

Forsha's Balm is Endorsed by President Lincoln

By Dave Maryo



Double collar Forsha bottle



Blue Forsha bottle



Teal-green Forsha bottle



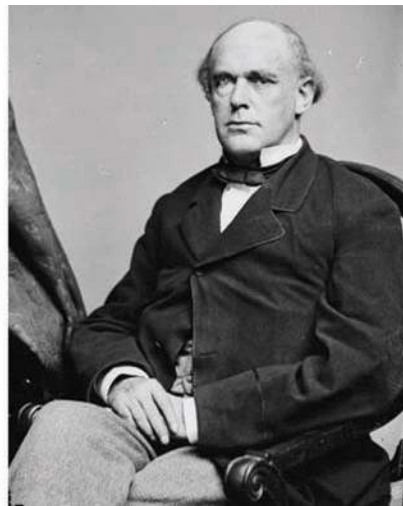
Tooled-top Forsha bottle



President Lincoln during a Civil War tour

During the Civil War a soldier from Ohio had suffered a wound on his hand and was being treated at the Capital Hospital. The soldier requested his wound be treated with Dr. Forsha's Balm. Dr Shippen, who was treating the soldier's wounds, agreed to try the balm, but the Ward Surgeon in charge objected. Hearing the soldier had been denied treatment with his balm, Dr. Forsha traveled to the White House on September 21st, 1862 in an

attempt to meet with President Lincoln. The purpose of Dr. Forsha's visit was to request that his balm be



Secretary of Treasury
Salmon Chase

used to treat wounded soldiers.

The President was too busy to meet with him. Dr. Forsha then met with Salmon Chase, the Secretary of the Treasury during the Lincoln administration. Salmon Chase had a long political history in Cincinnati and was most likely acquainted with Dr. Forsha. Secretary Chase urged President

Lincoln to request Surgeon General Hammond provide a ward at the Capital Hospital to allow Dr. Forsha to demonstrate the curative property of his remedy.



Surgeon General
William A Hammond

Lincoln sent a letter the next day to the Surgeon General requesting the use of Dr. Forsha's Balm to treat wounded soldiers. Surgeon General William Hammond denied the president's request and immediately replied that Dr. Forsha was an "ignorant

quack”.

