

## Utah

History of a  
Western Patent Medicine

## Johnson's Valley Tan Remedies

Salt Lake City  
Utah Territory

By *Stan Sanders*

Photographs by *Mickey Roach*

The following history is quoted from Utah - Her Cities - Towns and Resources - W. E. Conkey Company - Chicago - Printers and Binders - Chicago 1891-1992

### The Valley-Tan Laboratory

"The history of proprietary, or patent medicines, as they are termed, discloses a wonderful number of different brands throughout the world. Many of these preparations possess valuable medical qualities, while others are worthless, if not positively detrimental. A good patent medicine, or family remedy, however, is deserving of mention, and the editors of this work feel inclined, from the well-known merit and excellence of its preparations, to give the Valley-Tan, or V.T.R. Laboratory of Mr. C. E. Johnson, located at 54 and 56 S. West Temple, an extended notice in these pages.

This enterprising manufactory is essentially a home institution in every sense of the word. It deals in and manufactures home-made medicines for family use, taking advantage of the many valuable remedies growing at our very doors, and combining them all with the good

remedies of the known world, to produce an effective and useful whole. The composition of the various remedies was chiefly the result of the life-long labors of Mr. Joseph E. Johnson, the father of the present proprietor. The Laboratory was put in operation some six years ago (1884), by C. E. Johnson, and its success has been a phenomenal one in the history of enterprises of this class.

The preparations of the Laboratory are designated as "Valley-Tan Remedies," and the "V.T.R." trademark that appears at the head of this article, are very familiar throughout the West. An analysis of the V.T.R. trademark appears at the end of this article, and will be found well worth a perusal, from the fact that it is unique and shows evidence of much thought and care for detail, which is a marked feature in all Mr. Johnson's affairs. The principal preparations of the Laboratory at the present writing are:

Johnson's Oil of Science, V.T.R. Cough Cordial, Johnson's Ginger, Kol-Kura (Johnson), V.T.R. Canker Syrup, V.T.R. Eye Salve, Compound Boneset Pills, V.T.R. Liniment, Johnson's Essence of Life, Johnson's Peach Tonic, Magic Corn Cure, Johnson's Blackberry Tonic, V.T.R. Worm Lozenges, Baboria (Johnson), Johnson's Wine of Wormwood, Johnson's Juniper Tonic, Johnson's Pill, V.T.R. Lung Troches, and other articles, such as Elixirs, Syrups, Tinctures, etc.

The excellences of these medicines are amply exemplified in the numerous testimonials that Mr. Johnson has received and also by the gold medals, diplomas, etc. awarded him at the Territorial Fairs.

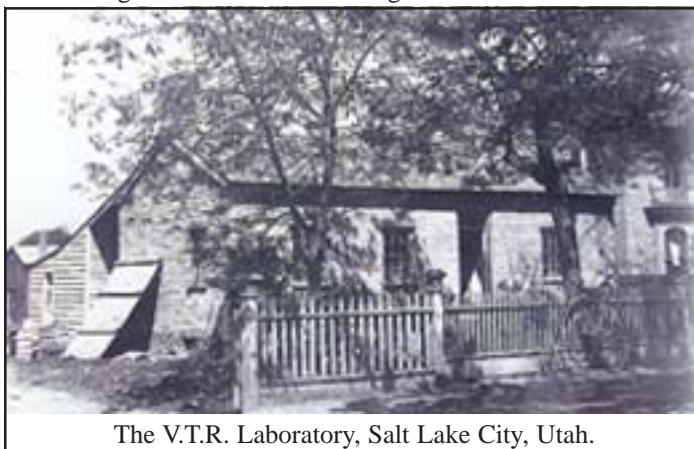


Photo of C. E. Johnson, cir. 1891, found on page 46 of Utah - Her Cities - Towns and Resources.

