

Medicines of the Holy Roamin' Empire

*The Remedies of
Reverend William S. Lunt*

by Joe Terry



“All is bright Beyond” Those were the last words, uttered in the early morning hours of April 24, 1879 by a remarkable person. Death took from the world that day a man well-known and respected. He gained his popularity through honesty, true friendship, and a firm belief in that for which he stood. These qualities, passed from person to person by word of mouth, generated such publicity that he rarely found mention in print. This fact makes piecing his life together today a challenge. What does come to light shows that during his life he was a Methodist Episcopal clergyman, a gentleman farmer, a politician and a proprietary medicine salesman.

This man was William S. Lunt. Much of his early life remains shrouded in mystery. He was born in New York State on May 26, 1817 to his seventeen-year-old mother, Mary. Little else can be determined from history, but a few deductions can be made. There was a Rev. Lunt in New York, possibly William’s grandfather, and this might have been the reason he eventually entered the ministry. Sometime in the early 1840s William was a practicing preacher and was administering to the multitudes of his home state.

William married a girl named Phila, and the two took to traveling: he preaching the gospel and she the dutiful wife. They were not alone, for the couple was joined in 1839, not by a new bundle of joy, but by William’s mother. She would remain with them for the next four decades.

The first mention of him in Ohio was in 1847. He was assigned to the ME church in Defiance. In addition to his regular duties, William was promoting and selling the *Guide to Holiness*. Mr. Lunt wrote this letter to the author of the

work, Dexter S. King.

Defiance, Dec. 30, 1847

Dear Brother,

I cannot better express my gratitude to you for your liberal offer, made in your epistle of the 3rd, nor the willingness and pleasure with which I accept your invitation to give my mite of influence in circulating the “Guide”, than by sending you the enclosed subscribers. May I say to you that there is no work in which I am more interested and delighted, than the spread of holiness – to increase which, may the “Guide: long live under the influence of the Holy Ghost, to bear its testimony against indwelling sin, and to direct those who sigh for purity to the power of faith and the fullness of Christ.

Its contributors have evidently been baptized with an unction from the Holy One, for their testimony comes with the freshness and power of living witnesses. But you need no encouragement from me, far off and unknown. May the Deliverer from “all iniquity” incorporate His will as a part of your being until you are brought to ascribe to him glory and praise through eternity, when may we meet to say, as we do now, that “God is all in all.”

Yours in Christ

W.S. Lunt

These do not sound like the words of a typical patent medicine salesman. This is not surprising, as at the time he was not yet involved with the trade, nor would he be for another year or two. His time in Defiance was short, as was common to a circuit preacher. The Kalida (Ohio) Venture for September 5, 1848 listed the appointments for the next year’s circuit, with the Rev. W.S. Lunt having charge of Maumee City (present day Maumee) and

its area churches. Though based in Maumee, William’s travels took him as far north as Tremainsville and as far south as Waterville. Along the way were scattered settlements and isolated farms, all of which he visited on his travels. He quickly became a lifeline for many of these people; bring with him news, supplies, the occasional letter, all mixed with a good dose of salvation.

Maumee was a busy little town, named for the river on which it was situated. It was home to all manner of businesses, including several drugstores. One of these was owned by John Stanford Gregory, a purveyor of pills, potions and poultices on the town’s main street. John knew his business well, maybe even too well. He had earned himself a bad reputation with one of his patent medicine suppliers, a New Englander named Perry Davis. While Davis’ Pain Killer [Figure 7] was a good seller, Mr. Gregory found out that making and selling his own imitation, Gregory’s Cure of Pain, was more profitable than selling someone else’s.

It is not illogical to conclude that the two men, reverend and druggist, would have met. Somewhere down the line W.S. Lunt was talked into selling his own line of medicines, changing his title from reverend to “doctor”. It was perhaps because there was a need for extra cash. God’s rewards might fill the soul, but they did little to fill an empty stomach. A preacher was not given an extravagant paycheck; neither did he have time to do extra work. Mr. Gregory likely found a few workable formulae, and perhaps even mixed up the first few batches of medicine. Bottles were purchased, filled, labeled, and in no time William was marketing Dr. Lunt’s Family Medicines. His job as circuit preacher allowed him access to numerous people, many of who had little time to travel to the local store. They willing bought his medicine, which he brought with him as he traversed his circuit.