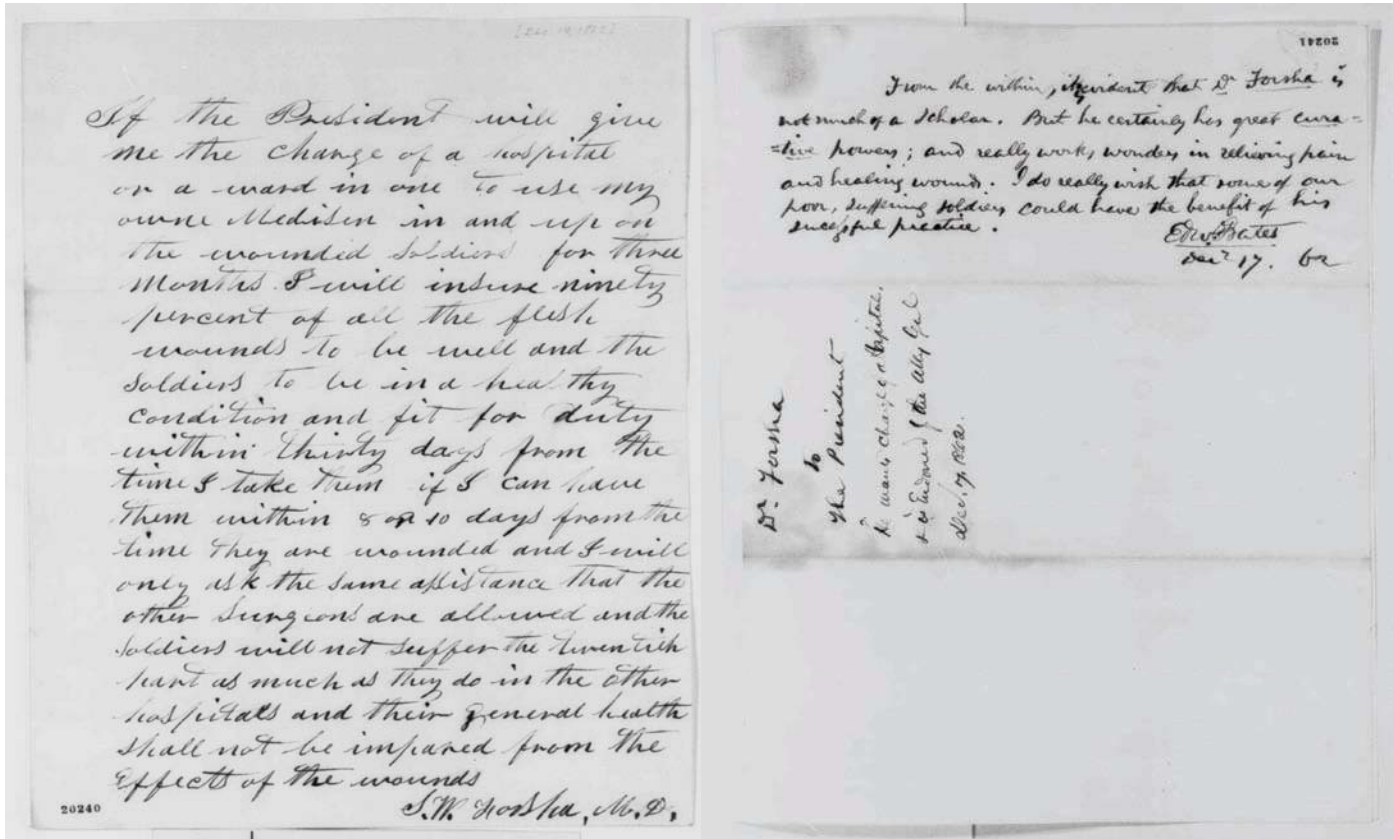
This did not stop Dr. Forsha or Secretary Chase from promoting his balm and they gained other supporters in high-ranking positions.

General McClellan had suffered a bullet wound to his foot during the September, 1862 battle of Antietam. The lead ball had passed through the fleshy part of the sole just missing the bones. Secretary Chase heard of the wound while meeting with the general and suggested he try Dr.

Sanitary Commissioner George Templeton Strong reported the remedy worked like magic on flesh wounds.

The main point of Hammond's contention in using the medication was that Dr. Forsha would not reveal the ingredients in his balm.

Dr. Forsha sent a letter to Lincoln December 17th, 1862 requesting a hospital ward be set up to administer his balm to wounded soldiers. He guaranteed ninety percent of all the flesh wounds would be healed and the soldiers



December 17, 1862 letter from Dr. Forsha to Lincoln

Forsha's Balm.

Dr. Nichols, the physician attending the general, contemplated using Forsha's Balm on McClellan but found the wound healing well without any inflammation.

Secretary Chase even requested his assistant George



Attorney General
Edward Bates

Harrington make arrangements for Dr. Forsha to visit General Hooker. Dr. Forsha spent much of his time and energy promoting his balm to be used for wounds incurred during the Civil War.

Surgeon General Hammond never stopped his opposition to Dr. Forsha's balm, even though

would be fit for duty within thirty days.

Edward Bates, the United States Attorney General, endorsed Dr. Forsha's letter. President Lincoln's request to place Dr. Forsha in charge of a hospital ward was strongly rejected by Surgeon General Hammond. Surgeon General Hammond responded to Lincoln in the following letter dated February 13th, 1863

"Sir;

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your note relative to Dr. Forsha, and to thank your Excellency for the consideration which prompted you to refer the subject to me.

I have met with Dr. Forsha before, and am satisfied that he is an ignorant quack. The fact that he keeps his preparation a secret is sufficient proof, if any were wanting, of his charlatanism. If Dr. Forsha will reveal the mode of preparation of his medicine, I will very willingly have it tried in the Hospitals, provided it contains no injurious articles. If his desire (as he alleges) is solely the benefit of our wounded soldiers, his aim will be accom-

Washington City D.C.
February 14th 1863

Brig. Genl. W. A. Hammond
Surgeon General U.S.A.

