



Dr. Daniels' and the Story of Witch Hazel

My very first veterinary collectible purchase, oh those many years ago, was a Dr. Daniels' tin front display cabinet. Since that purchase, I have always had an interest in Dr. Daniels' medicines and memorabilia. One of the least commonly found of his remedies is Witch Hazel. One of my favorite bottles is a Dr. Daniels' Veterinary Witch Hazel Cloudy Quadruple Extract of Hamamelis. Now, that is quite a name. I have always been intrigued by the name and now I have some history to go with it.

Witch Hazel was not one of Dr. Daniels' original medicines. Its name does not show up on the first style display cabinets and is not listed in any of the company's early booklets. Witch Hazel is not listed on a company letterhead dated 1901 when the company was located at #1 Staniford Street, Boston. However, bottles of Witch Hazel with the Staniford Street address do exist.

Dr. Daniels' moved his business to Milk Street in 1903, so it seems safe to assume that production of Witch Hazel was begun between late 1901 & 1903. After



Pond's Extract embossed bottle with packaging. From the Pond's Extract Company. Note the package has a flowering shrub on the front. No doubt an image of Witch Hazel. (Photo courtesy Reggie Lynch)

narrowing down the production start, I looked into Witch Hazel itself.

What is it?

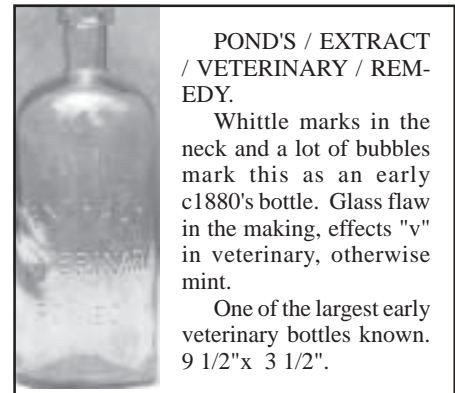
Witch Hazel is a shrub found in the northeastern United States. Its scientific name is *Hamamelis virginiana*. It produces a yellow flower which most unusually, blooms in the winter.

The name Witch Hazel seems to come from two sources. Witch comes from Colonial times when the forked branches of the plant were used by water dowers. The dowers searched for water by holding their cut branch, or witching stick, and when it pointed to the ground, water was surely under ground. Hazel come from a case of mistaken identity. It seems that the leaves of *Hamamelis virginiana* are often mistaken for the Hazelnut tree.

American Indians were first to find the medicinal properties of Witch Hazel. A tea brewed from the leaves helped control internal bleeding. It's astringent properties helped with external bleeding. In 1840, Theron T. Pond of Utica, New York came in contact with the Oneida Tribe of Central New York who were using Witch Hazel for burns, boils and wounds. His work with the Indian medicine man led to local production of an extract of Witch Hazel he called "Golden Treasure." The golden is thought to come from the yellow color of the plant's flowers.

Their treasure was preserved with alcohol. Around 1850, Mr. Pond died and the company was sold to Mr. Hart and Munson of Utica. The extract's name was changed to "Pond's Extract."

Hart and Munson's involvement was short lived and the



POND'S / EXTRACT / VETERINARY / REMEDY.

Whittle marks in the neck and a lot of bubbles mark this as an early c1880's bottle. Glass flaw in the making, effects "v" in veterinary, otherwise mint.

One of the largest early veterinary bottles known. 9 1/2"x 3 1/2".

company was sold to Isaiah A. Palmer. In the 1850-60's Pond's Extract found it's way into use among Homeopathic and Allopathic physicians and then by the general public as a patent medicine. In 1860 Extract of Hamamelis was added to the U.S. Pharmacopoeia and would remain there until 1947.

But how did it work?

The active ingredient with the astringent properties is Tannin. It, no doubt, has medicinal properties. The problem with effectiveness arises with the distillate. When the leaves are distilled, almost all the Tannin is removed. This unfortunate fact caused the U. S. Dispensatory to state in 1916, "As whatever slight therapeutic virtues witch hazel possesses seems to depend on it's tannin, it is obvious that this distillate cannot represent the drug." "This much used and still lauded witch hazel. . . must depend for its virtues upon the alcohol they contain, and the faith



they inspire.” Finally, it was stated that “the good that it exerts . . . resides more in the activity of a cleansing and evaporating lotion and in the mind of it’s user, than in any decided curative properties that the preparation may possess.”

