

# Dr. William H. Tutt,

fervent patriot, prominent pharmacist, politician

*By Bill Baab*



Photos by Mike Newman



Beautiful Amber medicine embossed on side reading Dr. Tutt's

**N**ative Augustan William H. Tutt loved his city and his fellow residents thought highly of him. He was born August 31, 1823, one of at least two sons to parents whose names are unknown.

He is believed to have attended and perhaps was graduated from the Academy of Richmond County, probably in 1839 or 1840. Then he entered the Medical Department of the University of Georgia ideally located next door to the academy in the 500 block of Telfair Street. He earned his Medical Doctor degree in 1843, according to a list of graduates at the MCG Library. Both academy and medical college buildings are still there.

Physicians' salaries were on the low side financially speaking, so in 1845, Dr. Tutt decided to become a pharmacist and soon began concocting his own series of patent medicines which were to bring him fame and fortune.

Research indicated his first drug store where Louis A. Gardelle's pharmacy was located (in 1898) and he remained there until 1850 when he and his family moved to New York City.

He advertised in the Daily Chronicle and Sentinel (later called The Augusta Chronicle) extensively from nearly the first day he was in the drug business.

In 1853, he was in business with his older brother, Benjamin F. Tutt, who was a pharmacist in Chattanooga, Tennessee. In 1860, he sold his part of the drug business to his brother who died in 1871 and when the Civil War broke out, he was at his factory in

New York City.

Dr. Tutt applied for passports to return South and his wife and children were able to do so, but the federal government wasn't about to allow a medical man to go. So Dr. Tutt was forced to take a roundabout course. He sailed from New York to Bermuda and then bought passage on a blockade-running steamer to New Orleans. He returned overland by train and stagecoach to Augusta.

During his absence from Augusta, rumors had been spread that he had become a Union sympathizer. Upon his return, he caused this note to be published on July 1, 1863 in The Chronicle:

"A CARD – To my fellow citizens – Having heard since my return to my native state, that it was at one time reported here, that I had, while in New York, 'given dinners to Black Republicans; hung out the Union Flag from my windows; presided at some of the political meetings of our enemies, and given other indications of disloyalty to the South.' I deem it a duty to myself and to my children to deny emphatically the truth of these report, and to declare that I have never said or done anything calculated to give rise to them. My warmest feelings, on the contrary, were enlisted in our Confederacy. If I did not return South as soon as I desired, it was because of the impossibility of doing so, having with me my wife and four small children, and the Federal Government having repeatedly refused my petitions to cross the lines. But now that I am once more at home, it grieves me to think that any of my fellow citizens have listened to such slanderous reports."

Dr. Tutt received a pardon from the federal government on Nov. 23, 1865.

In 1868, Dr. Tutt took Civil War veteran R.H. Land as a partner. Land had been in charge of Dr. Tutt's pharmaceutical laboratory. In October of that year, investigators with the credit reporting agency R.G. Dun reported that Dr. Tutt "is said to own real estate



The other side of the medicine embossed Augusta, Ga.



Dr. Wm. H. Tuttle's Golden Eagle Bitters



Expectorant, an early amber medicine



Sarsaparilla & Queens Delight, also an early Amber Medicine

worth \$25,000 to \$30,000 and his drug firm is considered good in every respect." Dr. Tutt and Land broke up in 1870 and Tutt continued the business on his own.

The Tutts returned to New York in 1872, selling his drug store stock to the pharmaceutical firm of Charles H. Greene and (Tutt son-in-law) Dr. Henry Rossignol, but that firm lasted less than three years, prompting Dr. Tutt's return to Augusta in 1875 to pick up the pieces.

On May 4 of that year, Dr. Tutt took Lincoln County, Georgia native Rem Remsen as a partner and reopened his latest business as W.H. Tutt and Remsen at 264 Broad Street. A year later, Remsen is described "as a young man of good character, but little means. He is the son-in-law of Tutt whose estimated worth is \$40,000 to \$50,000. Tutt lives in New York and Remsen attends to business in Augusta." Remsen had wed the Tutts' youngest daughter Ella.

In 1883, at age 60, Dr. Tutt retired from the drug business and "conveyed to Mr. Rem Remsen his interest in the present firm." The new name of the firm was Remsen and Tutt. Dr. Tutt continued his New York business until 1888 when he sold out and he and his family returned to Augusta.

The physician's next goal was an idea for investments apparently hatched while he was in New York where he saw the successful operations of many grand hotels at nearby Saratoga and elsewhere. He cast his eyes on Summerville in Augusta's hill section. It was first settled just before the Civil War by Augusta residents of means who left downtown properties along the Savannah River, especially

after a yellow fever epidemic had broken out.

Dr. Tutt's discreet inquiry revealed Summerville residents would not approve of such a commercial undertaking (such as a luxury hotel). It would spoil the non-commercial atmosphere of the neighborhood. So he quietly searched for property suitable for a hotel and, as luck would have it, Mrs. Anna McKinne Winter's vast property on Hickman Road at its intersection with Walton Way and overlooking downtown was available.

Mrs. Winter's five children were grown and she was looking to downsize to a smaller home. Dr. Tutt bought the property on May 28, 1888 for \$12,500. Summerville residents thought that Dr. Tutt planned to replace Mrs. Winter's home with one of his own, but the building soon grew out of all proportion and it soon became evident that it was a hotel. More land was added to the original four acres, the ground landscaped and trees and grass planted.

"A great-spreading, four-storied frame building with towers and turrets, staircases and verandahs overlooked the city of Augusta, its Victorian splendor ready to receive the Yankee elite," said a newspaper description of the building called the Bon Air.

**SOURCES:** Various archival issues of The Augusta Chronicle, established 1785, to the present.

Works Progress Administration during President Franklin D. Roosevelt's term in office. Employment was given to journalists who compiled local histories, including that of Dr. William H. Tutt. Copies of the studies may be found in the Augusta-Richmond County Library's Georgia Room.



# School Hall of Fame next stop for Dr. Tutt

AUGUSTA, Ga. – Native Augustan Dr. William H. Tutt will be honored by his high school alma mater on October 17 when the Academy of Richmond County inducts him and nine others into its Hall of Fame.

He was one of two sons born in 1823 to parents whose names have been lost in the mists of time. While early graduation records are not in existence, he is believed to have graduated before his 18th birthday (1841).

Fifty years before, President George Washington visited Augusta and is known to have delivered the commencement address at the all-male school chartered in 1783. The school later became a military institution.

It was moved from its Telfair Street location to a new

building on Baker Avenue at Walton Way in 1926 where it remains today.

After graduation, Tutt entered the Medical College of Georgia located next door to the academy and is listed as a graduate in 1843 at age 20. Both the original academy and medical school buildings are still extant.

Joining Tutt in the ARC Shrine are Dr. Louis Battey Sr., William Henry Cato Jr., Laverne Lewis Gaskins, Don Grantham, Philetus Harison, U.S. Marine Corporal Leonard O. "Pete" Fletcher, Don P. Giddens, Edward W. Hagler, Thomas Hagler Jr., Roy V. Harris, Brig. Gen. Regionald G.A. Neal and Kessel D. Stelling Jr.

Dr. Tutt's presentation will be made by Bill Baab.

