

# Collecting Bottles by State, The Iowa

## Part 2 - Medicine Bottles

*By Mike Burggraaf*

This is the second article in a series that will deal with collecting bottles by state. In this instance, specific categories from the state of Iowa have been and will be presented. The last issue of the *Bottles & Extras* magazine discussed the various Iowa drug store bottles available to collectors. I'll begin this issue with the always popular grouping of medicine bottles.

The category of Iowa patent medicines is one that seems to have some great variety. We are fortunate to have examples from the 1850's to 1915, with the pontiled examples being extremely difficult to find. Lucky is the collector that has more than one open pontiled medicine bottle from Iowa.

One example pictured is DR. YOUMAN'S AMERICAN AGUE KILLER and has a pontil that extends past the base of the bottle, preventing it from standing level. This bottle is well documented as being from Davenport, Iowa. Personal history of Dr. Youman and ads in the Davenport city directories support this. Other Iowa medicine bottles exist from the 1860s and '70s which are also difficult to find while quite a number of different examples from the 1880s and '90s are available.

During the 1850s through the 1880s, the town of Keokuk hailed as the medicine capital of Iowa. Numerous medicine companies sprang up in this town during the early 1850s, leaving us a few examples of open pontil marked bottles to pursue. One of the earliest examples are the bottles embossed Mamaluke Liniment. This particular liniment was produced and marketed by a number of different proprietors with the original manufacturer being H. R. Gilmore, a druggist in Keokuk during the 1850s. Mr. Gilmore eventually sold the concoction to T. I. McKenny and M. H. Runner. By the close of the Civil War, McKenny & Runner sold out to J. L. Curtis, a former partner of Mr. Gilmore in the drug business. Mr. Curtis later sold out to Edward Welchman in

1869. Mr. Welchman continued his medicine business until 1871, when it appears that he sold out to the then patent medicine giant of Iowa, the S. F. Baker & Company of Keokuk.

Other than the Chamberlain medicine bottles from Des Moines, the Baker medicine bottles from Keokuk are perhaps one of the most familiar medicine bottles associated with Iowa. Dr. Samuel F. Baker established the company in 1868 as a manufacturer of patent medicines. By the middle of the 1880s, their company was manufacturing no less than 15 individual medicinal products along with a full line of flavoring extracts and spices. The newer bottles used by S. F. Baker & Co. are side embossed only, but the earlier examples prior to 1905 all used individual bottles for each specific liniment. All examples are aqua except for the Dr. Baker's Tonic Laxative, which used an amber bottle. While the range of products that they made was extensive, there is no record of this company ever producing a bitters product.

Other companies from Keokuk that used embossed bottles include The Crawford Medicine Co.; Dr. Fisk, owner of the Keokuk Proprietary Medicine Co., and Dr. Machin, proprietor of the Iowa Medicine Company, which eventually became the KKK Medicine Company.

The KKK bottles turn up frequently and usually spark some interesting conversation as to the name. While a KKK chapter was well established in Keokuk at one time, there is no documentation between the two groups. On some bottles, the K's in Keokuk are all capitalized which leads to speculation as to where the name may have come from as there are three K's in Keokuk.

As the state of Iowa grew and expanded, so did its various businesses and industries. This included the patent medicine business. In the spring of 1872, Lowell Chamberlain moved to Marion, Iowa to engage in the druggist trade. He formed a partnership with Dr. Norman Owen who had practiced in Marion since 1863. This newly formed firm was established as Owens & Chamberlain and began producing various patent medicines for sale on a local market. The success of the products, which became known as O & C's Standard Remedies, invoked increased production and in turn a larger sales area. They marketed six major products

including a bitters which will be discussed in a future article on Iowa bitters. Their bottles were very distinctive as all examples have hinge mold bases and very large embossed O & C initials. A local competitor, Benjamin Nott, produced a very rare cure using the same style of large embossing. The words PAIN CURE cover the entire front panel with 1" tall letters.

In 1882, David Chamberlain, a brother of Lowell, bought out Dr. Owen's share of the business and the two brothers moved the medicine business to Des Moines, establishing what would become the largest patent medicine business in Iowa, the Chamberlain & Company patent medicine firm. The number of products was expanded greatly and eventually sales would reach to an international scale. During 1892, the firm name was changed to the Chamberlain Medicine Company and most of the Chamberlain bottles can be dated by this change. All bottles embossed Chamberlain & Co. date from 1882 to 1892 while those embossed Chamberlain Medicine Co. are post-1892.

