



# In the Medicine Chest

By John Panella and Joe Widman

## OPIUM HABIT CURED

*Dr. S.B. Collins Opium Cure, his life, his times and his dive into ambiguity meant more misery during the Golden Age of American Medical Quackery*

### INSPIRATION

A passage from Arthur William Meyer, "The Vogue of Quackery," *Medical Journal and Record* 125 (1927):

*"Bravado, self laudation, a ready wit and double tongue, shrewdness, a knowledge of the foibles of men, a blunted conscience and an ignorance of the very things in which they claimed competence always have characterized the quack."*

### INTRODUCTION

In June of 2019 I was contacted via my online patent medicine, trade card, advertising and quackery website by my good friend and part-time bottle digging enthusiast/historian, Zack Baer. He had posted his recently unearthed, unlabeled, Dr. S.B. Collins embossed Opium Cure bottle. Its interesting size, shape and embossing led to quite a discussion regarding the nature and history of this totally quack narcotic curing, narcotic based, habituating and bogus patent medicine. This was just my style.

Zack, his lovely wife and I instantly went to work mining details of this discovery, which turned out to be quite interesting for our readership, especially cure and patent medicine collectors out there. We found some excellent references and here is Part 1 of our drama. We assembled some well-researched and unique facts in order to present this rather exciting and interesting story of American medicine during the days of expensive doctors, no drug regulations and plenty of self-medication. Welcome onboard!

### FROM THE BEGINNING

On July 30, 1834, Samuel B. Collins was born in Darke County, near Greenville, Ohio. By 1843, the Collins family moved to Indiana, first to Dearborn County and then to Wabash County in 1843. Samuel followed in the footsteps of his father and learned the trade of brick mason. From Wabash County he then moved to La Porte County to be close to his aunt and uncle on his father's side. He had been married about two years to a Miss Bronson and this marriage had ended in a divorce due to her filing on grounds of incompatibility.

In September 1859, he married Josephine Drollinger in La Porte County. They had three children but their marriage was at best rocky. Josephine along with a "confidential" employee, W.S. George, worked with Collins in the development of his opium cure, so both were very knowledgeable about its content.

In 1868, Samuel announced the establishment of Dr. S.B. Collins' Painless Cure for your Opium Habit, and it was "recommended by the Medical Facility." Morphine was commonly used during the Civil War as a painkiller. Morphine was extremely habituating, but was the best painkiller on the market. Given for battle injuries, its addiction and withdrawal symptoms became known as the "soldier's disease."

It was well known Collins was a ladies' man, with no guilt about cheating on his wife. Within a short time, they divorced and she resumed her maiden name of Drollinger. She and a Collins agent began producing their own opium cure. Samuel filed an injunction to stop her, but Drollinger won and was allowed to continue after the divorce.

Collins never had any medical training and referred to himself as a "Spirit Physician" and stated that the original formula for his cure came to him in a dream.

In 1870, he published a pamphlet of one hundred pages titled *Theriaki and their Last Dose*. It was published in Chicago and noted that it was "relating to the most wonderful medical discovery of the age." It was full of testimonials of numerous "cured" individuals having used Collins' antidote.

*It is rumored that Meeker paid a few rough thugs of La Porte to burn effigies of Collins and his new wife in retaliation for Collins immoral behavior.*

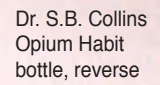
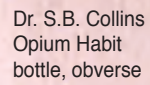
At this juncture in the story, Dr. Daniel Meeker enters the picture. In 1871, Meeker had issued a pamphlet stating that he had discovered a certain cure for the opium habit. Meeker was born in Schoharie County, New York. In May 1835, Meeker relocated to La Porte.

In 1842, Meeker helped start La Porte University and was president of the Indiana State Medical Society. When he published his pamphlet, *Professor Meeker's Opium Cure - a Certain and Safe Remedy for the Opium Habit*, this led to his expulsion from the State Medical Society the same year.

