

Spam Ads

By Steve Ketcham

Somewhere, P.T. Barnum must be smiling. He of the statement, "There's a sucker born every minute" must be taking great pride in the charlatans now trolling on the Internet and the television, seeking to hook a sucker of two for themselves. If the sheer volume of Internet ads is any indicator of their success, these sucker seekers must have full stringers.

Some ads arrive as SPAM, those unwelcome Internet messages which daily clutter our e-mail boxes. So bothersome are these intrusive ads that Congress is seeking means to stop them. The ads offer us opportunities to get out of debt, refinance a home, or buy all manner of products. Some ads are simply incredible; others would make a sailor blush.

Somewhere very near the smiling P. T. Barnum, the likes of Kickapoo Indian Medicine Company's John Healy, Texas Charlie Bigelow, and Nevada Ned Oliver are no doubt also engaged in a good, back-slapping guffaw. Their delight is found in the many television infomercials which, for

all intents and purposes, are the Twenty-First Century rebirth of the traveling medicine shows which the Kickapoo Indian Medicine Company once sent across the hills and plains of America.

SPAM ads boldly promise that male recipients can "become the man that women desire." Others promise to enhance body parts, both male and female, which are somehow too small. Meanwhile, television infomercials push diet drugs and exercise machines. Lewis Carroll foresaw it all when he had Alice take doses of potions which made her grow and then shrink. What are the Internet and the television if not electronic Wonderlands?

Another SPAM ad suggests, "Eat the foods you love while losing weight." Remarkably, a fellow named Henry C. Bradford used nearly identical words to promote his weight loss product on the pages of a 1903 issue of "The New Metropolitan" magazine. His was one of five weight-loss-product ads which appeared in the magazine. It promised that

while using this product, "You make no radical change in your food, but eat as much or as often as you please." If 100 years didn't separate these two ads, one could easily believe they were written by the same copy writer.

Weight-loss humbugs have been around for over 100 years, but their pain-killer counterparts are equally long lived.

Back in 1876, as our nation celebrated its first 100 years by staging an exposition in Philadelphia, large-scale brand advertising was a young idea. There were no electronic media, but within the pages of the "Official Catalogue of the U. S. International Exhibition 1876," many companies boasted proudly of their products. One such product was Dr. Tobias' Celebrated Venetian Liniment. The ad claimed that the product was for both internal and external use. When used externally, it was "warranted to cure...croup, chronic rheumatism, cuts, bruises, insect stings, core throats, toothache, old sores, and pains in the back, chest, and limbs..."

The Dr Tobias promises of 1876 sound incredible, but remarkably similar claims drew the attention of the Federal Trade Commission in 2002. The product, known as Blue Stuff, was advertised on a web site and on television infomercials. A summary

THE GREATEST DISCOVERY OF THE AGE

DR. TOBIAS'


Celebrated Venetian Liniment

TWENTY-NINE YEARS BEFORE THE PUBLIC.

Warranted to cure Colic, Diarrhoea, Spasms, and Vomiting, taken internally, and Croup, Chronic Rheumatism, Cuts, Bruises, Insect Stings, Sore Throats, Toothache, Old Sores, and Pains in the Back, Chest, and Limbs, externally.

IT HAS NEVER FAILED, NOR HAS ONE BOTTLE BEEN RETURNED,

ALTHOUGH MILLIONS ARE SOLD ANNUALLY

 No one once using it is ever without it.


\$1000 REWARD

Has for years been offered for any certificate which he has published in the newspapers or on his circulars proving false!!

No one should go to sea without it. It cures sea-sickness; and a few drops put in a tumbler of water entirely corrects the impurities, and makes it invaluable on land as on the sea.

Thousands of certificates can be seen at the Depot,

10 PARK PLACE, NEW YORK.

 Sold by all Druggists. Price, 50 Cents and One Dollar.

Right: Healy and Bigelow would be right at home advertising on the Internet. This ad for their Kickapoo Indian products, as found in an 1892 drug supply catalog, sound a good deal like Internet ads of today.

Genuine
Kickapoo
INDIAN REMEDIES.



KICKAPOO INDIAN SAGWA.
A compound of the virtues of Roots, Herbs, Bark, Gums, and Leaves. The purest, safest, and most effective Medicine known to the public for all Disorders of the Stomach, Kidneys, Liver and Blood. Constipation, Dyspepsia, Indigestion, Loss of Appetite, Scrofula, Rheumatism, Chills and Fever.

\$ 1.00.

KICKAPOO INDIAN OIL.
Is used internally as well as externally without fear of harm.

25c.

KICKAPOO INDIAN SALVE.
Prepared from Pure Buffalo Tallow, combined with Healing Herbs and Herbs. A Specific for all Skin Diseases, Scalding and Excellent for Erysipelas, Eczema, Rashes, Burns, Piles and Hard and Soft Corns.

25c.

KICKAPOO INDIAN COUGH CURE.
PURELY VEGETABLE.
An invaluable Kickapoo Indian Remedy. A specific for COUGHS, COLDS, ASTHMA, THROAT and LUNG Diseases. Pleasant to the Taste.

50c.