His saddlebags were brimming with bottles of Dr. Lunt’s Ague Killer [Figure 1], American Pain Killer, Balsam of Horehound [Figure 2] and Great Western Liniment [Figure 3]. Sales of his medicine were by word of mouth, but it was enough. As sales increased, personalized bottles were ordered with “Dr. W.S. Lunt’s” on one side, “Family Medicine” on the front and “Maumee, Ohio.” on the other [Figure 4]. The



Figure 1

popularity of the medicines grew, and it seems likely that a few local drugstores kept a stock of his remedies on hand. John Gregory likely did him the favor, as did Peck and Robertson across the river in Perrysburg.

The situation worked out well, but it developed a foreseeable flaw. William, now known as Dr. Lunt, was still a Methodist preacher, and as such was bound to go where he was told. After two years in Maumee he received a decree to move south to Findlay, Ohio. In his departure he left behind many friends, but he promised to send them news (and medicine) as he could. He was soon preaching to the populace at the new church; a small wooden affair located on Main Cross Street. Being of a good nature, and not overbearing in his views, he quickly made many new friends. As travel was still part of his duties, his voice resounded in church buildings at Risden (now Fostoria), Arcadia and Portage.

The move necessitated new molds for his bottles. Customers had no doubts about where the medicine came from, as Findlay now took the place of Maumee. The old familiars were there, the ague syrup, the liniment and the horehound balsam. The medicines found their greatest sales locally, but some found their way as far as Indiana. A bottle dug in the Hoosier state several years ago may have ridden the distance with some gold seeker en route to California.

Dr. Lunt sold the medicines for a few more years. It could be presumed that he retired from the patent medicine business in 1854, when he withdrew from preaching. He settled on a farm in Hancock County, between Fostoria and Findlay. It is even possible that he found the money for the farm from the sale of his business. He raised stock, and made a specialty of growing various types of potatoes. Life was fairly relaxed, without the hardships of riding horseback through swamp and thicket.

His comfort was short lived. In 1855, the local Republican caucus chose him to run with Salmon P. Chase in the Ohio election. Mr. Lunt had formerly been a Democrat, but had dropped from the party on account of their pro-slavery stand. William's popularity was evident; not only was he nominated for state senator, he was elected. He served only one two-year term, refusing another. He returned to religion in 1858-59 by accepting a position in Fremont. He remained there until the fall of 1861, when he returned to the Fostoria area to pursue his agrarian hobbies. He was happy once again tinkering with his



Figure 2

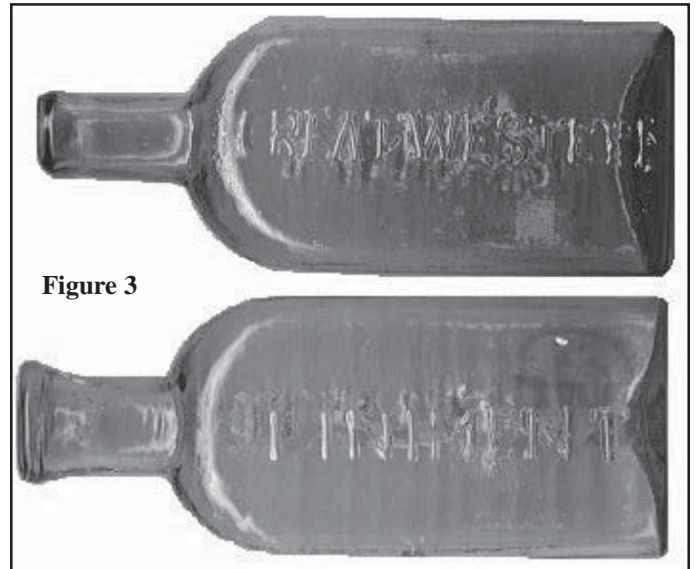


Figure 3

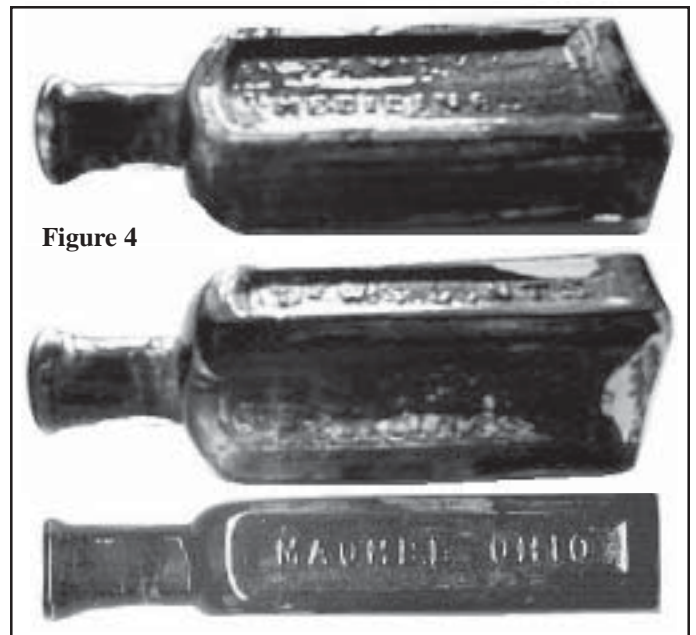


Figure 4

crops.

