

## ANTOINE BAUMÉ, FRENCH PHARMACIST.

Antoine Baumé, best known in connection with the hydrometer bearing his name, ranks high among the French pharmacists of the 18th century, who contributed largely to the chemistry of that period. He was born—February 26, 1728—at Senlis, about twenty-five miles distant from Paris, where his father was an inn-keeper. When thirteen years of age Antoine was apprenticed to a pharmacist of Compiègne, a town in which a royal palace of a previous century was rebuilt during the reign of Louis XV; the statement is incidental; however, his acquaintance in Compiègne may have given Baumé a hearing before the King, referred to hereafter.

In 1745 the young pharmacist came to Paris, where he found employment with Claude Joseph Geoffroy, the last of a lineage of pharmacists who had held this business from 1638 until 1762; the employer of Baumé was then about sixty years of age and highly regarded at home and abroad—he was a member of the Academy of Sciences and a fellow of the Royal Society of London; other members of this family were prominent among the scientists of that period. In the Geoffroy pharmacy Baumé served for six years, in charge of the laboratory. It was during this period that he made application to be received as a member of the Paris Guild of Apothecaries; objections were raised to his admission on account of deficient education and because he had not passed his apprenticeship in Paris. Baumé appealed to the King and, in 1752, was duly enrolled among the master apothecaries of Paris. It was in this year that Geoffroy died, and Baumé opened a shop in the rue St. Denis, opposite the Church of Saint Leu, having been aided financially by Joseph Macquer, Master of Pharmacy and Doctor of Medicine, known for a number of notable chemical discoveries and as director of the royal porcelain factory at Sevres; potassium arsenate was for a long time known as “Macquer’s arsenical salt”—“*Sal arsenicale Macquer.*” In 1763, the business which Baumé had founded was removed to rue Coquillière where a wholesale as well as retail business was carried on.

Baumé disposed of his business interests in 1784, but in later years he suffered financial reverses and reentered business as a partner of his son-in-law, Louis Margueron, a military pharmacist who, in 1800, opened a retail pharmacy, not far from Baumé’s first shop; this partnership continued until the death of the latter, October 15, 1804.

During the more active years of his business life Baumé established a factory for the manufacture of sal ammoniac and devised a process of bleaching silk. He is, perhaps, best known, as previously stated, in connection with the areometer which bears his name; however, as pharmacist he deserves an honored place in pharmaceutical history for his successful efforts in removing many of the traditional superstitions which for a period burdened and afflicted the materia medica with polypharmaceutical combinations of disgusting ingredients. Baumé contributed largely to the new nomenclature of chemistry proposed by De Morveau, Lavoisier, Berthollet and Fourcroy. Pharmacy claims Baumé as a pharmacist, he always searched for truth, this and his industry characterized him.

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