Seeing the success of the Chamberlains in Des Moines, numerous competitors tried their hand in producing a medicinal product. Some were successful on a smaller scale while others failed in less than a year's time in business. By 1910, there were no less than 25 different medicine manufacturing companies operating in Des Moines. The result has been an interesting variety of some hard to find medicine bottles from the capital of Iowa.

Other major medicine companies in Iowa included W. F. Severa of Cedar Rapids; The Scarless Remedy Co. of Winterset; Dr. Master's Remedy Co. of Sheldon; Dr. Mrs. Keck of Davenport; Wrights Farmers Friend of Red Oak; the Fitch Ideal Dandruff Cure Co. of Boone; the Seminole Indian Medicine Co. of Boone; Olney & McDaid of Clinton; and Dr. Norton Remedies from the small town of Kent in Southwest Iowa.

The firm of Olney & McDaid from Clinton produced a varied assortment of medicinal products. Perhaps the most noteworthy example is Prof. Dean's King Cactus Oil which was touted as The Great Barbed Wire Remedy. The bottle is elaborately embossed, showing the fancy dispenser that was set up in the drug store. This device was a fancy wire mesh stand which contained sponges. On top of the stand was a five-gallon can of the King Cactus Oil with a pump attached to the top of the can. The smaller individual bottles could then be filled from the five-gallon can in the drug store. This particular bottle has a lot of appeal because of the

embossing and being a barbed wire remedy. It is available in three sizes with all three sizes made in amber or clear glass.

There are many examples of Iowa medicine bottles that are labeled only examples. While embossed bottles seem to be more desirable, there are many labeled medicines that have very attractive graphics and appealing claims. The photo shows a brief sampling of labeled Iowa medicines and cures.

Of specific interest to cure collectors are a number of interesting and somewhat hard to obtain cure bottles. For some unknown reason, a large number of embossed Iowa cure bottles have some connection to a dandruff problem. There are many attractive and interesting paper label cure bottles from Iowa but the the listing includes only embossed examples.

Fitch's Ideal Dandruff Cure, Boone, aqua  
Seminole Indian Liver & Kidney Cure, Boone, aqua  
Henry's Skin Cure, Burlington, clear  
Keipps Dandruff Cure & Hair Restorer, Colfax, milk glass  
Cubeb Cough Cure, Des Moines, clear  
Hansen's Radical Cure, Des Moines, aqua  
Dr. Arntz Eye Cure, Des Moines, aqua  
Lichty's Cough Cure, Des Moines, aqua  
Globe Hair Restorative & Dandruff Cure, Des Moines, aqua  
Globe Hair Restorative & Dandruff Cure, Grinnell, aqua & clear  
Eureka Hair Restorative & Dandruff Cure, Grinnell, clear  
Moore's Tree of Life Catarrh Cure, Emerson, amber  
Dr. Norton's Chlorodine Consumption Cure, Kent, clear  
B. H. Nott's Pain Cure, Marion, aqua  
Caucasian Dandruff Cure, Sheldon, aqua  
Park's Pile Cure, Troy, clear

[Fig. 1]



[Fig. 2]



[Fig. 3]



[Fig. 1] A rare open pontiled medicine from Davenport, Iowa. DR. JAMES YOUMAN'S AMERICAN AGUE KILLER.

[Fig. 2] A rare 1870's cure: B. H. NOTT'S / PAIN CURE / MARION, IOWA.

[Fig. 3] An interesting name for an Iowa medicine: DR. MACHIN'S K.K.K. REMEDIES / KEOKUK, IOWA.

[Fig. 4] A rare cure: MOORE'S TREE OF LIFE CATARRH CURE / EMERSON, IOWA.

Shaped exactly like the common Ely's Cream Balm bottle.

[Fig. 5] A labeled only example and an embossed example of LICHTY'S CELERY NERVE COMPOUND from Des Moines, Iowa.

[Fig. 6] A nice cobalt blue CITRATE OF MAGNESIA / SARGENT / TRUE DRUGGISTS / OTTUMWA.

[Fig. 7] A popular medicine from Clinton, Iowa: PROF. DEAN'S KING CACTUS OIL / THE GREAT BARBED WIRE REMEDY.

[Fig. 7]



[Fig. 6]



[Fig. 5]



[Fig. 4]



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