

S. O. Dunbar, Druggist

By Ed & Lucy Faulkner

Samuel Oliver Dunbar, known to bottle collectors as S. O. Dunbar, began his apothecary business in the early 1800s in Taunton, Massachusetts. Born in 1800 in Titticut, Massachusetts, he had little formal education. Because of serious illnesses in his father's family, there was little time or money for scholastic studies. Most of his educational and business knowledge was learned outside the schoolroom. In 1818, when he was eighteen years old, he moved to Boston and worked as a salesman for a dry goods merchant. He continued there until 1834, at which time he moved to Taunton and started his own business.

The Taunton drug business started small, but as he won the confidence of the townspeople, it grew and he continued to add more products. Ads were found from 1849 to 1886 for his drug store. Earlier dated testimonials were written on some of the ads. In 1869, the business directory listing was S. O. Dunbar & Son. About 1878, it went back to just S. O. Dunbar. He was still listed in 1883, and was the oldest druggist in Taunton. It was said in a history of Taunton that he continued to supervise the business every day, even at an advanced age.

By 1887, the business was listed in directories as Dunbar Drug Store, probably having been sold, as the Dunbars had no natural children of their own. They raised and adopted five orphans, but only one was still living in 1887, and he did not reside in Taunton. Throughout the years, addresses listed were at 9 and 10 Bank Row and 52 & 53 City Square. His ads included drugs and medicines, Shakers' herbs, chemicals, bitters, inks, school supplies, blank books, Bibles, and perfumery products, as well as dye stuffs, trusses, foreign leeches and brushes. Besides the products he produced himself, he filled doctors' prescriptions any hour of the day or night and was an agent for all popular patent medicines of the time.

Although active in local duties, Dunbar never sought to obtain higher office, preferring to help as a private citizen. He worked on committees, including ones relating to the Civil War

which involved citizens from Taunton. Dunbar was said to have been a lifelong member of the Whig and Republican political parties. At some point, he became a justice of the peace. In 1869, he was appointed postmaster of Taunton and maintained a post office in his building.

Dunbar was a large ink producer, manufacturing and selling it in embossed glass bottles ranging from small umbrellas to quarts. The bottles are both pontiled and later smooth-based. Mention is also made of half-gallon and gallon jugs of ink as well as kegs. On an early label it is noted that he bought the rights to manufacture and sell ink from a Mr. Baylies. We found several merchants by this name in the area, but are unsure which was the one mentioned. One 1840 testimonial noted this ink had been in use for twenty years, winning numerous awards under Baylies' manufacture.

Dunbar's vegetable bitters is said to have had the longest name known for a bitters product (see ad). It contained tomatoes,



The Cheapest and Best Bitters to be had!
TOMATO, SARSAPARILLA,
BLACKBERRY, DANDELION AND WILD CHERRY
Vegetable Compound Life Renovating
BITTERS.

Cure for all diseases arising from an impure state of the Blood, either from the improper use of Mercury or any other cause. As all diseases arise from an impure state of the Blood, it is certain to cure them all.

These Bitters have been known to have cured in the following diseases, viz: Scrofula, Ulcerations, Sore Throat, Pimples on the Face, Scaly Patches and other Eruptions of the Skin, Rheumatic Affections, Pain in the Bowels, Night Sweats, Dyspepsia, Liver Complaints, Gout, Lumbago, Cancer, Piles, Salt Rheum, Erysipelas, Neuralgia, Epilepsy, Weakness of the Limbs, Dizziness, Headache, Palpitation of the Heart, Cough, Bronchitis, Throat and Lung Complaints, Dropsy, Gravel, &c.

In quart bottles.—Price \$1 00 per bottle—\$5 00 for six bottles.
 S. O. DUNBAR, Sole Agent, Bank Row.

1850 Bitters ad.

FLUID MAGNESIA,
 PREPARED BY S. O. DUNBAR,
 Taunton, Mass.
 EQUAL TO ANY ENGLISH OR AMERICAN.

