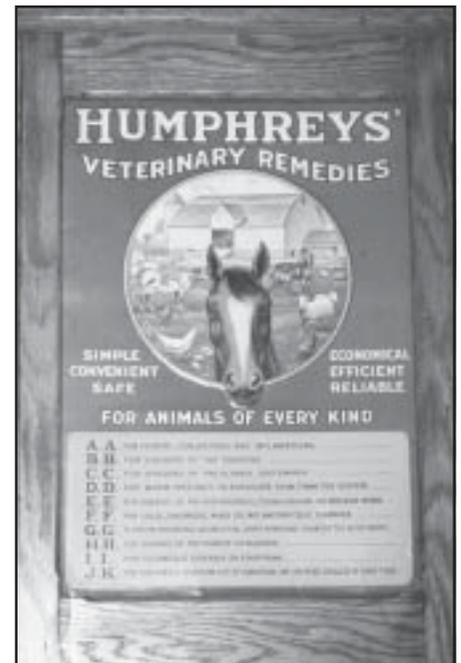
Company.

In 1940 the company name was changed to the Humphreys' Medicine Company. It is not clear who was running the company at this time but an unconfirmed reference indicates that it was probably being run by Frederick's brother. In 1952 another famous Humphreys flyer entered the company and became President and CEO in 1954.

Suzanne Humphreys-Ford-de Florez was born in Far Hill, New York in 1915. She was the great-grand daughter of Dr. Frederick Humphreys. Suzanne was bitten by the flying bug at age ten. At the age of 16, she started her flying lessons and by eighteen she was racing planes and doing stunts. When World War II came to America women were not allowed into the Air Corp. Suzanne applied to the United Kingdom Air Transport Auxiliary. At the time, she was a flight instructor on Long Island. In 1942, she entered the Royal Air Force and was a ferry pilot until 1945 when she returned to the United States.

Suzanne took over the family company from her father in 1954 and continued in it's leadership until sometime after 1985. In 1968, the company changed it's name again, becoming Humphreys' Pharmacal Inc. Suzanne passed away in July, 2001.

According to a Google search in the internet, Humphreys' Pharmacal Inc. is still doing business and is located in Rutherford, New Jersey. They are described on one site as being the second largest manufacturer of homeopathic products in America. I could not,

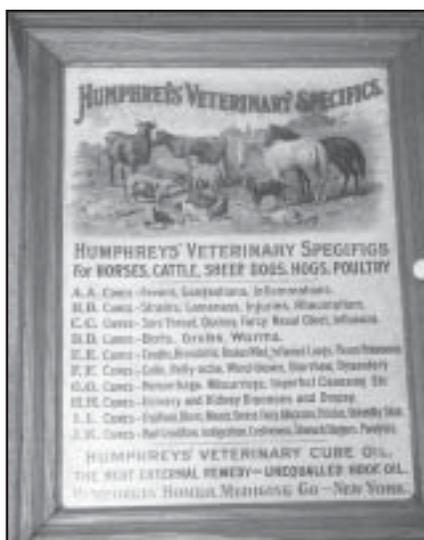


**Figure 9:** Tin front cabinet that I call the "Porthole Horse". This is considered to be the last display cabinet produced by Humphreys c. 1920. This is by far the rarest of the Humphreys' tin front cabinets.

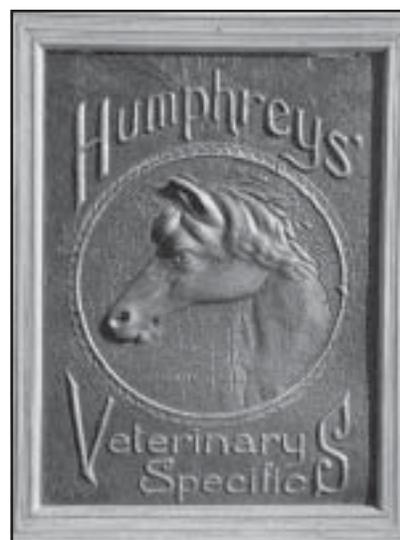
however, locate a web site for the company. After 150 years of production, the company that was founded by Dr. Frederick Humphreys' is still active in the homeopathic medicine industry.

**References:**

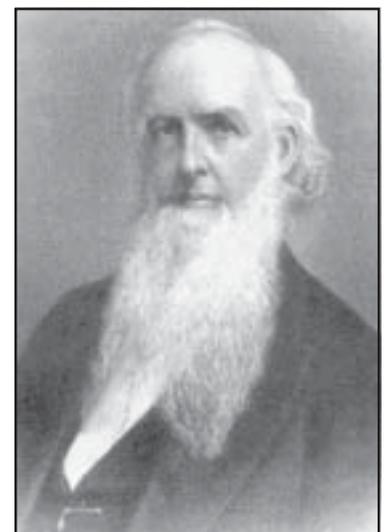
- "The Medicine Chest," Dr. Richard Cannon; *Antique Bottle & Glass Collector Magazine*.
- Air Transport Auxiliary Org.
- New York State Military Museum.
- Fort Hill Cemetery, Auburn, New York.
- America's Successful Men of Affairs.
- Website: [www.Homeoint.org](http://www.Homeoint.org).
- Humphreys' Homeopathic Medicine Company booklets.



**Figure 7 (L):** Tin front display cabinet commonly referred to as the "Barnyard Scene". Two variations exist in which the line of print just below the scene differs.



**Figure 8 (R):** This is the display cabinet referred to as the "composite horse". This is a compressed paper material that gives the horse a raised, 3-D effect. Three variations of this cabinet exist in which the placement of the lettering around the central horse differs. This was also produced in an original frame for hanging on the wall.



**Figure 10:** Dr. Frederick Humphreys (1816-1900), the founder.