

# Dr. Clide Randall's 'Cough Mixture'

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## Introduction

The widespread use of liquid medications (so called patent medicines) in the late 19th and early 20th centuries would not have been possible without the ability to mass produce glass bottles. After 1880, natural gas became accepted as the perfect fuel for melting glass, as opposed to initially wood and then coal.

Since access to physicians was difficult, many people purchased glass bottles of patent medicine (often referred to as snake oil remedies) from traveling medicine shows in the late and early 20th centuries. At the turn of the 20th century, a patent medicine was a ready mixed product that was purchased for medicinal use from pharmacists or merchants. Many Americans turned to druggists (as pharmacists were referred to until the mid 20th century) to purchase other medicines that may have been of questionable quality and outcome as well. It was not until the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act in June 1906 by the U.S. Congress that the initial tightening of regulations regarding what could be sold as 'medicines' became prominent. Still, many druggists sold questionable remedies that took advantage of the trust that individuals placed in them.

## Dr. Clide Randall and His Cough Mixture

Dr. Clide Randall (top right row far right in the attached family photo, Dr. Randall's brother and sister are to his immediate left, and the parents of the three siblings can be seen in the front row, all lived in Cherokee County, Kansas) was a chiropractor by trade who eventually became registered as a pharmacist. Clide Randall apprenticed as an assistant pharmacist under the sponsorship of his mother, Elsie Randall, a pharmacist in 1907. This apprenticeship with his mother was for a one-year period of time, as was typical and accepted in Kansas (and other states) at that time. Pharmacy graduates of this era were granted certificates as registered pharmacists without examination if they had received a diploma from recognized schools of pharmacy. There is no documentation of the route that Elsie Randall took to licensure as a pharmacist. Dr. Randall participated in the pharmacy licensure examination at Hutchinson, Kansas on November 19, 1908, and was granted a certificate as a registered pharmacist

Doris Anne Randall Bolick was born on September 27, 1924 and died March 7, 2007 in Cherokee, Kansas. A formal portrait of Doris Randall was taken and is presented in the photograph here along with the "Cough Mixture" bottle on the label of which is copied the same picture of Doris Randall {1}. Ms. Randall was 7 years old at the time the portrait was taken in 1931, which places the



Dr. Clide Randall (top row, far right) stands next to his brother and sister, Doris. Their parents are seated in the front row. (Photos courtesy of Dr. Jack E. Fincham)



Photo of Doris Randall was included on the label of the Cough Mixture bottle.

cough mixture in the Randall Drug Store around the early 1930s. The label reads as follows:

“Cough Mixture For Throat and Bronchial Irritations, Shake Well, Dose: For adults, one teaspoonful each hour or two as needed or better yet, five or a few drops each ten or fifteen minutes. Children in proportion to age.”

The contents of the cough mixture are unknown and were not listed on the label on the bottle. This would have been standard practice for such products at this time. More than likely, the cough mixture contained some quantity of alcohol. During the U.S. prohibition, alcohol was commonly continually used in drug stores as a component of compounded prescriptions, and also was sold as “medicated alcohol” which could be dispensed via prescription by physicians. The Volstead Act outlined how alcohol could be obtained during Prohibition in the U.S. During the 14 years of prohibition, liquor containing prescriptions could be obtained from physicians for about \$3 and subsequently obtained from pharmacists for \$3 - \$4.

The following note from the Kansas Historical Society online exhibit Sinners and Saints the following is presented to illustrate how Prohibition was circumvented by the guise of seeking treatment and subsequent prescribing and dispensing of alcohol:

“The physicians help the droughty ones to get around the prohibitory law by prescribing liquor for all the ills that flesh is heir to. For a boil on the arm, one patient was ordered to take, in eleven days, ten pints of ‘spiritus fermenti’ and thirty bottles of beer. . . . [B]oils are very fashionable in Kansas.” [Boston Transcript, 1882].

As can be seen, the manufacturer of the mixture is listed on the bottom of the label and reads:

Dr. Clide Randall  
Druggist  
Bartlett, Kansas

Many similar glass bottles can be found in numerous sources, but few have the meticulously maintained

quality of this particular bottle, and few are seen with the pharmacist’s daughter on the label as well.

#### Selected References

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*Sinners and Saints: Vice and Reform in Kansas*, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas. <http://www.kshs.org/exhibits/vice/illegal.htm>.

[1] There is no way at this point to determine the financial or marketing impact of the personalized cough mixture upon the Randall Drug Store. Nor can there be an estimate of the influence that the likeness of Dr. Randall’s daughter on the label might have had upon sales or use of the product. However, in an era of uncertainty and naiveté regarding health options in general and medicinal products in particular, it could be assumed that this photograph-adorned personalized cough mixture bottle would have been promoted in-store by Dr. Randall with confidence, and used with assurance by purchasers. This uniquely presented cough mixture was no doubt a point of pride for the pharmacist, as well as his lovely daughter. This bottle and photograph were personally given to this author as a gift while serving as dean of the University of Kansas School of Pharmacy. It is now a part of the author’s personal pharmacy memorabilia collection.

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