At this time it was reported that Meeker's two daughters were being treated unsuccessfully by Collins for opium addiction. Daniel went into partnership with his



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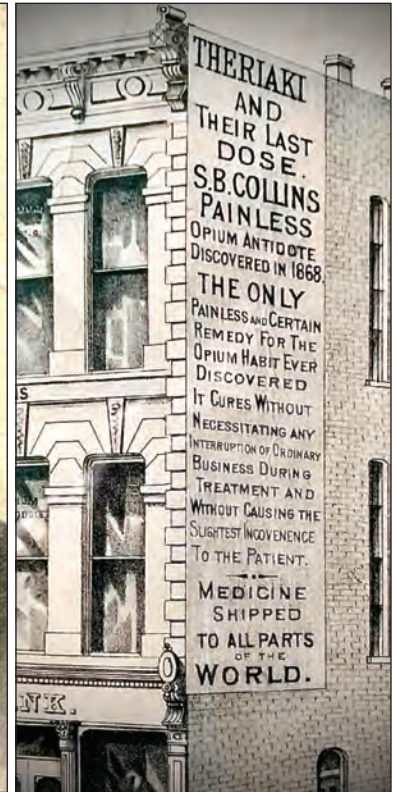
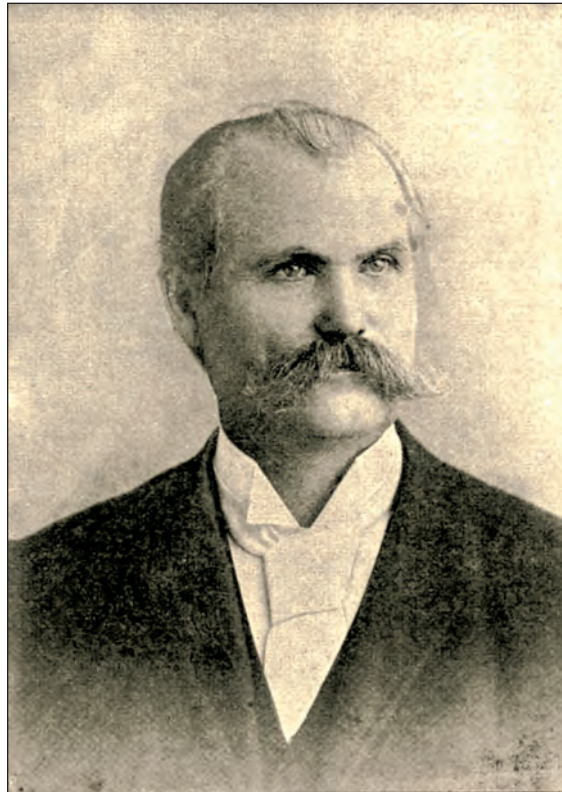
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son, Dr. L. Meeker, under the firm name Drs. D. and L. Meeker La Porte Indiana Opium Cure Company. Meeker died in 1876 but his son continued to produce the cure until 1897. There was no more advertising after that date and the son was no longer in the business.

Meeker went public with a statement accusing Collins of fraud in his publication of *Theriaki*, so it became a court case — Meeker vs. Collins, in the October 1871 term of the La Porte Circuit Court. At this time, Collins, Meeker and Drollinger were all making the basically same formula for opium addiction, all out of La Porte, Indiana. Collins alleged that Meeker paid a local reporter to publicize the whole trial as a means to discredit him. Collins was realizing that the town was turning on him and needed a scapegoat. His son was still making the cure and, at the time of his death, his son was still in business, having moved to Chicago.

In November 1871, Collins announced the construction of a new building, which was located on the west side of East Main Street and north of the post office at the time. A.P. Andrew, Jr. & Sons, Bankers was located on the lower level. The building was called a “marble front” and on the facade was the name “Doctor S.B. Collins,” where he manufactured and shipped his antidote on the top two floors.