This very useful and elegant preparation is used as an Aperient Anti-Acid in Dyspeptic complaints, attended with acidity, with very great benefit. It has the advantage over common Magnesia, in being dissolved and therefore not liable to accumulate in the bowels. It is decidedly superior to Carbonate of Soda or Potash, on account of its superior quality.

The Solution of Magnesia is found particularly beneficial as a pleasing sedative and Aperient, in all cases of Irritation or Acidity of the Stomach, Febrile Complaints, Infantile Disorders or Sea Sickness.



1850 Fluid Magnesia ad and half pint bottle (right) that is known with label for the Magnesia. This bottle, without a pour spout, could have been used for many of his products. It came in half-pint, pint and quart sizes, perhaps others.

S. O. DUNBAR & SON,
 52 and 53 City Square, . . Taunton, Mass.

DEALERS IN

Drugs, Medicines,

CHEMICALS, DYE-STUFFS,
 Perfumery, Foreign Leeches, Trusses, Shakers' Herbs,
BRUSHES OF ALL KINDS.

Books, Stationery, and Fancy Goods.
PHOTOGRAPH ALBUMS,
 MANUFACTURERS OF
Fluid-Magnesia, Edge-Blackening, and Black Ink.
 Also Agents for all the popular
PATENT MEDICINES,
 BIBLES, TESTAMENTS, PRAYER-BOOKS, HYMN-BOOKS,
HISTORIES, POETICAL WORKS,
 Miscellaneous and Standard Works, School and Blank Books, constantly on hand.
 BLANK BOOKS manufactured to order. Please call and examine.
Physicians' Prescriptions carefully prepared.

1872 ad lists products including foreign leeches

Sources:

- History of Bristol County, Mass. by Duane Hamilton Hurd, 1883.
- A History of Massachusetts in the Civil War by William Schouler, 1871.
- The Massachusetts State Record and Year Book of General information, 1851.
- Taunton Business Directories 1850 -1887.
- Bottle pictures from Inks, 150 Years of Bottles & Companies, 2nd Edition, by Ed and Lucy Faulkner.



S. O. DUNBAR
 BASEMENT POST OFFICE,

MANUFACTURER OF
FLUID MAGNESIA,
 Writing, Stencil & Dotting Ink,
Swan's Cherry Syrup,
 SHEPARD'S CONDITION POWDERS, LIFE BITTERS.

We have on hand a full assortment of Wines and Liquors for medical use, as old and good as any in this or any other City.
 And a full assortment of
DRUGS, CHEMICALS AND PATENT MEDICINES.
 ALL WARRANTED PURE,
 sold at prices satisfactory to the purchaser. (Call and see.)
 TAUNTON, MASS.

Trade card mentions the post office in his building and products on the back.



1st Chicago Bottle Club's 41st Annual
Antique Bottle, Jar, Pottery, Advertising and Collectibles
Show & Sale

October 31, 2010
 9:00 am - 2:00 pm

Ramada Inn & Suites
 Convention Center
 780 E. North Avenue
 Glendale Heights, Illinois

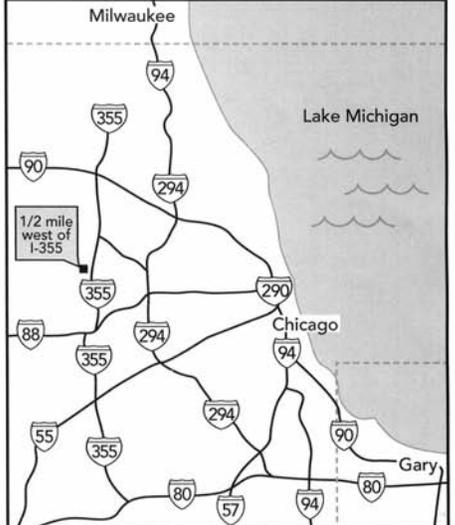
Admission: \$3.00
 Children under 16 Admitted Free

FREE Appraisals
& FREE Parking





Bottle & Pottery Display



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