In the late 1860’s a well known patent medicine producer, Dr. Frederick Humphreys, jumped into the Pond’s extract bandwagon. Dr. Humphreys claimed to have been the personal physician of Theron Pond. He claimed that Mr. Pond gave him the right to produce and sell Pond’s Extract, which he did through his Humphreys Homeopathic Medicine Company. For his trouble, Humphreys was sued by Mr Palmer in a lawsuit which dragged on for many years. In 1872, a banker from New York, F. W. Hurtt bought Dr. Humphreys’ interest in Pond’s extract and formed a partnership with Mr. Palmer. The new corporation was capitalized for \$100,000.

In 1873, the company was reorganized and Mr. Hurtt was joined by his brother Leon Hurtt. The new company was now named F.W. Hurtt and Brother. Production was based in Rome, New York with annual sales of over a half million dollars. The Hurtt’s sold the Pond’s Extract Company in 1898. The Pond’s Company went on to become one of the largest skin care companies in the world. Today they are known as Chesebrough-Pond’s Company.

The veterinary collector today can find

examples of these Witch Hazel products. Pond’s Extract sold a veterinary remedy. Their extract was sold in a huge, aqua, embossed bottle. It stands 9 1/2” x 3 1/2” and is embossed: POND’S / EXTRACT / VETERINARY / REMEDY. This c1880’s bottle is considered uncommon.

Dr. Daniels’, it seems, developed his Extract of Hamamelis as a proprietary medicine to compete with the Pond’s product. Since his production started after the Hurtt’s sold their company in 1898, Daniels’ was most likely riding the wave of public popularity the Pond’s Company had started. Dr. Daniels’ produced his Witch Hazel for both animal and human use. The packaging was separated by species and several variations of labeling exists (see illustrations). The Human, Triple Extract Cloudy Witch Hazel was advertised as “The Family Remedy for Inflammations and Hemorrhages and Good for a Thousand Ills.” “For internal and External Use.”

The Daniels’ company was above all else, a shrewd advertiser. If simple “Extract or Hamamelis” was good then surely the more concentrated or perceived to be more concentrated, the better. Thus, his single extract became Triple Extract, three times as strong. Finally his Veterinary Witch Hazel became Cloudy Quadruple Extract of Mamamelis, a four fold concentration, or so he would lead us to believe.

The Daniels’ Hamamelis for human use

comes in two size bottles that are typically either 6 1/2” or 9 1/2” tall. Their labels have a colorful blue background and are very collectible. Original boxes are very scarce in any condition and would add significantly to the price. The only examples of Veterinary Witch Hazel I have seen are in 9 1/2” tall bottles, not embossed, and have paper labels. These bottles are extremely rare and would be much sought by collectors.

References

1. Foster, Steven. Witch Hazel. Steven Foster Group 2000.
2. Lloyd, J. U. and J. T. Lloyd. History of Hamamelis (Witch Hazel), extract and distillate. Journal of the American Pharmaceutical Association. 24 (1935).

Photos:

1. Family use, large size extract of Hamamelis. Embossed bottle with label extending to three sides. Embossed: DR A.C. DANIELS INC / BOSTON, MASS. 9 1/2"x 3"x 1 3/4". Label still retains the 1906 Drug Act disclaimer, but the bottle dates to post-1915.

2. Variation of Dr. Daniels' Witch Hazel. Embossed: DR. DANIELS' / TRIPLE EXTRACT / HAMAMELIS and has the 15% alcohol added later with a red stamp. Bottle is 6 1/2"x 2 1/2"x 1 1/2". "For Internal and Extrenal Use."

3. This example is the latest of the Witch Hazel group. Paper label only. Probably produced late 1920's to early 1930's.

4. This early Dr. Daniels' Veterinary Extract of Witch Hazel has the company's #1 Staniford Street address. That address dates this bottle to the 1901-1903 time period. Bottle is 9 3/4" x 4" x 2".

The largest Dr. Daniels' bottle I have ever seen. Back label has an image of race horse, Lord Derby, 2:06 1/2 for the mile. Bottle still retains most of its original contents.

5. The bottle with the big name that started the Witch Hazel search. Unembossed, label only. Label extends to all sides. Racing scene of trotting horses on reverse. 9 1/2"x 4"x 2". The "INC." in the company name dates this example to post-1915.

