



Old Tyme Chronicle

Published by Big Walnut Area Historical Society

Volume XX

August 2020

July's Online Program

Doritty Shows Evolution of Infantryman's Gear Since W.W. I

“Military Equipment Connections Between Wars,” is the topic for Big Walnut Area Historical Society’s July program. Richard Doritty will present the evolution of the infantryman’s equipment from WWI to the present. The program is recorded and will be available on YouTube. Go to <http://BigWalnutHistory.org> and click on link to the program.

Doritty was born in Erie, Pa in 1941, graduated from Erie Technical High School in 1959, entered the Air Force in 1960 where he served with the 60th Fighter Interceptor Squadron as an electrician until January 1964. He came to Columbus to work for Western Electric. He attended Ohio Technical Institute where he earned an Associate Degree in Electronic Technology. In 1967 Dick married Sharon and moved to Sunbury.

He has served time with the Sunbury Police Department and B.S.T. & G. Fire Department. He is active in Sparrow Masonic Lodge and American Legion Post #457. He supports and is actively involved with many activities for military veterans.

Myers Inn Museum To Re-Open

In compliance with the Governor DeWine’s mandates and the Delaware County Health Districts recommendations, we will reopen in September on Saturdays from 9 to 3 for family groups of 10 or less by appointment only. Guests must wear masks, not have a fever and feel well. Guests should arrive on time.

For appointment call **740-965-3582** and leave a message or email info@BigWalnutHistory.org at least 24 hours before you wish to visit. You will receive a reply with instructions.

August's Online Program

William Little with Brent Carson

Before Delaware was a county, William Little and his older brother, Nathaniel (with 3 a’s), came to Delaware County from Connecticut via Worthington. In the October 1808 Election for County Commissioners, William got 1 vote from Sunbury Township and brother Nathaniel got 9 from Sunbury Township and 50 total from Delaware, Liberty Berkshire, Union townships. Nathaniel is said to have purchased goods from Byxbe in Berkshire Township. He opened a store on in-lots 63 and 64 at the northwest corner of William and Sandusky Streets. He died in 1813 leaving a minor son. The lots were sold to Henry Smith.

During the election William was a saddler by trade but switched to mercantile business in a store on the southwest corner of Winter and Sandusky, one block north of his brother. Perhaps he got his brother’s merchandise. He carried cloths such as velvet, silk, satin, cassimeres and commoners (?) plus shoes, crockery, hardware, medicines, and groceries. Each year he went to Philadelphia for 2 months to purchase stock for his store. Even though Little’s Store was in competition with Col. Byxbe’s Store, he prospered and became a very wealthy man.

Carson will share the story of the two brothers and their descendants in a special YouTube Program in August. Details will be forwarded to those using email. Or go to <http://BigWalnutHistory.org> and click on link to the program when it is posted.

We Regret Our Annual Big Walnut Area Historical Society Old Fashioned Picnic will not be held this year due to the epidemic.

Myers Inn Museum will be closed Labor Day.



Balcony Floor Repaired & Painted

2.5 tubes of caulk, 2 dozen weather proof screws, 2 gallons of paint and lots of Damon Bower's elbow grease later the old balcony looks wonderful and the birds won't be able to build a nest under the warped boards. THANKS FOR YOUR LABOR, DAMON.

Calendar of Events

August Annual Old Fashioned Picnic is cancelled.
August 11 6:00 Trustees Meeting via Zoom
Watch Website for Links to July and August Programs.

First Online Program Was Popular

June's online program about Eli Whitney was very successful. Jack Brown reported his YouTube program had 100 views through June and July. There is no way to know how many individuals watched the program. Thanks to Roger Roberts for organizing our programs.

Patent Medicine Display Coming to Myers Inn Museum

by Polly Horn, curator

In this time of Covid pandemic and the rush for a vaccine, I remembered the bottles I saved for a 'patent medicine' display in the Myers Inn Museum.

Before there were trained doctors in towns, "snake-oil" salesmen traveled around the frontier selling their cure-alls. While few contained snake oil, most contained herbs, alcohol, cocaine or other ingredients to make the person feel better.

A patent medicine, also known as a nostrum (from the Latin nostrum remedium, or "our remedy"), is a commercial product usually heavily advertised as a purported over-the-counter medicine, without regard to its effectiveness.

The phrase "patent medicine" comes from the late 17th century marketing of medical elixirs, when those who found favour with royalty were issued a letter patent authorizing the use of the royal endorsement in advertising. Few if any of the nostrums were actually patented; chemical patents did not come into use in the United States until 1925. Furthermore, patenting one of these remedies would have meant publicly disclosing its ingredients, which most promoters sought to avoid.

