

# CLUM'S LIVER CATHARTIC

By Steve Ketcham

It is sometimes a real challenge to determine where a particular nineteenth century product bottle originated. 100-year-old bottles embossed with a product name, but no other information can be found in many a collection. Sometimes, the town name was included on a paper label that has long since been removed.

Rare examples of a bottle simply embossed "Clum's Liver Cathartic" have been found by members of the North Star Historical Bottle Association (often while digging an old privy hole or dump). The aqua bottle stands about seven inches tall and is embossed on sunken side panels. No town name is embossed on the bottle, and until recently, collectors were mystified as to just where the product was marketed.

In his posthumously published book *North Star Snake Oil, Minnesota Patent Medicines 1860-1920*, Minnesota medicineman Boyd Beccue tells the story of Mr. A. L. Clum of Red Wing, Minnesota. Boyd found a Clum bottle with partial labels and was able to assemble an impressive amount of information regarding this Minnesota quack.

According to the label, Clum's Liver Cathartic was patented on January 29, 1878, by Dr. A. L. Clum. Contrary to the statement on the label, Clum was not a doctor at the time. A few years later, though, the *1886 Polk Medical Register and Directory* listed Clum as a physician who graduated from the Indiana Eclectic Medical College of Indianapolis. Beccue points out that the college was more of "a diploma mill for aspiring quacks" than a legitimate medical college.

Clum didn't stop there, and by 1893, he was listed in the Red Wing city directory as a physician, architect, and lawyer.

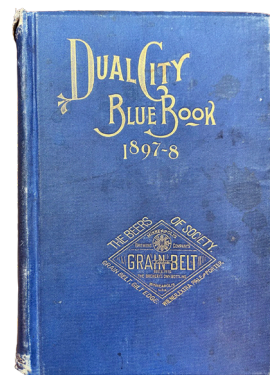
Clum did a good deal of advertising both locally and afar. His ads appeared in Red Wing, St. Paul, and even some New York newspapers. Beccue found that the ads proclaimed Clum's Liver Cathartic "has never failed to cure Ague and Fever, Cholera, Cholera Morbus, Bilious and Typhoid Fevers and Female Complaints."

No other versions of Clum product bottles are known at this time. However, Dr. A. L. Clum stayed quite busy offering his medical skills to the world and going far beyond dispensing mir-

The rectangular aqua bottle is about seven inches tall with indented panels



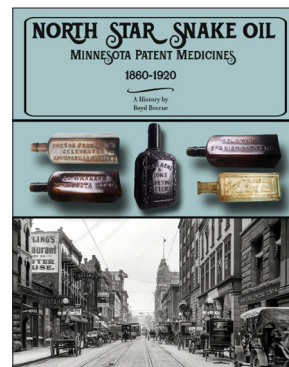
acle drugs. The *1897-1898 Dual City Blue Book*, which featured all manner of advertising from the merchants of Minneapolis and St. Paul, carried an advertisement placed by Dr. Clum. On page 290, under the heading of Cancer Institutes, a reinvented Dr. A. L. Clum claimed to be "The Great Australian Cancer and Tumor Specialist." Not only has Clum become a doctor, lawyer, and architect in just a few years, but he has also become Australian.



To summarize, it is now 1898. Dr. Clum is situated on Washington Avenue in Minneapolis. He is Australian. He has the following letters after his name: A.M., M.D., LL.D. He purports to be "The only Physician known who successfully removes heart failure, chronic constipation, blood poison." He further states, "1500 cancers and tumors cured in five years." Not satisfied with his list of cures, Clum also brags that he "Also treats all chronic diseases with success, such as rheumatism, liver disease, kidney disease, piles, gonorrhea, sores, chronic diarrhea, scrofula, female diseases, especially pertaining to their sex removed in a very short time." And what are we to make of "Special contracts for guaranteed cures"?

With his Liver Cathartic, A. L. Clum was just one of thousands of quacks plying their scurrilous trade prior to the pure food and drug laws enacted in the early Twentieth Century. They preyed on an unsuspecting, gullible public and became wealthy in doing so.

Note: Copies of *North Star Snake Oil, Minnesota Patent Medicines 1860-1920* are available on Amazon.





Ambrose L. Clum,

A. M., M. D., LL. D.,

1500  
Cancers and  
Tumors  
Cured in five  
Years.

The only  
Physician known  
Who successfully  
Removes Heart  
Failure, Chronic  
Constipation,  
Blood Poison.

