

# Huey P. Long: The Patent Medicine Man Who Became Louisiana's Governor

By Charles David Head



Huey P Long



Few people probably know that before he achieved notoriety as governor of Louisiana, and later as a United States senator representing that state, Huey P. Long peddled patent medicine.

Huey Pierce Long was born in a log house on August 30, 1893 to Huey Pierce Long Sr., and Caledonia Tison Long at the large family farm near Winnfield, La. His family wasn't wealthy, but it fared well.

As a boy, Huey was quite precocious and smart, but went out of his way to avoid physical conflicts. His older brother usually handled the rough stuff.

In 1910, when 17-year-old Huey realized he was not going to graduate from Winnfield High School, he and longtime childhood friend Harley Bozeman began working as salesmen

for the N.K. Fairbank Company of New Orleans. The firm sold a lard substitute called Cottolene. It had a cotton seed base. From the onset, housewives used to using hog lard or cow butter thought the product was pretty strange, but surprisingly the young salesmen prospered.

While overseeing and judging baking contests sponsored by his company, Huey met Rose McConnell, his future wife. She and her mother entered one of the contests and won, perhaps with a little help from Huey. He knew Rose's mom would have a say-so

in her daughter's future. They eventually married on April 12, 1913.

But the Cottolene business went sour and Huey and Harley lost their jobs. Both joined the Houston Packing Company as salesmen of the firm's specialty cured meats, lard and canned goods. Bozeman proved successful, but Huey did not and soon lost his job. His older brother helped him financially and urged Huey to enroll in law school at the University of Oklahoma. He stayed in school only a short time, contacting his friend Bozeman in hopes of landing another job.

Bozeman had become a super salesman at Faultless Starch Company and was able to convince his supervisor that Huey was an excellent salesman. So one of the supervisors took out Huey on a trial run and was so impressed with his abilities that he not

only gave him a job, but gave him a supervisor's position in Memphis, Tenn., where he directed the firm's junior salesmen and advertising men in several states.

Soon numerous states were awash in Faultless Starch, thanks to Huey's tutoring.

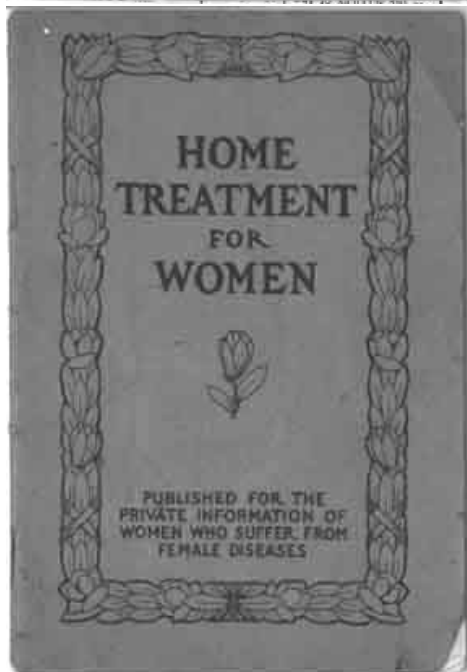
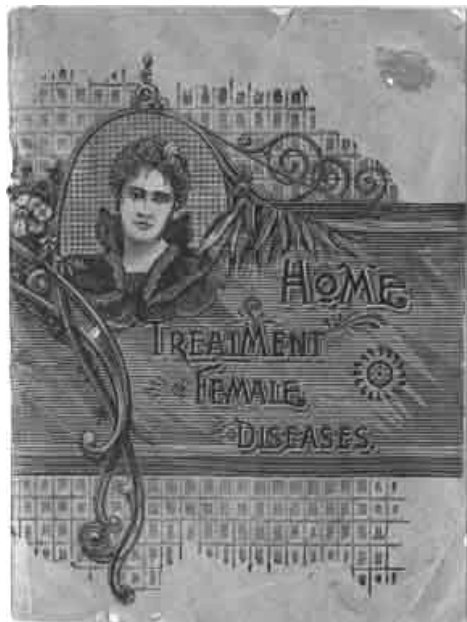
However, two years later (in 1914), the Faultless Starch Founder died. Pending settlement of his estate, the company cut all of its sales positions and once again Huey and Harley were hitting the road.

Huey found another job almost immediately with the Chattanooga Medicine Company owned by the Patten family and directed by a colorful character called "Bome" Patten.



November 21, 1935 Cardui ad

Born in Wilna, N.Y., in 1840, Zeboim Patten first saw Chattanooga while



**Booklet covers created by  
Chattanooga Medicine Company  
Top one is dated 1894  
Bottom one is undated**

convalescing from wounds received in the Civil War Battle of Chickamauga. He served with the 115<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry and the 149<sup>th</sup> New York Infantry. He returned to Chattanooga after the war and with another veteran, T.H. Payne, opened a book and stationery store called Patten & Payne. Selling out a few years later, he purchased the *Chattanooga Times*. With a few

friends, he founded the Chattanooga Medicine Company in 1879. He bought the rights to formula called *Black-Draught*, a senna-based laxative from the grandson of originator Dr. A.Q. Simmons of Snow, Hill, Ga., who developed it in 1840. In 1882, he bought the rights to *Dr. McElree's Wine of Cardui*, a tonic for women. Both medicines became the backbone of the company for a half-century.

Huey Long's job was to sell the stuff in northern Louisiana. He compiled a good sales record and prospered until the outbreak of war in Europe in the summer of 1914. Businesses declined to the point where they had to cut back and Huey received notice of his dismissal while staying in an Alexandria, La., hotel.

He decided to go back to law school, enrolling at Tulane University. He didn't stay long enough to receive a degree, but did take and pass the state bar examination and became an attorney-at-law.

He soon learned that politics were his true calling. He decided to run for governor in 1924 and, although he lost, he ran again four years later and won. Midway through his term in office, Huey decided to give the U.S. Senate race a shot. He won, but because of legal technicalities, he could not take office until 1932. During his

upward run, many thought he had a chance to become President of the United States, but that wasn't to be.

He didn't live until the end of his term. For reasons that are still not fully understood, Dr. Carl A. Weiss shot Huey in the corridor of the Louisiana state house. Huey died of his wounds on Sept. 10, 1935.

As for the Chattanooga Medicine Company, it continued to thrive and today operates under the name "Chattem Inc." Its stock is worth more than \$1 billion.

Sources: Every Man a King, The Autobiography of Huey P. Long, by T. Harry Williams. Websites: <http://www.chattem.com/about/hisproducts.asp>-Chattem's History

<http://tennesseencyclopedia.net/imagegallery.php?Entry+Ids:P009,C063,L057>

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** I would like to hear from anyone who specializes in collecting the early products of the Chattanooga Medicine Company. You may contact me:

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**Front and back of a fan used to advertise Cardui for women**