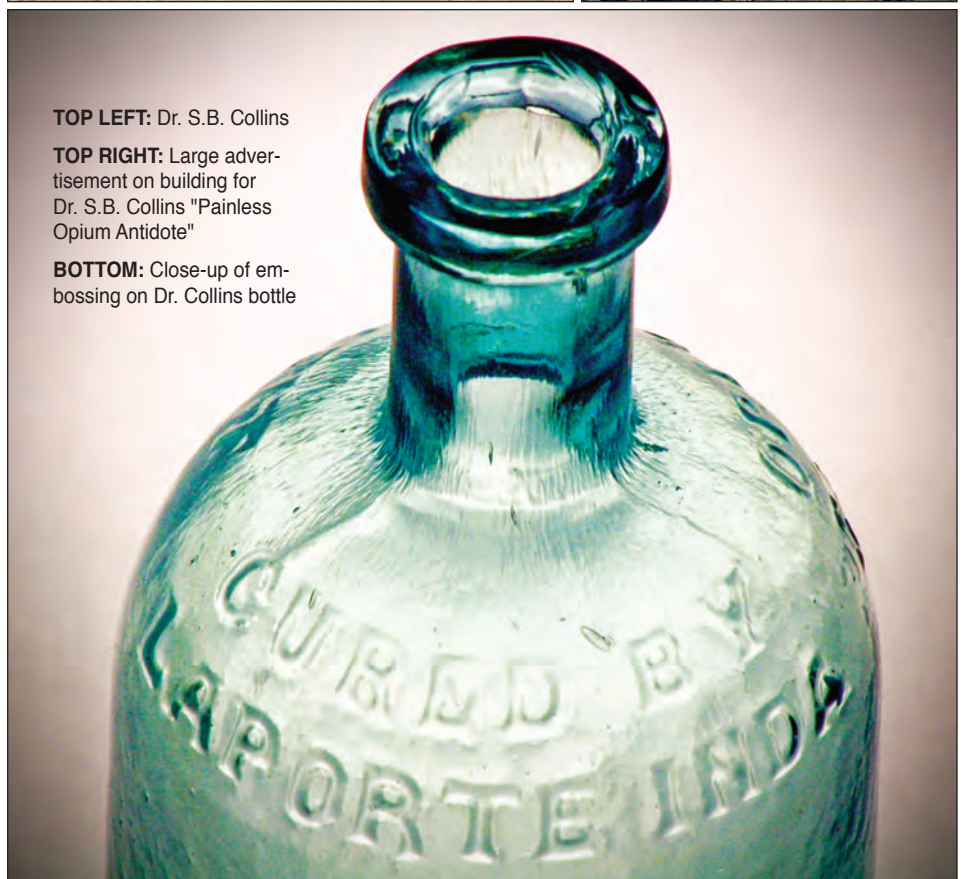
As already mentioned, Collins was a ladies’ man. During his marriage to Josephine, he became acquainted with Caradora (Andrew) Gregory. She was the daughter of Abraham Piatt Jr. and Viola (Armstrong) Andrew, who was the son of one of the founders of La Porte. Caradora was married to Samuel Oscar Gregory and they had one child. Samuel Oscar divorced Caradora in June of 1872 and she was allowed to resume her maiden name of Caradora Floretta Andrew.



**TOP LEFT:** Dr. S.B. Collins

**TOP RIGHT:** Large advertisement on building for Dr. S.B. Collins "Painless Opium Antidote"

**BOTTOM:** Close-up of embossing on Dr. Collins bottle







## HOW TO ORDER MEDICINE.

A blank containing questions to be answered is sent to any address upon application, to be filled out and returned. Upon receipt of this blank by the Doctor the price per month for treatment will be given.

The money must accompany each order, to insure prompt attention. No medicine sent C. O. D. without part payment.

Nothing less than one month's supply of the Antidote is ever shipped to any address, and patients should always remember that when the full price of one month's supply is not sent to the Doctor they must invariably pay the balance to the express agent from whom they obtain the medicine.

In all cases where it is possible, however, the patient should remit the full amount of the bill, thus saving the very heavy charges for the return of the money—the charges in many instances being twice as large as the original bill.

All medicine is sent by express, and in no other manner.

Money sent by Postoffice or Express Money Order is always safe. When that cannot be done the letter should be Registered.

All bills are payable monthly in advance.

Patients should always give County and State plainly.

The words "Opium Habit Cured by Dr. S. B. Collins, LaPorte, Ind.," appear blown in the glass of each and every bottle sent from the Doctor's laboratory.

