

SECTION ON HISTORICAL PHARMACY, AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION

THE BLAIR PHARMACY—ESTABLISHED 1829.*

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The city of Philadelphia is richer in historical lore and places of historical interest than perhaps any other city in the United States. To the pharmacists of every city and town of our country, Independence Hall, Carpenter's Hall, the Liberty Bell, Old Christ's Church, Betsy Ross House, etc., are well known. Nor is the part that Philadelphia has played in making pharmaceutical history unknown to most of us. As early as 1821 a college of pharmacy was organized in Philadelphia and that venerable institution is now almost a century old. In 1828, seven years after the opening of the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, Henry C. Blair, who was born at Carlisle, Cumberland Co., Pa., purchased the pharmacy of Franklin Smith located at 8th and Walnut Streets, Philadelphia. Mr. Blair had previously served his apprenticeship under Mr. Smith. He attended lectures at the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy in 1834 and 1835, graduating in 1835.

The fact that this store has remained in the possession of the Blair family since 1829 and has passed from the hands of Henry C. Blair, Sr., to Henry C. Blair, Jr., at the former's death and at the latter's death was turned over to Henry C. Blair, 3rd, its present owner, would be sufficient to make it of historical interest. It has been said that the average life of a drug store in the United States, under any single proprietor is three years. If such is the case the record of the Blair Pharmacy is indeed remarkable.

Mr. Blair, Sr., was the first apothecary to use the title *Pharmaceutist* which was later changed to *Pharmacist*. It is of interest in connection with this title to repeat the following comment from the *Druggists' Circular*, 1907, page 103:

"When the Chicago College of Pharmacy launched *The Pharmacist* in 1868, the *Circular* in commenting on the name adopted for the new journal said: 'We don't quite like the title, for it seems to us not to be exactly naturalized English; at any rate it is an inharmonious word, and far from being an improvement on *Pharmaceutist*, a term better known and with more weighty hindquarters to balance a heavy head and shoulders.'"

Who says *pharmaceutist* now?

In those early days, pharmacies were opened and conducted for the purpose of compounding prescriptions and dispensing drugs. Mr. Blair was an able pharmacist and rapidly acquired the confidence of the medical profession of the city. His son and grandson followed in his footsteps and to this day the Blair store is known as a prescription pharmacy and enjoys the utmost confidence of physicians.

Situated in the old Washington Square district of Philadelphia, the Blair Pharmacy became the prescription store of the entire neighborhood centering at

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this historic square, which was at that time, the residence section for many of the leading old families of Philadelphia.

Blair's Drug Store was also a kind of social center and meeting ground for leading citizens who would congregate there in the evening after the day's work and discuss matters of social, civic, or national interest, around the large old-fashioned stove in the center of the store and the Blair store was known among them as *The Rialto*. Among these citizens may be mentioned Attorney-General Benjamin Brewster, Richard Vaux, Edwin Forest, Henry Carey, Dr. Agnew, Dr. Gross, Dr. Pancoast, Dr. Penrose, Mr. Drayton, Mr. Morris, Mr. George Boker, Mr. Erhlen and others.

The "Old Families" of Philadelphia used and continue now to use Blair's Cologne, Castor Oil & Glycerine Pomade for the hair, Blair's Quinine & Glycerine Hair Tonic, Elixir Iron Quinine & Strychnine, Bitter Wine of Iron, Liquid Rennet, Wheat Food, Medicated Prunes, Racahout, Blair's Tooth Powders, Washes, and Pastes, etc.

The leading dentists of the day entrusted Mr. Blair with the compounding of their dentifrices, White's, Jack's, Birkey's, Briscoe's, Dickey's, Darby's, Hudson's, McQuillan's, Gulliam's, and many other dental preparations originated in this way.

