



Vince poses with this large poster of a woman holding a book. A very classy and rare 27 inch poster, it advertises six of Fenner's medicines. This photo and our June cover photo by Holldan Martonis.



Another Fenner advertising approach was using classical-looking women. This beautiful and exotic woman certainly grabs attention. A large ad for Fenner's medicines is on the back.

Last issue we focused mainly on the amazing bottles in Vince's collection. Now, in addition to more bottles, we will take an extended look at the posters, photographs and ephemera that make up the rest of his fabulous collection.

Fabulous Fenners, Part II

By Vince Martonis

The astounding increases in people and products in post-Civil War America led to an equally astounding increase in product advertising and marketing. Chicago alone grew from a little over 100,000 people in 1860 to nearly 2.2 million by 1910. Numerous illnesses and diseases, in large part due to population growth and crowding, were met by ads promoting thousands of cures, medicines, remedies, specifics, tonics, liniments, balsams, and the like.

Wise businessmen needed catchy and colorful advertising to take advantage of a public eager to be relieved of their ailments. Warner came up with his embossed "Safe" logo. Kilmer came up with embossed kidneys, hearts, and lungs on his bottles, not to mention his "autumn leaf." The Indian Queen (Columbia) figure sold many bottles of medicine. So did the attractive and patriotic cabin and ear of corn.

And Fenner? His logo was the Globe, the name he used for his own printing company situated in his People's Remedies building. The logo appeared on Fenner's boxes, medicine booklets, cookbooks, almanacs, and more. It emphasized the growth of his business and the widespread use of his medicines.

But the Globe, of course, was not nearly enough to harness the attention of the needy public. Fenner's primary advertis-





ing magnet was beauty, children, animals, and patriotism — important elements of our culture, directly tied to our needs.

The most common Fenner trade cards are a set of eight which all feature children and animals. These small stock cards no doubt strongly appealed to the parents of sickly children. Each advertises a different Fenner medicine on the back.

Some of his larger trade cards also featured happy and healthy children playing and enjoying life, outside, of course, where they ought to be, not sick and sad in bed. The cards loudly proclaim, “Mother, father! Help your child return to this state of health and happiness where they belong! It is your duty!”

Beautiful women adorn his trade cards and posters. My favorite without doubt is the 13 ½ x 27 inch poster showcasing a woman who is not only beautiful but also apparently well read. Dressed to the nines, she looks demurely at the book in her hands. Consider even the group of six yellow roses she wears, in Victorian times a symbol of infidelity. No wedding ring here either. Question why she herself is in a yellow flowered dress and why her hair style has a floral look to it. Note how the large words — DR. FENNER'S REMEDY — encircle her head. “CURE, RELIEF, HONEY” are to the right.

PREVIOUS PAGE:

TOP: Vince states: “About thirty People's Remedies employees gather for a circa 1890 photo, but I don't see Dr. Fenner here. Fenner operated the Globe Printing Co. in the basement, the reason why one sees a globe on his paper advertising. *Photo courtesy of the D. R. Barker Museum, Fredonia, NY. Retouching by Niles Dening Photography.*

BOTTOM: This Dr. Fenner's People's Remedies display by Vince at the 2019 GVBCA Show in Rochester won Best of Show and People's Choice awards.

THIS PAGE:

TOP: Salt Rheum and Family Ointment bottles came in a great variety. Note the three very rare artist mock-up boxes on the left.

MIDDLE: Eight different medicine ads are on the back of these stock cards of children and animals.

BOTTOM: Fenner's booklets feature varied attractive imagery and usually his Globe icon. Note the many differences in the two with the Statue of Liberty.

Subtle but effective. Give the Victorian ad designer some credit. *SHE* is the remedy for what ails you!

Fenner also took advantage of the patriotic fervor associated with the Spanish-American War in 1898. Note the coincidental use of that date on his bottles. The war was quickly won by the U.S., primarily as a result of vastly superior naval power. We lost only one ship while Spain lost nineteen. Admiral Dewey became a hero by sinking the entire Spanish Pacific Fleet at Manila Bay.

Directly connected to this are the 9 x 11 1/2 inch (usually) ships of war posters Fenner produced. Besides the U.S.S. Maine, I have nine others which feature battleships, cruisers, and two submarines. In addition to front advertising, each has one of two large ads on the back. These dynamic posters are scarce and readily snapped up by advertising collectors.