Advertising the product was as important as what was in it. This might include a traveling salesman, a side show or a full length "Wild West Show." Booklets were printed, flyers distributed and ads taken out in trade directories. All to make the public feel the medicine was a true cure. A booklet for Henry Cring's Balm, made in Condit, is posted in its entirety on website at http://BigWalnutHistory.org/Local_History/trenton/Cringsbalm/Balm.htm

In 1971 Jack and I purchased the Willison property on Letts Avenue. Essa Willison was born in 1881. Her parents bought the house so she could go to Sunbury School after her early education in a one room school in Trenton Township. It had been 43 years since her father had died and little had been done to the house. There was an assortment of patent medicine bottles in

(Continue on page 3)

BUSINESS MEMBER SUNBURY CHIROPRACTIC CENTER

The Center, founded by Dr. Tom Erndt, has been present and active in our community for over 38 years. They utilize state-of-the-art chiropractic techniques and rehabilitative treatments to restore proper spinal function and maximize the body's natural healing ability.

Their office is at 123 St. Rt. 3 and can be reached at 740-965-4301.

Patent Medicines from page 2

the kitchen, root cellar and barn. Many of the corked or rag stoppered bottles had medicine still in them. Now with time on my hands, I needed the story that goes with them.

I chanced upon a clever website titled **Made In Chicago Museum**. Andrew Clayman, owner/curator of this museum has taken items made in Chicago and looked up their history and put them in a museum. I found this while researching DeWitt's Pills. With his permission, enjoy!

By Andrew Clayman

It probably wouldn't be fair or accurate to call Elden C. DeWitt a "snake oil salesman." For one thing, the guy's been dead for nearly a century, so unless a secret diary surfaces, we'll never know for sure if he genuinely believed in the quirky patent medicines he peddled. On top of that, the little we do know about the man paints a picture far more peculiar and colorful than your average, fly-by-night charlatan.

In the span of 50 years, DeWitt evolved from a lowly druggist hawking kidney pills in 1870's in the Dakota Territory to a multi-millionaire and international playboy—stretching his lavish lifestyle beyond the boundaries of logic or good taste, all while keeping an improbably low profile.... It wasn't until after his death in 1927, at age 72, that the spotlight really found him.

It started with a collective double-take at the value of the deceased's estate: a staggering \$20 million (\$300 million in today's money). "Wait, this is the same E.C. DeWitt that makes those bogus kidney pills?!"

Then came the lawsuit.

In perhaps the most bizarre, quintessentially Roaring '20s court case ever committed to the public record, a woman named Mae Brearton sued the estate of the late Mr. DeWitt for recurring payments never received. Her claim? Years earlier, she had allowed herself to be intentionally injected with syphilis germs by DeWitt—all as part of an agreement in which he would then use her as a paid guinea pig in his quest to cure the illness.

According to Brearton, DeWitt vowed to treat her condition and pay her \$1,000 per month "for the rest of her natural life" as part of this contract. He had only completed five payments by the time he suffered a stroke in 1926, and now Brearton wanted the rest of her dough.

The 1930 case and the appeals that followed—while never front page news—make for a sort of absurdist theater, shining a whole new light on E.C. DeWitt and his later years as a philandering New York City high-roller. While the defense argued that Ms. Brearton had completely fabricated the whole story of the contract and the supposed injections, it was acknowledged by everyone that Mr. DeWitt had, in fact, given her a lot of money, and—more disturbingly—taken Brearton's daughter Pearl as his mistress, setting up the girl in his Park Avenue loft with all the spoils she could ask for. That affair, however—as the defense explained it—was just a natural consequence of being a VIP in the big city.

Mr. Elden C. De Witt was president of E.C. DeWitt Company, Inc., manufacturer of medicines, with offices in New York, Chicago, and London," the defense brief read. "He was a man of large affairs and large means. From the record it must be inferred that he lived a fast life and this can not be lived without contact with fast women. Fast women are plentiful."

While the defense painted Mae Brearton as a lying, greedy hanger-on—and someone who had annoyed Mr. DeWitt far more than *(Continue on page 4)*

(Patent Medicine Continued from page 3)

she entertained him—the plaintiff’s team tried to use that argument towards their own cause. Since everyone agreed that DeWitt had given Brearton money on a few occasions, the question became, why?

The motive sprang either from fear or affection or a sense of obligation,” they argued. “Counsel for respondents have definitely excluded the motive of fear. They point out that at times [DeWitt] ignored and defied [Brearton]. Just before he took her to Florida, that he despised and hated her. Upon their own reasoning, therefore, there remained but one motive for the conduct of Elden C. DeWitt toward this plaintiff. Unlovely to look upon as she was, rotten with disease as she was, there is but one explanation under the sun for the behavior of DeWitt toward her, and that is—HE OWED HER A DUTY.”

Ouch, that’s Mae Brearton’s own lawyers saying that stuff!