In 1867, Mr. Lunt submitted the findings of some of his horticultural experiments to several societies. The Institute Club, of New York, received a copy of his successes in growing potatoes. His results were published in *Moore's Rural New Yorker*, of Rochester, on November 16, 1867. This shows he was still practicing a career as a gentleman farmer. Little else drew his interest, and he spent his time as he pleased. His life continued as he wished, living in quiet obscurity with his wife and mother.

His death came about twelve years later. According to one obituary, his health had seen a decline prior to 1855, which would correspond with the Toledo Blade's assessment that year. "*He was compelled to abandon his former calling on account of health, and is now engaged on a stock farm in Hancock County*". He was well remembered by many, and his obituary could be found in a variety of newspapers. The *Clyde Enterprise* had a touching article, and the *Seneca Advertiser* (Tiffin) mentioned his passing in their Fostoria section, more so, in fact, than did the Fostoria paper.

Many questions still remain unanswered. For example, what did Mr. Lunt do with his medicine business when he retired? It seems probable that he sold the rights to his remedies, but if so, who bought them? There is one known bottle, non-pontiled, embossed "Dr. Lunt's Balsam Horehound, A.J. Boyd prop." [Figure 5] A search of the Northwest Ohio area did not turn up such a person. There are several possibilities, including this prospect. There was a Methodist minister by the name of A.J. Boyd, who by the 1890s was serving in the Indian Territories. It could have been he that bought the medicines, and perhaps finding little time to devote to them, abandoned them to anonymity. There is a good chance we will never know for certain. Additionally, one of the pictured liniment bottles in not pontiled, though it was blown in the same mold as earlier versions. This fact points to a continued use of the medicine into more modern times.

The bottles shown in this article are from the collection of Findlay Antique Bottle Club member Joe Frey. I would like to thank him for sharing his collection with the readers of *Bottles and Extras*. If any of the readers have any Lunt bottles, especially any not mentioned in this article, Joe would be interested in hearing from you. Please drop him a line at odants@bright.net.

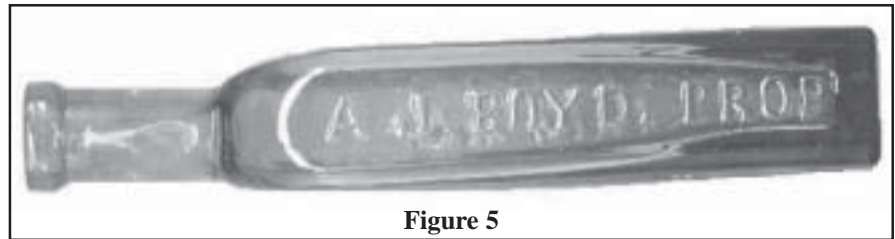


Figure 5



Figure 6

Davis's Pain Killer.
 CAUTION.

ALL persons are hereby Cautioned against making application for, or purchasing DAVIS' PAIN KILLER of one

J. STANFORD GREGORY, of MAUMEE CITY.

He was formerly an agent for the sale of the genuine Medicine; but recently it has come to the knowledge of the proprietors, that he has been manufacturing and vending a spurious article, putting it up to the same style as the genuine, publishing a pamphlet and copying our directions near verbatim and using one of the heads of our advertisements ("INSTANT CURE OF PAIN,") for a name to his spurious compound.

Within the last two weeks he has made application to our western office, Cincinnati, for another supply of the genuine, to sell to persons he cannot sell with his spurious stuff; but his agency is hereby revoked, and he will have no more; and all persons who value life and health, and wish to purchase the genuine PERRY DAVIS' PAIN KILLER, must see that a likeness of the original inventor is on the bottle, and purchase of such agents as are named below this notice.

New London, Ct, May 4, 1860.

Western Office, 70-Heise Building Cincinnati,
 J. N. HARBIS, General Agent.
 T. H. C. ALLEN, Superintendent.

J. AUGUSTUS HALL, agent for Northern Ohio,
 and Spencer & Moore, agents at Maumee City
 May 18, 1860

Figure 7