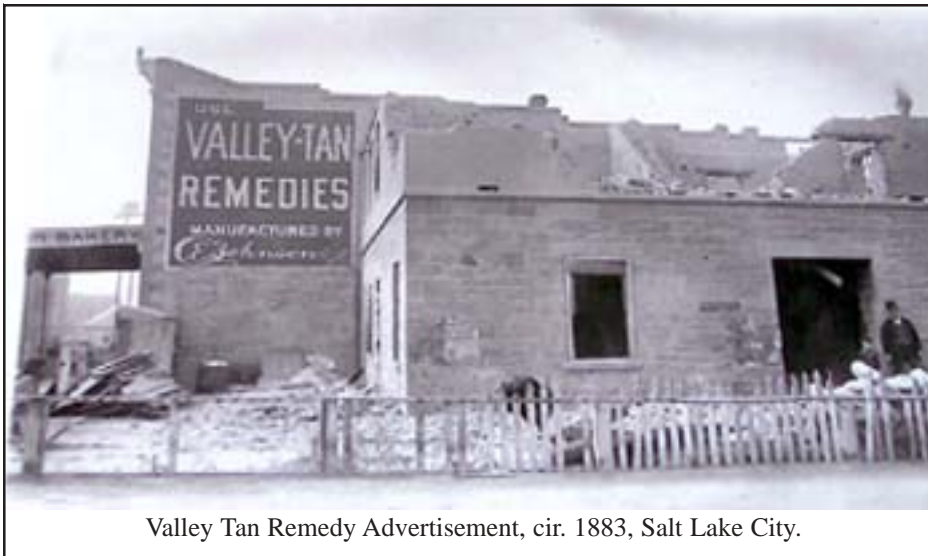
Joseph E. Johnson, the discoverer and inventor of these valuable remedies, was born in New York State in 1817. At a very early age, he manifested a disposition to follow the practice of medicine, and began to study the nature of remedies and theory of diseases as well as he could in so early a day. Following this up, he gathered herbs, roots and barks and compounded them for neighbors and friends, and was among the first to note the evil effects of mineral poisons and



Two different Vallen Tan Remedy bottles (B.I.M.) cir. 1885-1890.



The V.T.R. Laboratory, Salt Lake City, Utah.



Valley Tan Remedy Advertisement, cir. 1883, Salt Lake City.

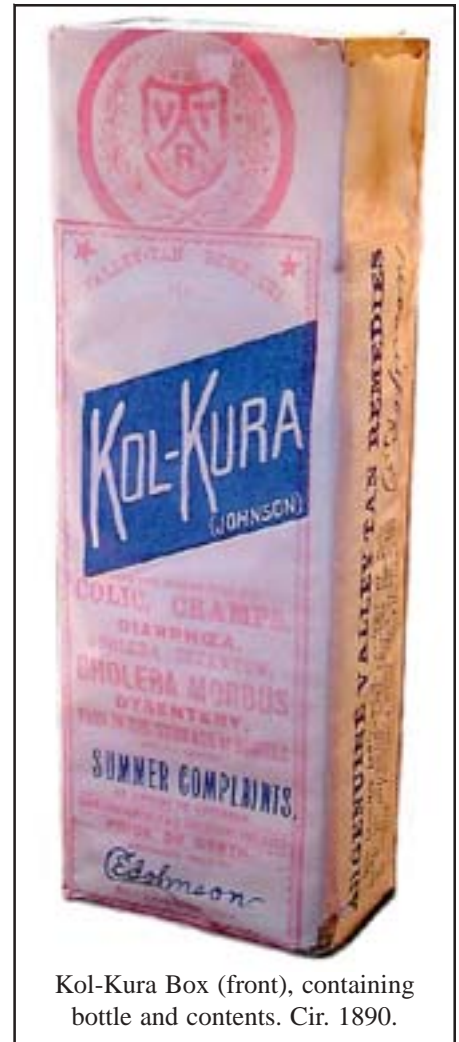
endeavor to find vegetalbe substances possessing the benefits without the damages attending them.

He was passionately fond of plants and flowers, both for their beauty and remedial qualities. By his discovery, some ten or twelve new varieties of plants have been added to the botany of the United States, four of which were named after him by Government Botanists. Joseph E. Johnson was in many respects a remarkable man. He was of a roving disposition, but always had an object in view, viz.: To make "the desert blossom as the rose." He sought always to develop new territory, and was ever among the advance guard of the Daniel Boone type of pioneers, who set their faces toward the land of the setting sun. Whenever a railroad caught up with him, he pulled up stakes and moved forward.