Patients residing in England, France, Italy, Germany, South America, etc., should order not less than from two to six months' supply at a time, as it will be to their advantage to do so. The medicine is securely packed and sent by express to any of these points with full and explicit directions.

In conclusion would say that it has been, as it will continue to be, the object of Dr. Collins to give his time and attention to the manufacture of his Antidote, assuring all that the same care in its preparation, which secured to it the just reputation of being the Only Perfect and Painless Cure of the Opium Habit ever discovered, shall always be observed.

All Communications are strictly Confidential.

For further information address the Discoverer and Sole Manufacturer of the Collins Painless Opium Antidote.

DR. S. B. COLLINS,  
P. O. Box 1141, LaPorte, Ind.

Josephine was divorced from Collins in December 1873. By February 9, 1874, Caradora and Collins were married. The media had been silent about the activities until February 1874, when the story, "The Latest Sensation - A Local Scandal" hit the headlines. A history was published detailing his activities about his divorce from Josephine and marriage to Caradora. The general public was very stirred up, which culminated in "burning Collins and his wife in effigy in the street in front of his office." It is rumored that Meeker paid a few rough thugs of La Porte to burn effigies of Collins and his new wife in retaliation for Collins immoral behavior. This was one big Opium Cure competitive crazy free-for-all. It takes home the lesson that everyone loses when it comes to opium, buyers and sellers of cures alike, just one big mess!

In January 1875, Josephine commenced the manufacture of the cure for the Opium Habit. It was reported that "she was a worthy woman and clearly entitled to the support of the public, she will be almost certain to succeed."

Collins applied for an injunction to prevent her and W.F. George from manufacturing the antidote. A refusal from the court to grant the injunction was filed in South Bend. It was later reported that "Josephine beat Collins" in the injunction suit and she had the right to use the names of all his patients. Following this, Josephine issued a scathing circular titled "In Self Defense" to vindicate herself against the false charges issued and circulated by Collins. W.F. George and the Argus office reported they kept a few copies "for us to look at and show to the Doctors' friends."

TOP: Wonderful early advertisement for Dr. S.B. Collins "Painless Opium Antidote"

BOTTOM: Instructions to order medicine





Caradora died in August 1880, perhaps from complications of the birth of a child born in July. A libel case filed by Collins against Josephine was finally settled in March 1881 with a verdict favorable to Josephine. The trial lasted two days and the court room was packed with people at all times.

On May 3, 1881, Collins married Sadie Bearup of Elkhart. By 1889, Collins purchased a home in Chicago and moved there soon afterward. It was reported locally that on November 1, 1893, "Dr. Dreamt Himself Rich" Collins died. This believer in dreams of cures and spiritualism, who entered the medical profession from brick-layer, was gone for all eternity.

According to one of Caradora's descendants, "There are some who have said that his Opium Cure" was nothing more than a liquid containing opium. It is reasonable to assume, that being the case, his patients did, indeed, feel better after a good dose.

Unfortunately, most of America during this era was utilizing one narcotic to "cure" the addiction to another, thus simply masking withdrawal symptoms. History, once again, teaches us another valuable lesson. Where there is money, greed and immorality, some are ready to balance the ugly equation, especially when they are merchants of opiates.

*It was reported locally that on November 1, 1893, "Dr. Dreamt Himself Rich" Collins died.*



LEFT: A beautiful plate from a book depicting an image of Dr. Collins estate as well as his offices and laboratory.



BELOW: An attractive ad promoting Collins' "Painless Opium Antidote."

ESTABLISHED IN 1868.

DR. S. B. COLLINS' OFFICE & LABORATORY

## DR. S. B. COLLINS'

# PAINLESS OPIUM ANTIDOTE.

SEND FOR

## THERIAKI:

A Magazine of 80 Pages—Sent Free by

**Dr. S. B. COLLINS, La Porte, Indiana.**

P. S.—Please send this to some one who is suffering from the Habit.

S. E. TAYLOR & CO. STEAM JOB PRINTERS, LA PORTE, IND.