



Veterinary Roundtable

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I would like to start this column with a thank you to the Federation for expanding the number of collecting categories for which regular articles will be written and with an introduction.

I am a practicing veterinarian in a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia. I purchased my first veterinary patent medicine bottle in 1981 and have actively collected in this area since that time. I have published "Veterinary Collectibles Roundtable," a newsletter dedicated to veterinary patent medicine collecting for the last ten years.

My aim in this column is to update you on the state of veterinary collecting; it's past, present and future.

Future articles will focus on the history of veterinary patent medicine companies. I hope to provide this information in such a way that even collectors who have never spent a waking moment considering veterinary patent medicines before will find a bit of interesting knowledge to add to their collecting consciousness.

As long as there has been livestock in America, there have been home remedies to treat their ills. For the first three-quarters of the 19th century, veterinary medicine was in its highest form of quackery.

It was not until after the Civil War that formal veterinary education had any support. Up until that time and into the first part of the 20th Century, the majority of veterinary medicine was practiced by horsemen and livestock owners on their own animals.

Anyone could hang out a shingle as a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine. The majority of "veterinarians" were self-taught men or apprenticed under other so-called "veterinarians."

Since horses and livestock were so essential to almost every family in the growing America of the 19th century and veterinary knowledge and medicine was so limited, the patent medicine companies

were happy to take advantage of the fears of the common man.

Animal medicine could be purchased at the blacksmith, country store, or from the traveling salesman's wagon. Sure cures for every animal ailment were available in those medicine bottles.

Merchant's Gargling Oil from Lockport, New York is considered the first successful, mass produced and marketed veterinary patent medicine, manufactured to treat the harness sores on the horses pulling barges along the Erie Canal.

Later, two men without any formal veterinary education would produce competing empires. Dr. J. G. Lesure of Keene, New Hampshire and Dr. A. C. Daniels' of Boston, Massachusetts would take mass marketing of complete lines of veterinary remedies not only nationally, but world wide.

Few collectors before 1970 collected strictly in the veterinary or animal medicine field. Most were general bottle, medicine, or cure collectors to whom animal medicines were only a minor category in their collecting interests. These people were primarily interested in a bottle's embossing and color.

Many a bottle's label was soaked off so that the color and embossing could be displayed in a window or lighted cabinet.

It seems that veterinary collecting has come full circle as those once annoying labels are now the object of desire for most veterinary collecting specialists.

Collectors seeking medicines in their original condition dominate veterinary bottle collecting today. Examples with label, contents, and packaging are typically the most desired. Graphics and color on the label or packaging can add significantly to a medicine's desirability and cost.

Condition of the bottle is

important, but a nice clean, colorful label will greatly outweigh a minor lip chip.

Embossed bottles without a label are not as highly sought after in today's market. However there are a few exceptions.

The highest prices for veterinary bottles are still brought by colored, embossed, pontiled medicines. The Warner's Safe Cure animal size bottle is another highly sought and priced example. The very limited supply helps keep these prices elevated.

A fellow collector recently told me that he adds only one pontiled medicine to his collection a year on average.

The highest prices are typically paid, not by veterinary specialists, but by cross collecting pontiled medicine collectors.

Availability of quality material in the marketplace is a problem for almost all collecting hobbies. While it is true that veterinary collector numbers have grown rapidly over the last ten years, interest in animal medicines by country store and vintage advertising collectors have also bolstered the field.

Most collectors have expanded their collections to include not only medicines, but also vintage advertising, paper ephemera, and company give-aways.

Seemingly, many people believe that the "good stuff" is all in collections. Quality material is still popping up in all manner of venues for the people who seek it out.

Certainly the Internet is the current favorite, but bottle shows and antique markets still bring surprises to the table.

The future of this collecting field is bright. Quality material is highly sought and prices are strong for better and mid-range items.

Average and common items are lagging or finding no takers at any price. I predict that the next long established and diverse veterinary collection to come to auction will set benchmark prices for the next generation of collectors.

I look forward to hearing from any collector with a question or comment about veterinary collecting.

I can be reached by email at Petvet@mindspring.com or weekdays at 770-482-5100.

Nancy Hanks Veterinary Liniment

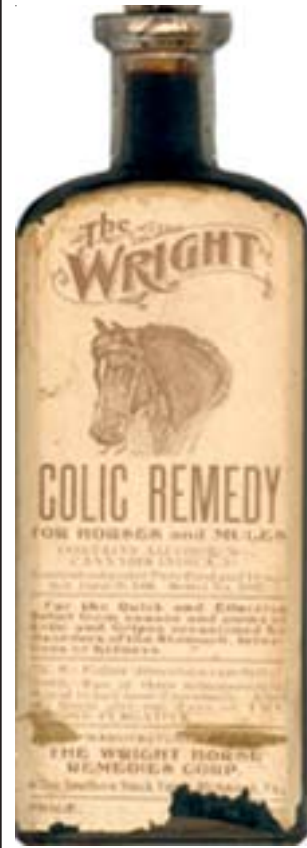
Amber embossed bottle with label and contents. 6" x 2". Embossed: NANCY HANKS / VETERINARY LINIMENT / MF'G BY THE H.L. LOHMEYER DRUG CO. / PITTS. PA. Nancy Hanks was a famous trotting horse whose record in the mile of 2: 04 is printed below

Yankee Compound

Aqua, embossed bottle with label from N. T. Dore, Boston. 7 3/4" x 2 1/2". Embossed: YANKEE COMPOUND // N. T. DORE // BOSTON, MASS. Without the label, this bottle could not be identified as a veterinary medicine. Label clearly states its veterinary only use in horses with Ringbone, Spavin, or Curb.

The Wright Colic Remedy

Clear, embossed bottle with paper label from Richmond, Virginia. Embossed: THE WRIGHT HORSE REMEDIES / MANUFACTURED AT / RICHMOND, VA. 6 1/2" x 2 1/4". Slightly damaged to label would have no effect on this rare bottle's value.

Security Healer

Bottle with original contents, label and box. 7" x 2 1/2" without embossing. Colorful and graphic box makes this a very desirable medicine.

Dr. Dent's Dog Vermifuge

Clear bottle with label and box from Newburgh, New York. 4 1/2" x 1 5/8". Dog medicines are much less common than examples for livestock and horses. All dog medicines are highly collected. Vermifuge is a dewormer.