

# 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.

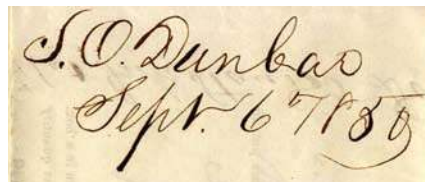


1850 Fluid Magnesia ad and half pint bottle (right) that is known with label for the Magnesia. This bottle, without a pour spout, could have been used for many of his products. It came in half-pint, pint and quart sizes, perhaps others.

**DUNBAR'S  
BLACK INK,**  
SUPERIOR TO ANY OTHER IN USE.  
Being made without acid, it will not act upon paper or pen, is improved by age and not injured by climate.

---

**A DIPLOMA**  
Was awarded to this Ink by the Mass. Charitable Association in 1844.



Listings were always as S. O. Dunbar, never a full name. Signature is from an 1850 letter.

used for other things as well. For whatever reason, Dunbar bottles don't seem to be as popular with collectors as some of the other older ones such as Harrison's Columbian and E. Waters. Perhaps

1850 ad - Ink won an award in 1844  
sarsaparilla, blackberry, dandelion and wild cherry. This bitters was reported to cure all diseases either from the improper use of mercury or any other cause. Ads stated it was known to have cured the following diseases: Scrofula, Ulcerations, Sore throat, Pimples on the face, Eruptions of the skin, Rheumatic afflictions, Pain in the Bowels, Night Sweats, Liver Complaints, Piles, Epilepsy, Palpitations of the Heart, Dropsy, and many other ailments. This Life Renovating Bitters was sold in quart bottles at one dollar a bottle, five dollars for six bottles. This was a cure for all that ailed you, if you believed the ads! He also made an anti-acid medicine called Fluid Magnesia. Ads indicated it was equal to any English or American product.

it is because not much was known of his interesting history or which large bottles were used for what product, unless a labeled one was found. We believe them to be very collectible and unless labeled, they sell for reasonable prices. Dunbar was a remarkable, self-made businessman who worked hard and had a successful business for over fifty years.

The round embossed aqua bottles are the most commonly seen, ranging from small sizes to a quart. While most are aqua, amber ones are also known in 3 sizes. We have heard of, but not seen, an amber umbrella ink. The sided bottles are not as common, but are seen fairly often. The ones with pour spouts are noted as inks in his price list, but could have been

The following description of the Dunbars is quoted directly from an 1883 History of Bristol County, Mass. by Hamilton Hurd and there is no better way to end the Dunbar history than this quote:

"Mr. and Mrs. Dunbar are in many respects a remarkable couple. They have passed over fifty-six years of life hand in hand together, and during all those long years the harmony of their union has not been marred by a dispute, disagreement, or harsh word. The united current of their lives has flowed peacefully and happily on, and now, as they near the great ocean of eternity, they can look confidently forward with the pleasing assurance that, if separated at all, it will be but briefly; that in the great beyond that union of heart and spirit, so long and happily maintained here, shall there be but the more firmly established as the ages roll by."

**S. O. DUNBAR'S  
PRICE OF  
BLACK INK.**

Quart Bottles, 4 dollars per dozen ::::: Retail Price, 50 cts. per Bottle.	
Pint " " 3 " " " " " " " " " "	" " " 37½ " " " "
Half pint " " 2 " " " " " " " " " "	" " " 25 " " " "
Half gall. Jugs, 6 " " " " " " " " " "	" " " 75 " per Jug.
Gallon " " 10 " " " " " " " " " "	" " " 1.25 " " " "

8 oz. Bottles, \$12 per gross—\$1 25 per dozen—17 cents single Bottle.

6 " " " 10 " " " " " " " " " "	" " " 1 00 " " " " " "
4 " " " 8 " " " " " " " " " "	" " " 83 " " " " " "
2 " " " 6 " " " " " " " " " "	" " " 60 " " " " " "
1 " " " 5 " " " " " " " " " "	" " " 50 " " " " " "
Ink Stands, 6 " " " " " " " " " "	" " " 62½ " " " " " "

Below are some of the notices which have been received. Also, the Certificate of Mr. Spreat, Clerk of the Courts for Bristol County:

This may certify, that for more than twenty years past, I have when I could obtain it, used ink made from the receipt now in possession of Messrs. DUNBAR & BAYLIES, of Taunton; that it flows more freely than any ink I have ever used, and that it writes better than any other kind when first put on, it very soon becomes a fine jet black, and from examination of records upon which this ink was used more than twenty years ago, as well as those more recently made, I find that the records longest made, are of the deepest black, and that without any apparent injury to the paper, or signs of failure in any respect. It is, in my opinion, decidedly the best article of the kind I have ever seen. JAMES SPROAT, Clerk of the Courts for the County of Bristol, Taunton, 1840.

Our neighbor Grant has lately supplied us with S. O. DUNBAR'S ink, which we like very much, and those who have used it longer than we, say of it as Collee did of Pompey—He was the brackest nigger, ten years ago, I cher did see, and he has done nothing eber since but grow bracker and bracker.—Exeter (N. H.) News Letter.

The best black ink we have ever used, is that manufactured by Mr. S. O. DUNBAR, of this Town. It is well adapted for records, as it grows black with age, and being made without acid, it will not act upon the paper or pen. The bottles have a peculiarity which no other ink has, and will save about a quarter in pouring out.—Old Colony Republician.

FINE BLACK INK.—This paragraph is written with a fine quality of ink, manufactured by S. O. DUNBAR, of Taunton. It appears to be free from sediment, and flows freely from the pen. We like it.—North Amherst.

We have for several weeks been using black ink, manufactured by S. O. DUNBAR, Taunton. It is of an excellent quality, flows readily and freely, and is very dark when transferred to paper.—Boston Merc. Jour.

Mr. S. O. DUNBAR, of Taunton, manufactures excellent Black Ink, which is thought to be a superior article to use with steel pens. It flows very freely and soon becomes very black.—Mass. Hinghamian.

BLACK INK.—We are now using a bottle of ink, manufactured by S. O. DUNBAR, Taunton, which is a superior article in point of color and the freedom with which it flows from the pen. Containing no acid or corrosive properties, it is the very thing to use with a steel pen, and very few writing fluids have that recommendation. Though pale when first used, it soon becomes a jet black, and what is more, it is said by those who have long used it, to preserve its depth of color for years without injury to the paper.—Boston Daily Bee.

We have received a sample of black ink, manufactured by S. O. DUNBAR, which is the best we have had as yet. It is not so dark as some when first used, but it soon becomes a perfect jet.—Boston Daily Mail.

Have you tried DUNBAR'S Black Ink. We think it decidedly the best article we have ever used. In looking over the Court Records made years ago, we find that the ink upon the books, which is the same kind with which we are writing, is of a beautiful jet black. This article is made without acid, and will not act upon the paper or steel pen.—Dor Drop.



1849 price list notes large inks have lips and contain amount listed.

(top left) Labeled umbrella. (top right) Small 12-sided ink. (bottom left) Quart, OP bottle with pour spout that would have been used for ink. (bottom right) A gallon ceramic jug.

**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

For Information:  
 John & Claudia Panek • P.O. Box 287, Deerfield, IL 60015 • (847) 945-5493, paperbottle1@aol.com