Pharmacy at that time was more complex; physicians wrote prescriptions containing a number of drugs, each added to the compound to meet special indications in the case under treatment. Owing to Mr. Blair's knowledge of incompatibilities and his skill in compounding elegant pharmaceutical preparations, his advice was continually sought by the profession in devising palatable and compatible mixtures. Blair's Drug Store, therefore, became the incubator from which emanated many of the elegant pharmaceuticals for which those times were distinguished. At Blair's Drug Store originated Jackson's Pectoral Syrup, Jackson's Ammonia Lozenges, Jackson's Compound Syrup of Phosphates or Chemical Food, devised by the celebrated physician and University of Pennsylvania Professor, Dr. Samuel Jackson. Elixir of Iron Quinine and Strychnine which entered and has now departed from the U. S. P. originated in this store, as did also Wine of Beef and Iron and Elixir Curacao.



BLAIR PHARMACY

No pharmaceutical problem capable of solution in a retail pharmacy equipped with better than average facilities was ever or is now sidestepped in Blair's Drug Store. The following instances will serve to demonstrate this contention: "While not a doctor's prescription, the following formula was compounded in this store recently and may be of interest if not of value to some member of our Association:

"One bushel of white potatoes.

"Extract the juice and reduce to one-fifth its bulk and add enough glycerin to preserve.

Directions: Rub in well over the part affected by rheumatism.

"Of course, the juice of one potato was experimented with first.

"From one bushel of potatoes, three gallons and one pint of juice were extracted by grinding and pressing. This juice was freed from starch, as far as possible with a fine straining cloth. Evaporated with direct slow heat to four pints and one pint of glycerin was added. After evaporating, the juice was allowed to cool and became thick like paste. However, repeated strainings and washings removed the starch entirely, and left a dark brownish green extract very unpleasant to smell and taste and irritating to the throat when swallowed.

"The cost of new potatoes was \$2.25, pint of glycerin 27 cents, young clerk's time, day and half, \$2, and the customer was charged \$7.00. The customer said that he had tried a dozen drug stores who had all refused to do the work."

In August, 1916, a physician after trying in New York and Philadelphia to secure *Succus Cineraria Maritima* ordered two ounces made for him at Blair's store. The fresh plant was obtained through the kindness of an employee at a well-known seed house and the juice was expressed and preserved with fifteen percent of alcohol.

Clinical chemical work is also performed in the Blair store but it is not solicited as neither the public nor the doctors seem to be willing to pay for it. All drugs for making tinctures, infusions, etc., are ground in the laboratory of this store, thereby securing the quality, freshness, etc., necessary for producing the best preparations.

Henry C. Blair, Jr., and his brother succeeded their father under the firm name Henry C. Blair's Sons and were prominent druggists, retail and manufacturing, in Philadelphia for many years.

In what esteem the business under their management was held by the medical profession may be judged by the following incident, related to the present Mr. Blair by Dr. Reyburn, of Washington, during the meeting of the American Therapeutic Association in Philadelphia, in 1906. Dr. Reyburn who was one of President Garfield's physicians said:

"During the last illness of President Garfield, the physicians in charge desired a certain drug which they could not get in Washington, therefore, a messenger was sent by special train to Blair's Drug Store in Philadelphia. He secured the drug and hastened back to Washington by special train."

Under the name Henry C. Blair's Sons, a display of Pharmaceutical Specialties at the Centennial Exposition of 1876 in Philadelphia, received a medal and certificate of "Highest Award." Under this name also a branch store, retail only, not manufacturing, was opened at 19th and Chestnut Sts., and managed by one of the brothers successfully for many years, until 1893, when Henry C. Blair, 3rd, joined his father as a partner at the old stand, the brother taking the branch store.

The following quotation, taken from the *American Druggist* of March, 1893, is of interest here: "It is seldom that a similar case of conservatism can be found *viz.*, three generations of this same full name, in the same business and location, and all graduates of the same College of Pharmacy."

The Philadelphia College of Pharmacy some years ago exhibited the original

lecture tickets of the three Henry C. Blairs'—father, son and grandson—thus emphasizing the unique occurrence referred to by the journal quoted above.

Since 1829, the practice of pharmacy has undergone many changes. Rarely is the druggist of to-day called upon to spread a plaster, make conserves or confections or even to turn out a batch of pills. Fluidextracts and other preparations of drugs have come and gone. Yet the Blair pharmacy achieved its reputation by preparing just those kind of pharmaceuticals with the skill of finished artists. Many of the customs originated by Mr. Blair, Sr., are still in vogue at the store to-day, not alone for sentimental reasons but because they are time-tried and have proven efficient.