Kickapoo Indian Worm Killer.
AS USED BY THE KICKAPOOS.
A safe, safe, pleasant cure for worms without the use of other medicines. Removes Stomach and Bowel Worms from adults or children, and as a cure for CONSTIPATION, BILIOUSNESS, INDIGESTION, SORE or WORMY STOMACH, they are unfailingly, removing all impurities from the stomach and keeping the bowels regular.

25c.

Headquarters of the Genuine Kickapoo Indian Remedies,
521, 523, 525 GRAND AVENUE,
NEW HAVEN, CONN., U. S. A.

HEALY & BIGELOW,

AGENTS.



736

PETER VAN SCHACK & SONS

of the FTC case against the company can be found in the American Bar Association's Fall 2002 Consumer Protection Update, available on line. Prior to a \$3 million FTC penalty, the \$59.95 product advertised nearly instant relief for all manner of pain. Sounding much like the old Dr. Tobias ads, the product said it would relieve knee, hip, shoulder, hand, foot and lower back pain, and pains resulting from automobile and sports injuries, in five to fifteen minutes. One especially questionable consumer testimonial even spoke of Blue Stuff saving a fellow from a leg amputation. According to the ABA report, the happy consumer said the product relived his symptoms, "...before I could get the cap back on the jar..."

The current Blue Stuff web site ads are far tamer. The product, which comes in rub-on, roll-on, and spray-on forms, is now advertised as being for "...temporary relief of minor aches and pains associated with arthritis, simple backache, strains, bruises, or sprains."

It is the fantastic claims of old, made by quacks of all kinds, which make our old bottles and advertising so interesting to collect. We delight in the curative claims of products like Dr. Kilmer's Swamp Root Kidney, Liver and Bladder Cure. We laugh at the shaky promises of quacks like William Radam and his Microbe Killer. We roll our eyes at the ads at the back of old magazines which promised readers they could be cured of baldness, obesity, hearing loss, drunkenness, freckles, and even cancer. We ought to take time to pause and give thanks that the Federal Trade Commission and the Food and Drug Administration have cleaned up the market and rid it of the fakes. But it hasn't happened yet, despite the nearly 100 years that have passed since the first pure food and drug law was enacted in 1906.

The questionable products and advertising of yesterday live on. Dozens of products hyped today are simply modern versions of scams perpetrated years ago. Perhaps the greatest difference is in the delivery of the pitch. Whereas folks used to gather around the medicine wagon to be entertained and cajoled, today the pitchmen come straight into our homes via television and the Internet. While the Internet SPAM is generally unwelcome and intrusive, many consumers actually tune into the infomercials. We are drawn to the bright lights and the magic of the medicine show like fish to a flashy lure. Barnum was right.

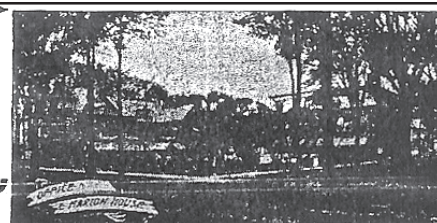
BLINDNESS PREVENTED

**The Absorption Treatment a Success;
No Knife, No Risk.**

Over 75,000 treatments given at our institution in 1897. Representative people from all parts of United States and Canada indorse this institution.

"Do Not Wait to be Blind."

THE BEMIS EYE SANITARIUM, Glens Falls, N. Y.



Two of the seven large buildings forming the Bemis Sanitarium.

Thousands Have Everything to Gain and Nothing to Lose. Pamphlet G. G. Free, describing home treatment and institution, the largest and most successful in America.

Lacking the Internet, those offering questionable medical help in the Nineteenth Century could catch suckers with ads like these placed in the pages of 1897 and 1898 issues of "The Puritan" magazine.

"COMMON SENSE EAR DRUMS"
Relieve all conditions of Deafness and Head Noises, where Medical skill fails. The only Scientific Aural Sound Conductor in the world. Safe to wear, comfortable, invisible, no dangerous wire or metal attachment. Recommended by physicians. Write for book. Free.

WILSON EAR DRUM CO.
Office: 375 Trust Bldg.,
LOUISVILLE, KY.

Editor's note: The ad below for The Jar Doctor does not go with this article. It was just a coincidence that it was placed on the same page.

CURED TO STAY CURED

ASTHMA

Dr. HAYES, Buffalo, N. Y.

JAR DOCTOR™

YOUR COMPLETE SOURCE FOR JAR, BOTTLE AND INSULATOR
CLEANING EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES
CLEANING CANISTERS

Designed to safely and professionally clean inside, outside and base - all at one time.

Available in White & Clear PVC (3" through 6" ID)

Prices ranging from \$85.00 to \$140.00

CLEANING MACHINES

Units available, starting at \$180.00

OXIDES

Aluminum, Cerium, Tin, Silicon Carbide

TUMBLING COPPER

New 12-gauge chisel point in 3 sizes

Copper Wire: \$7.00/lb.



**Payment by Major
Credit Card or PayPal**

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

R. Wayne Lowry

401 Johnston Ct., Raymore, MO 64083

E-mail: JarDoctor@aol.com

Website: www.jardoctor.com

**(816) 318-0161
FAX: (816) 318-0162**