In 1848, he emigrated to Nebraska, where he established large supply stores for furnishing and outfitting the overland emigrants to California. He also embarked on the sea of journalism, and was the editor and proprietor of the first paper, printed on Nebraska soil. He edited and published the Omaha Arrow, the Council Bluffs Bugle, the Crescent City Oracle, the Western Bugle and the Huntsman's Echo. He was also a postmaster at Council Bluffs, Iowa, for several years and assisted largely in the development of that State as well as Nebraska. He made a visit to this territory in 1851, and was very much impressed with the future prospects of Utah, and returned home with the intention of moving out as soon as circumstances would permit. He returned in 1861, and established a home at Spring Lake Villa, when Utah was still "Desert", and

published the Farmer's Oracle. He moved onward to St. George in 1868, where he remained until 1882. Here he published the Rio Virgen Times and Utah Pomologist, during all of which time he commanded the confidence and respect of all. In 1882, in company with other members of his family, he removed to Temple, Arizona, at which place he died the same year. Before his death, he gave to his son, Mr. C. E. Johnson, who had been his constant companion and co-laborer all his life until within a few months of his death, all the recipes, formulas, etc., with the desire that they should be manufactured and placed upon the market in proper shape.

With the establishment of the V.T.R. Laboratory, Mr. C. E. Johnson infused new life, and inaugurated many changes in the method of preparing the medicines by which more elegant preparations resulted. The labels, wrappers, circulars, etc., were all made in new and neat designs, the



Kol-Kura Box (front), containing bottle and contents. Cir. 1890.

printing being done in Mr. Johnson's own V.T.R. printing office, where two presses were kept busy all the time, the office being under the more immediate care of Mr. G. W. Johnson, a brother of the proprietor. New moulds for the special V.T.R. bottles were made, new engravings, etc., were obtained, and a uniformity never before attained in the history of the



Front and back of an extremely rare advertising token for "Johnson's V.T.R." distributed for the dedication of the famous Salt Lake Mormon Temple - "April 6th, 1893".





Two VTR Trade Cards, Cir. 1890.

remedies is the result.

There is one thing which Mr. Johnson desires especially to inform the public, and that is the fact that the Valley-Tan Remedies are not intended to take the place of a physician, but rather as an aid to him. For instance, take the V.T.R. Cough Cordial. If there is any need of a preparation to ease a cough in connection with any disease, instead of writing a prescription for a special mixture, the cough cordial is already prepared, is always the same, and being sold at all stores, is easily obtained. It can be taken at the same time with other medicines, and does not interfere with its action. All the V.T.R. preparations are the same. They will never do any harm under any circumstances. It is a fact that human nature is so suspicious of anything produced at

home, and many people are so prejudiced that they will not give home-prepared articles a trial. Those, however, who have tried them, have been so pleased with the result that they keep them always at hand thereafter. Should any of the readers of this book who have not already done so, feel like trying any of the remedies, Mr. Johnson will be pleased to furnish them free samples for this purpose. To use Mr. Johnson's own words, 'If I can only get people to try them, or even to look at them, they will be pleased, I am sure, and feel like encouraging a home enterprise. They are put up in as good style, and are as cheap as the same class of imported articles. They are much better adapted to the cure of the various diseases as they occur in the mountain regions, than those brought from other locations.'

The Laboratory is situated in a large building 36 x 120 feet, where a number of persons are kept busy putting up the remedies, the preparing of the same being done by Mr. Johnson only.

Mr. Charles E. Johnson, better known as 'Charlie' Johnson, the proprietor of this interesting and valuable home industry, was born in St. Louis, Missouri, but has resided in Utah practically all his life. 'My dear little mother walked across the plains - from Omaha to Utah', says Mr. Johnson, 'and I often contrast her dreary and perilous journey with the journeys over the same ground today, especially when I hear some lady friend remark 'we had a dreadfully tiresome journey' (view Pullman palace sleeper).