Many well-known pharmacists of to-day and former years received their training at the Blair Pharmacy and have since followed in their own stores, the methods and ideas inculcated under the tutelage of the Blair's and have been highly successful. Apprentices at the Blair Pharmacy were always well taken care of. The following "Rules and Regulations" originally adopted in 1848 and modified in 1893 were printed and a copy was handed to every new employee. These "Rules" were later incorporated in a chapter on Store Management in *Parrish's Practice of Pharmacy*.

- 1—Store to be opened promptly at 7 A.M. and closed at 10 P.M.; Saturdays, 10.30 P.M. Sundays, 9 A.M. and 9 P.M.
- 2—Business hours will include time between 7 A.M. and 6 P.M. on week-days, except when special work requires longer hours.
- 3—During business hours all hands must be on their feet and employed either in waiting on customers or some other store duty.
- 4—As waiting on the counter requires most knowledge and experience, the senior clerk must always go front first, then the next oldest. The younger clerks are not to wait on customers except when the older clerks are occupied.
- 5—In every case customers must be waited on promptly and when goods are to be sent it must be done with the least possible delay.
- 6—*Never* put up an article unless you are certain you are right.
- 7—Every other duty must give way to waiting on the counter, except when serious detriment would be the consequence.
- 8—Every person entering the store, whether rich or poor, infant or adult, white or colored, must be treated with courtesy and kindness.
- 9—Boisterous mirth and a sullen temper are to be equally avoided as productive of neither business nor business character. The acquisition of a uniformly cheerful temperament is an attainment worth far beyond the price it usually costs.
- 10—There are to be no master and no servants. Each one is to feel conscious of the fact that the performance of the duties assigned to him are just as necessary and as important as what pertains to any other hand in the store. All useful employment is honorable. Indolence is a disgrace.
- 11—As neatness, order, cleanliness and accuracy are necessary and not mere accomplishments in a pharmacist, all are required to practice them constantly.
- 12—Every clerk is expected to become a graduate of the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and time will be allowed during third and fourth years for attending the lectures (three evenings for Senior course; two evenings and afternoon for Junior course).
- 13—To deserve the Degree of Graduate will require severe economy of leisure hours, and their application to the study of those books which relate to the theoretical and practical knowledge necessary to make an accomplished pharmacist.
- 14—Students need but few social acquaintances and they should be very select. While the occasional visit of a well-behaved young friend will be allowed, lounging in the store will not be tolerated.

15—Each junior clerk will have at his disposal an afternoon and evening every week (from 1 P.M. until 10.30 P.M.), and these privileges will not be interfered with unnecessarily.

Rooms are furnished for all clerks in store building.

16—No junior clerk will be allowed to be absent at night after hours without permission. The first and second clerks are expected to be in at reasonable hours, and under no circumstance are both to be away at same time.

17—Each clerk will be allowed two weeks vacation each year.

18—Necessity requires that the store should be accessible on Sunday for the purpose of supplying medicines; beyond this the proprietor is not desirous of doing business on that day, and he enjoins on those in his employ that while they need not positively decline to furnish an article when asked for, to hold out no inducements to purchasers.

19—It is not the wish of the proprietor that any of his clerks should extol an article beyond its merits to advance his pecuniary interests, or to say or do aught in the performance of his duty that he would not be willing that others should say or do to him under the same circumstances.

20—Goods taken from stock for personal use of clerks must be paid for at cost.

21—The proprietor would affectionately recommend and advise all his clerks to attend public worship with a denomination of his own selection, at least once every Sunday, as circumstances may permit. The habit, when accompanied by a corresponding moral deportment (without considering the immense spiritual advantage which may result from it), confers a degree of respect in the estimation of those whose esteem is worth having, that scarcely any other act will.

22—The daily intercourse of the employees should be characterized with the courtesy becoming young gentlemen.

