

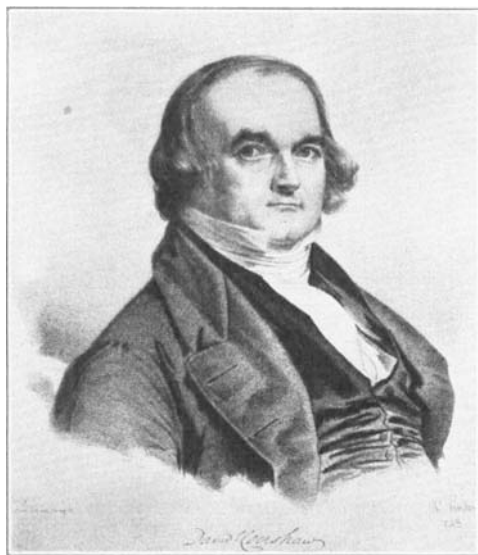
## DAVID HENSHAW—FROM "DRUGGIST" TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY.\*<sup>1</sup>

BY GEORGE E. ÉWE.

A record of the life activities of a man who started out as a "druggist" and later rose to the highest political office ever attained by an erstwhile member of the drug business, as far as known, should prove of interest to pharmacists in general and be worthy of retention in the archives of the profession.

While David Henshaw is most generally put down as politician, promoter and author, his five years of apprenticeship followed by about thirteen years of joint proprietorship in the drug business, with which he started his business life, places him definitely as one of the drug calling.

David Henshaw was a descendant of Joshua Henshaw of Lancashire, England, who settled in Dorchester, Mass., in about 1653. Henshaw's ancestors later moved to Leicester, Mass., and were among the original proprietors of the town. His father was a patriot of the Revolution and a highly respected magistrate.



DAVID HENSHAW

David Henshaw was born on April 2, 1795, in Leicester, Mass., the fifth son of David and Mary (Sargent) Henshaw. He was related to Artemus Ward, Commander-in-Chief of the Massachusetts forces during the Revolutionary War, who was in nominal command at the battle of Bunker Hill. Henshaw spent his boyhood days on his father's farm attending, during this time, the free schools and academy of his native town.

At sixteen years of age he became druggist's apprentice with the firm of Dix and Brinley who carried on a "drug, paint and dye-stuffs" business located in the old Faneuil Hall Building in Boston, Mass.

"On coming of age, although his employers were desirous of still retaining his services, yet they were unwilling to offer him more than  $\frac{1}{8}$  of the business profits. They, as many Boston firms both before and since, made a mistake. The smart, enterprising and self-reliant young man thought he could do better, and he did. He determined to be his own master and without a dollar of capital set up for himself. Hiring, at a cheap rent, the store opposite the old State House in State Street (Boston), lately occupied as the office of the 'Boston Daily Advertiser,' he filled it up, but, with the exception of a barrel or two of ochre and possibly a few bottles, etc., he had no stock to put in. His old employer, Mr. Brinley, often called as he was passing to his own store under Faneuil Hall, ostensibly to see how 'David,' as he always called him, got along. His invariable salutation was 'Well, David, how's business?' David could not, with truth, say it

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<sup>1</sup> Research Laboratories, Tailby-Nason Company, Boston, Mass.

was good, as he had nothing to do business with, but the young man had not, in the meantime, been idle. He knew . . . that most of their (his old firm's) goods came from the old house of David Taylor and Son, London. He had written them, stating all the circumstances of the case and at the same time enclosing a list of articles that he wanted, and promised, if they were sent to him, to remit the pay within a certain time. As there were no ocean steamers or telegraphic means of communication then, it took a long time for an answer, but it came at last in the shape of an ample stock for the long empty shelves. Old Mr. Brinley, during all this long time, had been constant in his calling on young David, possibly hoping that the valuable apprentice might be glad to go back to his old place again. But young David, though always honest, was sharp and far-seeing—he had kept his business with Taylor and Sons to himself. Last of all he would have mentioned the matter to his old employer, who opened his eyes very wide with surprise one fine morning on beholding the almost magical change in David's amount and variety of stock."<sup>1</sup>

Henshaw's business prospered mightily under his vigorous policies and seriously cut into the business of his former employers. In 1814, he allied himself with one David Rice, an expert paint man and glazier, as "Rice and Henshaw" and located in new quarters at 33 India Street (Boston). The business proved very successful and was further expanded. John Henshaw, a younger brother of David Henshaw, was admitted and the name of the firm was changed to "Rice, Henshaw and Co." Upon the retirement of Mr. Rice in 1825, Chas. Henshaw, an older brother, was admitted as partner and the firm's name was again changed—this time to "David and John Henshaw and Co."

Henshaw's firm also had a chemical works at South Boston and the following incident in connection with these works, taken from the aforesaid newspaper clipping seems worthy of recounting:

"The Messrs. Perkins receiving a large quantity of crude camphor which came on the deck of one of their ships from the East Indies, wanted Mr. Henshaw to buy it at 37¢ per lb. It came to \$45,000.00, quite a large amount of money for those days of comparatively small transactions. 'Mr. Perkins,' said Mr. Henshaw, 'we will take the camphor, if you can see your way clear to accept the note of our firm—we can give you nothing else.' 'Perfectly satisfactory,' replied Mr. Perkins. This camphor was probably a safe purchase in any event, but it proved to be a very profitable investment. It was taken to their chemical works at South Boston, which, as they were largely engaged in the manufacture of spirits of turpentine, were, a part of them, burnt up on an average once a year and refined. Soon after the cholera first made its appearance in this country, and the people having got it in their heads that camphor was a good thing to ward off its attack, their great stock of it was soon all gone at \$2.50 per pound."