Trying a different tack, Fenner promoted his medicines on a 12 x 8 inch poster honoring the Columbia, winner of the 10th America's Cup in 1899 against the Shamrock, built by the British. Columbia won all three races against Shamrock and another three against Shamrock II at the 11th America's Cup in 1901. Dismantled in 1915, her mast is all that's left. It stands on Flagpole Green in a park in New York City.

In 2018, I made the decision to display all this advertising and all my bottles one last time. Most of my Fenner ephemera and every Fenner bottle I was able to obtain in all my years of searching was displayed at the 2019 Genesee Valley Bottle Collectors Show & Sale in Rochester. The display took months to plan and even a U-Haul

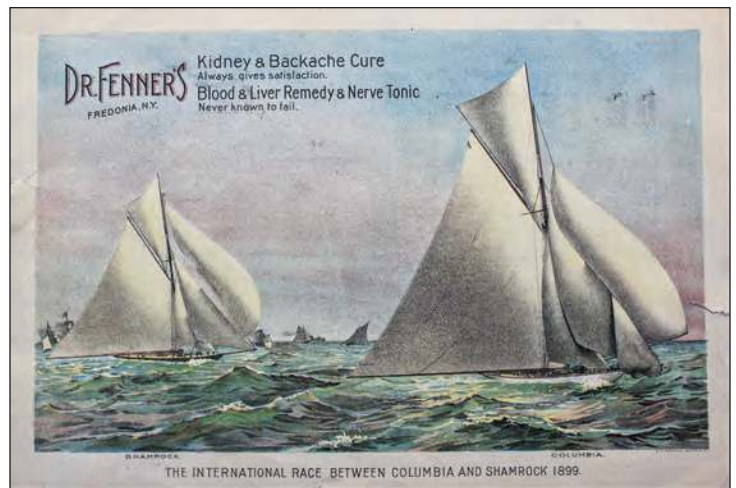
PHOTOS:

TOP LEFT: Fenner owned an ink company which produced this rather rare Paragon cone ink.

TOP RIGHT: Dr. Fenner knew that children would definitely help sell his medicines. Drawn by Frances Brundage with a large ad on the back also.

BOTTOM: Ten U.S. Naval Fleet posters from 1898 with Fenner advertising on both front and back. Remember the Maine!





to get it there. It was about twenty feet long and ten feet deep.

I am proud to say that my Dr. Fenner's People's Remedies display won both the Best of Show and the People's Choice awards at the 2019 Genesee Valley show.

It's been a long trail that I walked since my Fredonia landlady handed me that first Fenner bottle in 1971. Countless friends I made. Countless conversations enriched my knowledge. I carry with me many memories which make me smile.

In reassembling this small portion of what Dr. Fenner had created, I have thus been charged with the responsibility of finding it a suitable home. I think I have done this.

The D. R. Barker Museum's acquisition of my Fenner collection included my donation of over 200 items. I also prepared for them seven 3-ring binders containing the

41 billheads, 33 booklets, over 200 other paper items, and two with my extensive research file on Dr. Fenner. There are even original 1860s letters by Dr. Fenner, notes he wrote, and very rare 1870s printed materials. Included are 136 bottles, most with labels and boxes, many with contents. Everything is research-ready with detailed labels, tables of contents, and in archival pages.

There is no better place for this than in Fenner's hometown of Fredonia, N.Y. It is now securely housed in an important historic building where visitors may examine the items and learn a little about the fabulous Dr. Milton M. Fenner and how he worked to enrich not only his own life but the lives of countless others.



PHOTOS (clockwise from upper left):

Adm. Dewey's 1898 destruction of the entire Spanish Pacific fleet in Manila Harbor.

In the 1899 America's Cup, the U. S. ship Columbia beat the British ship Shamrock in all 3 races.

A very happy moment when John Pastor presented the People's Choice Award to Vince. The display also won Best of Show.

Four scarce St. Vitus' Dance Specific bottles. This was a Fenner medicine which sold very well long into the 1900s.

About the author: Married for fifty years this July to Joanne, Vince, now retired, was a teacher for 37 years. They are parents of four and grandparents of fourteen. As Hanover (N.Y.) Historian for 38 years, he's presented hundreds of talks and major events and written dozens of articles. He lives in Gerry, N.Y., and still searches for historical items to research and collect. Email: vmartonis@gmail.com