23—Should a clerk wishing to leave before his allotted time expires have a good reason, the proprietor will not probably object, and should his cause be a bad one and he persisted in, the proprietor will certainly not offer hindrance to his going. The proprietor depends on the honor of the individual.

24—A cheerful compliance with the foregoing rules is expected and the repeated infraction of a known regulation will be cause for immediate dismissal.

The text of these rules clearly shows what type of man could be expected to hold a position in this store and the fatherly interest which the proprietor took in the men in his employ.

There is in Mr. Blair's safe, a clerk's book which contains the complete record of every clerk or apprentice who has ever been employed in the Blair Pharmacy. A short biography, the length of time spent at the store, salary and increases as well as dates of entering and leaving the employ of Mr. Blair together with other information which may help to keep track of the man are found in this book. This register of clerks is still being kept and the information mentioned above is recorded. The proprietor is thus prepared to give definite and accurate information about his clerks whenever necessary. How many other proprietors could do likewise? Evidently affidavits to support statements of length of time spent at Blair's store are not considered as mere "scraps of paper."

It is refreshing to enter a drug store in a busy section of a large city and feel the atmosphere of the old apothecary shop. Absence of patent medicines from general view; displays of pharmaceuticals made or put up by the pharmacist, a large roomy section for laboratory and prescription purposes, an additional section with machinery for manufacturing on a fair scale—all of these carry us back to the days of the respected apothecary of old, or may we be so bold as to say that they give us an inkling of the distant future.

There are so many excellent pointers that one can gather from the prescription room of this establishment that the writers have omitted them here and contributed them in the form of a separate paper to the Section on Practical Pharmacy and Dispensing.

Whether or not the financial returns are as great in a store of the Blair type as they are in some of the department drug stores of to-day is, of course, an open question but there is no questioning the fact that the satisfaction which the Blairs have had in really practicing pharmacy professionally is greater compensation for their efforts than could be represented by a few extra paltry dollars.

MY EARLY IMPRESSIONS OF THE DRUG BUSINESS.*†

BY W. L. DUBOIS.

The Chairman of the Historical Section has written to ask me if I would prepare a paper on my impressions of the drug trade when I first entered it. I will endeavor to do so, but it must be from memories of long ago. In the spring of 1851 I was attending the school of the Collegiate Reformed Dutch Church in New York. On leaving school one day my teacher, Mr. H. W. Dunsher, asked me if I would like to take a position in an wholesale drug house. He informed me that Mr. Bradhurst Schieffelin had asked him to recommend a good lad and he had suggested me. I went home, talked the matter over with my father, and I concluded to go down town and make an application for the place. The store was then located at 104 and 106 John Street. The first person I met on entering the store was Mr. W. A. Gallatly, with marking pot in hand, as he was shipping clerk at that time. He sent me in the office to Mr. J. H. Westerfield and he took me to Mr. James L. Schieffelin. After a long talk I was engaged at a salary of fifty dollars a year, and given a small desk in one corner of the office. As I remember the firm of Schieffelin Bros. & Co., it consisted of Samuel B. Schieffelin, James L. Schieffelin, Sidney Schieffelin, Bradhurst Schieffelin, A. D. Randolph and John Dix. Mr. Randolph and Mr. Dix with Mr. Westerfield attended to the out-of-town business, and Mr. Horace Willard to the city business. Mr. Willard I remember as a fine old gentleman, loved and respected by every one, and many a red apple, pear or orange I found on my desk put there by him. He died the following winter and his place was taken by Mr. Walter Coon.

The John Street store was connected by a covered glass stairway with a store on Platt Street, where all the orders were put up. My first errand, I remember well, was an order for some pressed herbs at W. T. Peck's, a few doors above on John Street. My work was to get the mail three times a day, to take the bills of lading to have them signed, and to carry the monthly statements to some of the old drug houses, among whom were McKesson & Robbins, B. A. Fahnestock, A. B. & D. Sands, Ward Close & Co., Philip Schieffelin, Israel Minor and S. R. Van-



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† The three historical papers (including this one) have an interest for pharmacists because they link the past to the present in American pharmacy; the personal touch, quite naturally, enters into the writings.