Charles Johnson is thoroughly identified with Utah in all its interests in a practical manner, and is a man of business abilities, is enterprising and liberal in all business matters, and is destined to rank among the prominent commercial and manufacturing men of the country. In the establishment and operation of this industry, he has contributed materially to the commercial and manufacturing prosperity of the city, as his industry is especially a home one. The value of such a plant to the city cannot be computed in dollars and cents.

Mr. Johnson is a member of the Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce, is an equal partner with Mr. P. P. Pratt, Jr., in the successful firm of druggists known as Johnson, Pratt & Co., who have the largest wholesale and retail drug houses in Salt Lake City, and also a partner in the leading photographic firm of S & J (Sainsbury & Johnson).

Socially, he is recognized as a kindly



Johnson's Kol-Kura Vintage box, containing six bottles with original contents, cir. 1890.



A tradecard for Johnson's Kol-Kura.

spoken and cultured gentleman. He is very fond of music and patron of all legitimate amusements, and is very popular in consequence thereof.

In all walks of life, he is the same genial gentleman, with always leaning towards 'the underdog in the fight.' With these characteristics, there is no reason to doubt that Mr. Johnson will, in the near future, be numbered among the most honored and successful businessmen of the land. 'There are seven Johnson boys,' says Mr. Johnson, 'ranging from my own age downward, so that there are strong chances that the Valley-Tan Remedies will for many years be manufactured by the Johnsons.'

**Analysis of the 'Valley-Tan Trademark'**

The CIRCLE - when complete, represents the un-ending circle of time - without beginning or end. The circle is a symbol of beauty. It is a symbol of The Earth, and of everything above, below and around, about or upon it.

The BROKEN CIRCLE typifies the mortal existence. Man cometh up in the morning and goeth down in the evening of life. Whence, and where, who shall truly tell?

The SUN is the giver all of all life. It is emblematic of every other thing that



"Vintage" Stan Sanders along side his patent medicine collection in the Stan Sanders Bottle Museum.

mankind comprehends. Its glory typifies the Glory of Him we call God. Its daily appearance and disappearance illustrates the brevity of human life; and what more beautiful comparison than the one which leads to the thought that we died and lay our bodies down to arise again in brighter glory. Light and heat are LIFE; Darkness and cold - DEATH! The seed dies in teh cold soil unless the sprout son reaches the warmth and light of the SUN! Every thought of it is sublime!

The OAK WREATH is an emblem of long life. The oak tree is looked upon as attaining the greatest age of anything we speak of as being alive.

The LAUREL WREATH is an emblem of victory. Man obtains a victory inexpressible when he has learned to 'speak no ill, but lenient to the other's failings as his own.' Are you, reader, in possession of the wreath of the laurel?

The SHIELD is an emblem of protection; its application as boundless as time and space.

The RIBBON OF LOVE, which binds firmer than chains of steel. Dynasties are swayed by it.

The MOTTO - vitus semper virdis - 'Virtue is ever-bright, or evergreen.'

The SOUNDS SYMBOLS, V.T.R. are the initials of the words Valley-Tan Remedies. Combinations of the sublime and ridiculous are made from them in almost endless numbers.

The TRADEMARK in its entirety makes a neat and tasty design by which our friends may instantly recognize the preparations emanating from the 'Valley-Tan' or 'V.T.R.' Laboratory. We shall never permit a poor article to go out, bearing the V.T.R. Trademark."

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by Clarence "Corky" Shore

Shore, North Carolina was a whiskey distilling community located on Flint Hill Road in Yadkin County, fifteen miles west of Winston-Salem. The town was incorporated on May 14th, 1903, helping to date the pictured jugs. It is felt that the name of the town was likely chosen due to the large number of inhabitants of that name.

A large portion of the whiskey distilled in Shore was sold to the Winston-Salem based Casper Company. This firm was a distributor, not a distiller, of whiskeys. With seven distilleries reportedly present in Shore, the 'goods' were in ample supply for a major distributor.

There are three distillers from which I can identify stenciled



jugs -- I. C. Shore & Co, Yadkin Valley Distilling Co and Riverside Manufacturing Co.

Clarence "Corky" Shore is a long-time collector of North Carolina whiskey items and vinegars. He always has an interest in hearing from collectors with Shore, North Carolina, items. He can be reached at shorejugs@triad.rr.com.