

Got Tired Blood? Get Blood Life!

South Georgia pharmacist's formula reportedly cured what ailed you
By Bill Baab

Redden Whitaker Adams knew as a child what he wanted to be when he grew up, and it wasn't a policeman or a fireman. His notion of becoming a druggist came to fruition perhaps sooner than he expected.

Born October 23, 1885 in the tiny Thomas County town of Boston in southwest Georgia, Adams left an indelible mark on his birthplace by developing a formula that reportedly benefited people who lacked energy, a common complaint during that day as well as the present.

Blood Life was guaranteed under the Pure Food and Drug Act of June 30, 1906 and was assigned No. 7692. It was produced in unique, dark amber, embossed flask-like bottles and labeled "The Great and General Tonic and Blood Purifier." One bottle sold for a dollar or a bargain six bottles for \$5.

Nearing his 17th birthday on Oct. 23, 1902, he became a pharmacist's apprentice in Madison, Florida and with Bruce Pharmacy in Tifton, Georgia. He became a registered pharmacist in Florida on June 17, 1903, and earned his permanent druggist's li-

cense No. 958 in Georgia on July 12, 1903 to become what is believed to be the youngest licensed pharmacist in that state's history.

Two years later, he joined his father, James C. Adams, and his brother, Denzil Roy Adams, in purchasing the City Drug Store in their hometown of Boston from Dr. Henry C. Vann (1850-1933). The drug store

had been in business under various owners since 1882.

Among other things, the Blood Life Company's product, operating under the Adams Drug Company roof, claimed to be a remedy for scrofula (swellings of the lymph glands in the neck), rheumatism, syphilitic sores, old sores, boils and pimples and other skin eruptions, erysipelas (skin condition with a fever), cancerous humor (humor defined as a normal body fluid), salt rheum and other general diseases resulting in impure blood.

Adams' grandson, Jim Mayo of Weaverville, North Carolina, discovered a number of artifacts in the attic of the old drug store, including bot-



J. C. Adams and Sons Drugstore

tles, broadsides, labels, colorful wrappers and wooden crates. Later, he found his grandfather's "Private Formulae" book dated 1902. In it was the recipe for Blood Life and many other concoctions.

Principal ingredient, according to the formula book, was potassium iodide. A medical reference book noted that "in regions where little iodine is obtained in the diet, iodides are completely effective in the prevention of goiter. . .widely employed in the treatment of bronchitis and asthma." It's also been used in the treatment of diseases found in cattle, the reference book text reported.



Blood Life wrapper



Blood Life broadside

The Adamses were prominent in Boston's social life. He played first chair violin in the "Boston Symphony Orchestra" (11 players under the direction of H.C. Witt), and he and his wife, Lily, were largely responsible for bringing a Carne-



Lily & Mary Adams



R. W. Adams & wife (on left)

gie

Free Library to Boston. It opened in 1914. He also owned more than 1,400 acres of land and his wife spearheaded the founding of the Boston Red Cross, according to newspaper articles of that era.

Boston, named in honor of Capt. Thomas M. Boston, dates to 1830 and was incorporated by an act of the Georgia Legislature on Oct. 24, 1870.

A member of the Georgia Pharmaceutical Association, during World War I Adams volunteered his services to the American Red Cross. Compensated only for expenses, he was commissioned a lieutenant and assigned to the American Expeditionary Force (AEF).

Red Cross archives noted in their "Commission to Greece Reports



Red Cross insignias

printed by P.D. Sakellarios in Athens on July 1, 1919" that Lt. R.W. Adams established a refugee station in a mosque in Serres and that "he remained in charge throughout the period of active distribution."

Monsieur R. W. Adams
Capitaine
Mission de la Croix Rouge Americaine en Grèce

19 Boulevard de Kephtissin

Athènes

Calling card used while in Greece

While stationed there, he was promoted to captain and honored by having the "Decoration of the Silver Cross of Our Order of St. Sauveur" conferred upon him by the nation's king. The monarch also pinned the Medal of Military Valor, Fourth Class, on Adams' chest "for the principal part he took in the distribution of aid to the inhabitants of Serres, acting personally and exposing himself while doing so, to the danger of being attacked by the (typhus) epidemic raging in the town, exceeding in activity and self-denial, working methodically

and in a suitable way, overcoming the great difficulties of communication, inadequacy of personnel, and means of transport and succeeding in relieving at the critical moment the bareness and poverty of the needy population of the town."

"His comrades around him were dying of typhus," his grandson noted, "but ironically, he never got sick until

16 years later when he came down with typhoid fever. We later found his day-to-day diary from 1918 to 1919, medals and certificates documenting the extraordinary event."

Adams operated the Boston drug store until retiring during the early 1950s. He died Jan. 18, 1974, at the age of 88.

His grandson donated R.W. Adams' artifacts to the Agrirama (a museum devoted to farm life and agriculture) in Tifton, Ga., where in 1975 the office of Dr. Vann was relocated. The Thomas County History Museum in Thomasville, Ga., also received some of the artifacts including many photos and negatives.



Medal of Our Savior front (top) and back (below)



US Bronze insignia



Medal of Military Worth ribbon and box



R. W. Adams with Greek soldier

AUTHOR'S NOTE: I am indebted to Jim Mayo and his family; Ephraim J. Rotter, curator of collections, Thomas County Museum of History, Thomasville, Ga., and Neetika K. Gujral, Presidential Intern, Hazel Braugh Records Center & Archives, American National Red Cross.

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Hung Over? Try this

Even after retirement and late in life, Redden Whitaker Adams kept prescribing.

"My husband, Jimmy, woke up one morning with a terrific hangover," recalled Mary Ann Mayo Brown of Valdosta, Ga.

"Pop (Adams' nickname) told him what to mix: In an iced tea glass filled halfway with water, add some creme de menthe, an aspirin, an Alka-Seltzer tablet and a couple of ice cubes. Mix it well and then drink it through a straw.

"It worked!"