But while the drug business was very profitable and successful it did not claim all of Henshaw's time and energies and he was interested in other ventures. He gave up the drug business in 1829 after about thirteen years of operation, presumably because of the pressure of his other activities.

Before he was 23 he had become a banker and had established an insurance company. By 1828 he had actively furthered a project for a railroad through the Berkshires to Albany, New York. Later, he became an incorporator of the "Western Railroad," which, with the "Boston and Worcester" of which he was also a director, completed the interstate line to Albany.

Henshaw possessed a keen knowledge of men and affairs, read much and was a vigorous author. He made frequent contributions to the *Boston Post* and other

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<sup>1</sup> From a newspaper clipping of unknown date or origin kindly furnished by Miss Mabel W. Henshaw, Cambridge, Mass. Incidentally, this clipping affords many other anecdotes illustrating the humanness, liberality and sagacity of David Henshaw.

periodicals and wrote the important "Letters on the Internal Improvement and Commerce of the West."

In 1821, he and his associates established the *Boston Statesman* which opposed John Quincy Adams for president, but Henshaw later made terms with President Adams and gained election from Suffolk County to the Massachusetts State Senate in 1826 on President Adams' party ticket. Henshaw waged an active political life covering local, state and national affairs and became in turn Collector of the Port of Boston, Democratic "boss" of Massachusetts, State Legislator and Secretary of the Navy under President Tyler.

He was appointed Collector of the Port of Boston in 1829 by President Jackson and held this office for nine years to the acceptance of all who had occasion to do business with that department. He had great practical experience with high executive ability and brought these successfully to bear upon the orderly and systematic management of the affairs of this office.

His Navy Secretaryship dated from July 23, 1843 to Feb. 19, 1844, when the Senate rejected his appointment in deference to Webster and other Whigs. But he had charge of it long enough to evince eminent talents and qualifications for the place. While Secretary he introduced a system of strict accountability for funds and materials of the department far beyond previous custom and also advocated the annexation of Texas as preliminary to the acquisition of California.

Henshaw's democracy was conservative. He was a capitalist, a Mason, an opponent of prohibition, a friend of slaveholders. A political rival characterized him as "a shrewd, selfish, strong-minded (but I believe corrupt-hearted) man" who directed his party "with a rod of iron" and would "see it damned ere others should."

Henshaw's will to rule was unmistakable, but there is little reason for questioning the sincerity of his convictions. "An ardent politician of the Jeffersonian school and true to its principles as the needle to the pole" (from inscription on Henshaw's tombstone). Incidentally, an inspection of this tombstone disclosed that it is inscribed with an extensive account of Henshaw's activities embracing a total of 232 words. He was a self-made man who achieved for himself wealth, political influence and power and an unquestioned reputation for mental vigor and energy of purpose, of no ordinary character. While the innate qualities of David Henshaw presaged success in the enterprises in which he engaged, one is disposed to feel that the studiousness, diplomacy, knowledge of people and organizing ability inculcated by his fairly extensive experience in the "drug" business materially aided in the attainment of this success.

Although he never married he dispensed a generous hospitality at his country home in Leicester, Mass. Henshaw died on Nov. 11, 1852. Mr. D. H. McKenna, Town Clerk of Leicester, Mass., states in a personal communication:

"I am told his (Henshaw's) body is interred in 'Pine Grove Cemetery,' Pine Street, Leicester, in, presumably, the first cast-iron casket in New England. About 1912 the old homestead (Henshaw's) was connected with our public water supply. In course of the work excavating for that purpose, several old cannon balls were unearthed. . . . these relics are now in possession of William Montgomery who occupies the house at the present time."

In explanation of the finding of these cannon balls it may be of interest to note that in Henshaw's childhood a fort was situated directly opposite the Henshaw homestead and Henshaw, as a boy, was often lodged in the fort over night for pro-

tection from marauding Indians. However, a pilgrimage to the Henshaw homestead disclosed that no relics of Henshaw are on deposit there, apparently the only relics extant being an oil painting and a tinted tintype of Henshaw in the possession of Miss Mabel W. Henshaw, Cambridge, Mass. Incidentally, these are the only likenesses of David Henshaw encountered in this study.

Henshaw's homestead, now much reduced in spaciousness, by demolition of various sections, to suit the needs of the present day, is located in Henshaw Park, Leicester, Mass., and is the oldest house in the town.

Acknowledgment is due Miss Mary D. Thurston, of Leicester, Mass., whose line of forebears was the same as that of David Henshaw, for contributions to the data embodied in this account.

The references listed herewith afford voluminous data which will be appreciated by the especially interested. Many anecdotes suitable for pharmaceutical eyes are also to be found among these references. But space-saving dictates the omission of these anecdotes, which are of the type utilized above in this account to illustrate the remarkable abilities and character of David Henshaw who made the "drug" business one of the stepping-stones to the high office of Secretary of the Navy.

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### HOW TO HELP THE PHARMACIST COMMERCIALY.\*

BY E. C. BROKMEYER.

It is so self-evident that the pharmacist must be qualified professionally to succeed that further comment as to this is unnecessary.

If the American people appreciated and supported professional pharmacy to the same extent that the English people do, there would be no place on the program of this convention for the presentation of a paper on the subject of "How to Help the Pharmacist Commercially." Whether wisely or not, the American people have seen fit to develop the American drug store along commercial rather than professional lines. It is true that here and there pharmacists have scored distinct successes in the conduct of strictly professional or ethical pharmacies, but unfortunately they are the exceptions rather than the rule.

When the writer of this paper discusses "How to Help the Pharmacist Commercially" it must not be understood that he in the least fails to appraise professional pharmacy at its true and proper value—the highest. The profession of pharmacy

\* Section on Education and Legislation, A. P. H. A., Portland meeting, 1935.