It proved to be all for not, too. The court threw out the case, largely because the supposed contract, if real, would have to be deemed void anyway, since DeWitt—as far as anyone could surmise—was not a licensed physician in the first place. “For DeWitt’s promise being illegal,” the court’s 1930 ruling read, “the contract was void.” . . .

Rather than selling snake oil, was E.C. DeWitt actually

FEATURED BUSINESS MEMBERS

**SUNBURY ACE
HARDWARE**

Sunbury Ace Hardware is independently owned by local resident’s Mike Dwyer and Wendy Weiler. They strive to maintain the store as a warm and friendly place for customers to shop and associates to work. This store is proud to be a member of the Ace Hardware cooperative.

Located at 300 W. Granville St., services are provided in store or online for curbside pickup or home delivery.

so confident in his untrained medical knowledge that he became more delusional than any of his customers?

Beats me. But one thing that cannot be questioned is the



A wider examination of DeWitt’s 1910s/1920s patent drug line reveals some more hokey products with silly names, but nothing that seems stranger than you’d expect for the time: Dewitt’s Pills (“A Diuretic Stimulant for the Kidneys”), Kodol (for indigestion), ManZan (for hemorrhoids, aka, “piles”), Little Early Risers (laxative and cathartic liver pills), Nutos (for muscle pain), and DeWitt’s Hygienic Powder (“A Necessity for Woman’s Personal Cleanliness and Hygiene”), among others.

The “cure in a bottle” thing had been DeWitt’s stock and trade since his youth. He was born in the town of Wyoming, Iowa, in 1855, and by his early 20s, had already become a frontier druggist of sorts, setting up shop in the towns of Elk Point (South Dakota) and Sioux City before finally arriving in Chicago with his wife Cora in 1886. . . .

The company found its footing largely through clever marketing, and the druggist and pharmaceutical publications of the day were more than happy to legitimize it with full-page DeWitt & Co. advertisements—not just for the company’s products, but their unusual co-op shareholding plans/schemes, as well.

It’s really only when you seek out the opinions of the actual medical establishment that you come to realize just how much of a divide there was between “real” science and the super-batty drug industry of the early 1900s.

The American Public Health Association, for example, believed that companies like DeWitt & Co. were selling “nostrums” that constituted a “grave menace to the public health.”

(Continue on page 5)

(Patent Medicines continued from page 4)

“Because of the deceptive advertising regularly employed in promoting their sale,” the Association claimed in 1915, “[patent medicines] consistently oppose the influences seeking to educate the public to a better understanding of the nature, causes, and proper treatment of disease. . . . The bulwark of this traffic is secrecy and mystery. . . . Be it resolved that the American Public Health Association opposes the sale of patent medicines and nostrums whose constituents are unknown to the health authorities.”

In 1916, Alma K. Johnson of the North Dakota Agricultural College conducted one of the most thorough analyses on record of the actual contents of various patent medicines on the market.

“Not all patent medicines are fakes,” he wrote, “but a large number of those that are extensively advertised and pushed are fakes of the worst kind. Seventy percent of the so-called patent medicines or nostrums found upon the shelves of the average drugstore are practically worthless or simply fakes and a means of drawing money from suffering humanity without giving any real benefit. . . . There is no sure ‘cure-all’ or ‘shot gun remedy,’ and there are many diseases that are recognized by our best physicians as being, so far as any known medicine is concerned, incurable. So why do we expect that some ignorant vendor of drugs, some unsuccessful horse doctor, or a quack, should make a discovery that is going to prove a ‘cure-all’ for suffering humanity?”

In that same publication, Johnson goes on to assess scores of nostrums, including some from E.C. DeWitt & Co.

Since many medical professionals were citing the high alcohol content in some nostrums as a contributor to a new rise in alcohol addiction, this wasn’t a real good look for DeWitt. Products like the DeWitt “One Minute Cough Cure” were problematic, too, as the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906 had prevented the use of the word “cure” and other bogus terms on patent drugs, sending the industry scurrying for new methods of BS.

Even DeWitt’s “fun” marketing campaigns—while highly successful in their time—have a bit of a dubious element to them. For example, one of the company’s big annual promotional tools was a booklet called

“DeWitt’s 200 Year Calendar and Book of Horoscopes,” which used what they described as “the art or science of Astrology” to woo people into buying a 30-page advertisement for DeWitt drugs.

If your target audience believes that events decades in the future can be predicted by the star charts inside a drug store flyer, you just might be seeking to take advantage of those same people’s belief in magic medicines (no offense to the horoscope lovers out there).

In any case, the E.C. DeWitt & Co. business didn’t end with E.C. DeWitt’s death. Far from it. The humble little drug company—which opened its first big five-story headquarters on LaSalle Street in 1897—had become an unlikely international powerhouse. Along with its offices in New York and London, the “DeWitt International Corp.” eventually came to settle in South Carolina, with pharma satellites in the UK and Australia later in the 20th century. It wasn’t until 1986 that the Church & Dwight Company, a New Jersey based soap and detergent manufacturer, finally bought out the American brand of DeWitt’s—about 100 years after the whole thing started way out in a lonesome South Dakota drug store.