The Great Australian

# CANCER and TUMOR

Specialist.

Removing Them Without a Knife.

Office: 45 Washington Ave. So., Minneapolis, Minn.

In 1898, Dr. Ambrose L. Clum now "The Great Cancer and Tumor Specialist."



## The Greatest Doctor on Earth Dr. AMBROSE L. CLUM, (German Specialist.)

Cancers, Gollers and Birthmarks removed without cutting, caustics, blemish or pain; leaves no scar. The wonderful method known only to Dr. Clum, removes the cancer germ from the blood so as to produce a permanent cure. Tape-worms, blood poison, gout, rheumatism, catarrh, stomach troubles, lung difficulties, kidney diseases, scrofula, female complaints, diarrhoea, private diseases of both sexes, etc., can be cured by this great specialist. Dr. Clum has had 49 years of practical experience, and has cured 85 per cent of his patients. Don't fail to call upon him in your hour of need. Read what some people have to say about him. Correspondence solicited; enclose stamps.

Minneapolis, Minn., July 6th, 1900.  
This is to certify that my name is Hattie Sweso. I am 55 years old. I have been troubled with stomach troubles for many years, with its accompanied effects, associated with female complaints, which caused me to suffer a great deal. I tried several doctors, and they done but little good. I thought that I never would get well. I almost gave up when I heard of Dr. Clum, and of his success. I went to see him with my husband, and it is well that I did. After his examination of my case and the reasons he gave of the cause of my troubles, I at once put my case into his hands, and in less than one month I grew better, so much so that in a short time after was as well as ever. I was in my life, and it is nearly two years ago, and am still in good health, and can recommend Dr. Clum to any woman that is troubled as I have been. I can recommend him as a conscientious and kind gentleman. Any one can see me at No. 3317 Longfellow avenue south.

MRS. H. SWESO.

Minneapolis, Minn., Sept. 16th, 1901.  
To Whom it May Concern: I am 65 years of age and my home is Los Angeles, Cal. About two years ago I had a cancer start in my right groin, and it grew to about the size of a hen's egg. All at once it left there, only to appear on the other side of my right leg, just below the knee. The doctors at my home did not care to treat it, so I went to St. Paul, Minn., my

former home. Shortly after my arrival it had grown to the size of a man's fist, and was very hard.

I consulted some of the best doctors of St. Paul. The best they could offer me was an operation to have my leg cut off, and even then they could not guarantee a cure. As I refused an operation and was ready to start back home to die, when I called upon a friend to say good-bye. She showed me her child eight months old, which had been cured of a skin cancer on its nose by Dr. A. L. Clum, of Minneapolis, after it had been considered incurable by several doctors of St. Paul.

I followed her advice and consulted Dr. Clum, and he told me he could cure me. As I had confidence in him I gave him my case at once. After treating me about three months he took away a cancer weighing about two pounds, and am just about well now, and am going home—to live.

I am satisfied if I had not met Dr. Clum I could not have lived. He certainly is the most skilful physician I ever had, and can recommend him as a kind and considerate gentleman.

This is a short statement of the facts in my case. For any further information in this matter, address Mrs. W. F. Golisch, 541 Flower street, Los Angeles, Cal.  
(Signed) W. F. GOLISCH.

M. M. GOLISCH,  
MISS LIZZIE SCHMIDT.

**Dr. A. L. CLUM, 239 Nicollet Avenue,**

Suits 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, Knoblauch Arcade, Minneapolis, Minn.

Cut this out, as it will not appear again. Correspondence solicited.

Dr. Ambrose L. Clum (German Specialist) now "The Greatest Doctor on Earth." Star Tribune, Minneapolis, Minnesota, November 18, 1901, Page 2

DR. A. L. CLUM'S

Liver Cathartic

Trade Mark.



Dr. A. L. Clum's

Liver Cathartic

Cures all diseases proceeding from a disordered Liver, such as Rheumatism, Dyspepsia, Kidney Complaints, Costiveness, Headache, Bilious Attacks, Influenza, Gout, Humors, Paralysis, Tumors, Ulcers, Deep Seated Pains, Fever and Ague, Gravel and Brick Dust Deposit, Neuralgia, Heartburn, Bilious Colic, &c.

Patients using this Cathartic for different diseases will please to consult the circular wrapped around each bottle.

**Price One Dollar per Bottle.**

DR. A. L. CLUM

Red Wing, Minn.

Patented January 29, 1878.