General,

In reply to your enquiry, what I know of the mode of treatment of Gun Shot Wounds by a certain Dr. Forsha, I have the honor to state, that, in July last I was professionally at the "Academy of Medicine" in this City, several officers of the 5th Ohio Volunteer Infantry who had been severely wounded at the battle of Cedar Mt. Pa., & whose wounds had been dressed, as I was informed, by a Dr. Forsha. A very swelling & pungent preparation had been poured into the wound, & in some of the cases administered internally. This preparation had the odor of cedar oil. In many cases it had done harm, aggravating materially the sufferings of the wounded officers, & inducing unpleasant constitutional symptoms.

On or about 17th December last, I was called to see Lieut. Colonel Gorman, 4th Ohio Vols, who had received a gun shot wound of the thigh, & also one of the leg, at the battle of Fredericksburgh. On entering the room I detected at once the odor of the above mentioned preparation of Forsha, & on examining the injuries I found them dressed with lint which had been steeped in this preparation. The condition of Lt Col Gorman was pitiable, he was in extreme pain, & very great constitutional symptoms were present, & doubtless, in my opinion, by the heat ment he was undergoing. The application was removed, & the ordinary dressing substituted with immediate relief, & both he & his family afterwards repeatedly thanked me for my professional skill & choice of dressings.

The odor of this preparation is so strong that it remains for days in the room.

Have the honor to be, General,
Very respectfully,
W. A. Hammond
Surgeon Genl.

On Charge of Dr. Forsha's Medical Opinions of 1861.

Washington D.C.
February 14th 1863.

Meredith Clymer
Surgeon U.S.A.

Mentions cases of Gun Shot Wounds treated, as he was informed by a Dr. Forsha.

February 14, 1863 Clymer letter

Surgeon General's Office
Washington City D.C.
February 13th 1863.

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The recommendations in Dr. Forsha's possession are from laymen. With so many intelligent and celebrated physicians in the Country one would have thought he would have laid his assumed discoveries before them.

Again thanking your Excellency for referring the matter to me, and thus saving the Medical Corps the disgrace, and the sick the injury which would result from placing this man in charge of a Hospital.

I am, very respectfully,
Your Obedt Servt,
W. A. Hammond
Surgeon General

His Excellency A. Lincoln,
President of the United States.

P. S. I have the honor to enclose a letter of Surg. Meredith Clymer U.S.A., on duty as Attending Surgeon of Volunteer Officers in this City, which relates to Dr. Forsha.

Respectfully,
W. A. Hammond
Surgeon Genl.

Surgeon General's Office,
Washington D.C.
February 13th 1863.

Official Business.

His Excellency A. Lincoln,
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February 13, 1863 Surgeon General Hammond letter

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Forsha's balm was only one of many medications rejected by the surgeon general. His ban on medications using Calomel & Tar Emetic was not well received by many in the medical

profession. Over the next year the Surgeon General lost favor in both the political and medical circles.

William Hammond was court-martialed for irregularities related to the purchase of medical supplies and was relieved of duty August 18th, 1864.

Dr. Samuel W. Forsha was born in Cincinnati about 1802 according to US Census records.

He was involved in politics from as early as 1828 when he ran for constable in the Township of Cincinnati. Dr. Forsha's Balm is recorded as early as 1850 in US Senate documents and advertising for his medicines appear as late as 1924.

With more than seventy years in use, the balm must have been well received to have continued sales for this long period of time.

With the long span of production many variations of the Dr Forsha's bottles have been found. Early pontiled versions had flared and rolled lips, while later bottles had smooth bases with hand tooled tops. These

bottles also have a wide variety of glass colors ranging from aquas to dark greens and blues. Dr. Forsha's Cincinnati Ohio based medicine has had a long and interesting history that gives these bottles a special place in many collections.

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Also Special thanks to John Odell for his contributions

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