Postscript: Weirdly, you can still find the DeWitt’s name on some 21st century pain medications produced by the Lee Pharmaceutical Co. in China, but that’s likely a case of cashing in on an expired copyright and subliminal familiarity.

Thank you, Andrew Clayman

www.madeinchicagomuseum.com



Camphorated Oil
sold by **F.J.R. Pfiffner**,
Druggist in the Hotel Allen Block
at 3 N. Sandusky Street
in Delaware, Ohio

Having a rich history of traditional use, it was particularly used as a fumigant during the era of the Black Death and considered as a valuable ingredient in both perfume and embalming fluid. Camphor has been widely used as a fragrance in cosmetics, as a food flavourant, as a **(Continue on page 6)**

Patent Medicines from page 5

in household cleaners, as well as in topically applied analgesics and rubefacients for the treatment of minor muscle aches and pains. Home remedy for head lice.

First in a Line of Minnesota Products



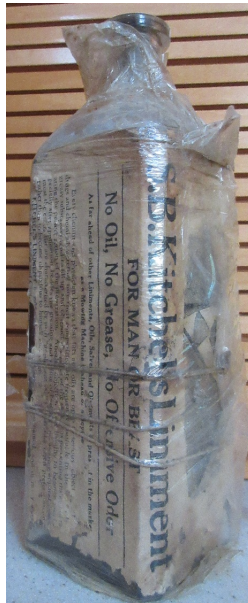
Trial Mark on left bottle above Watkins

Wash and iron; cook and clean; repeat. Such was life for many women in 1868. Working out of his home in Plainview, Minnesota, J. R. Watkins made the one-of-a-kind pain reliever with camphor from evergreen trees and capsicum from red peppers. In 1869 he had his bottles made with a line through the words TRIAL MARK. If one did not feel

the product worked well and the bottle was still full to the line, the money was refunded.

S.B. Kitchel's Liniment

Simon B. Kitchel of New York was studying law when he enlisted as a private in the Civil War in 1862. In 1864 he volunteered to lead the 43rd Regiment of U. Sharp Shooters (a group of colored soldiers) as their Lieutenant. Following the war Simon continued to study law in New York then migrated from New York to Coldwater, Michigan, via Sandusky, Ohio, where he taught for a year and married a teacher, Teresa Mungar. In Michigan, he practiced law and also owned trotter racehorses.



He developed Kitchel's Liniment to cure the osteoarthritis, or the final phase of degenerative joint disease (DJD), of horses. In order to publicize his cure he bought a

printing press to print labels for the bottles and advertize his product. He saw the need for another local newspaper in his community and in 1895 he started the "Coldwater Reporter" with his equipment. He was more interested in advertising than in the news

and made a point of only charging enough for his paper to meet his costs.

Simon served as Mayor of Coldwater in Branch County, from 1893-4. He died in 1905. His son Horace became editor of the newspaper until his death of pneumonia in 1922.

Humble Beginnings in Massachusetts

Like many significant achievements, Absorbine grew out of humble beginnings—and through the tenacity of someone willing to question the status quo. In this case, it was a young woman in late 19th-century Massachusetts: Mary Ida Young. Her husband, Wilbur Felon Young, was an enterprising piano deliveryman who relied on the couple's team of horses to make deliveries throughout the Northeast.

In those days, if a horse developed lameness, a common treatment was "blistering" the affected leg using one or more caustic agents. The blistered skin caused increased blood flow to the treated area, speeding recovery of the injury. Mary Ida knew there had to be a better, more humane way.

In addition to caring for their horses, Mary Ida was an avid gardener and herbologist. So in 1892, through her knowledge of healing herbs, she formulated a special blend of herbs and essential oils into a tincture designed to increase blood flow and speed healing—without painful burning or blistering.

The Youngs started using her creation on their horses daily. They were so impressed with the results that they named it Absorbine Veterinary Liniment, and Wilbur started carrying some on his deliveries. On one such trip to Syracuse, New York, he sold a whole case to trainers at a local race track. In a letter to Mary Ida mailed on his way home, he wrote: "I have had \$42.80 worth of 'Absorbine' orders this month. Let the good work go on. Some day we will make this boom ... Lovingly Yours, Wilbur."

Watkins Switching Gears for World War II

When men joined the armed forces, women entered the workforce and Watkins devoted 90% of its production capacity to support the Allied war effort. To fill government contracts, Watkins produced dried eggs, powdered juice packets, vitamin tablets, hospital germicide and DDT and insecticide powder. Their door-to-door salesmen also sold cooking spices.



