

THE WETHERILL FAMILY IN PHILADELPHIA PHARMACY.*

BY JOHN E. KRAMER.¹

The good name of Wetherill, the traditions of Pharmacy and the administration of the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science have marched forward hand in hand for well over a century, 118 years, to be exact. This most interesting and seemingly inseparable trio, now in its fourth generation, so far as spans of human life are concerned, started in 1821 as an enterprise of youth, and they carry on to-day much in the same spirit.

Early in the nineteenth century, as we know only too well, the practice of the profession of Pharmacy was hectic, unorganized and, in some instances, quite unethical. There were no particular laws regulating the sale of drugs nor the quality of the drugs sold. Most drug stores were merely clearing houses for bulk medicinals of questionable value. To deal in these commodities one need learn only their names and the various prices. Chaos was the order of the day, with charlatans and those of "lesser conscience" far outnumbering the true practitioners of the art.

There were some, however, whose conduct of life and business would bear close scrutiny, and those of this group who resided in the provincial precincts of Philadelphia, the "City of Brotherly Love," and who were "desirous of obtaining the degree of Master of Pharmacy," were invited by the University of Pennsylvania to submit their credentials for appropriate action at the 1821 Commencement exercises of that institution, founded during the previous century by Benjamin Franklin.

This attempt of the University officials to recognize the work of those pharmacists who were outstanding was generally interpreted as an action which would lift them up only by submerging others. If, as was claimed, it was a genuine effort to "render the apothecaries a just tribute of respect, and awaken in them a proper esprit de corps," it achieved its purpose, even though not in the manner intended. For a group of sixty-eight apothecaries, resenting this attempt of a Faculty of Medicine to pass also upon the credentials of pharmacists, and sensing, too, that the general practice of Pharmacy was much in need of some supervision, met in Carpenters' Hall on February 23, 1821, and organized the College of Apothecaries, later to be known as the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, and now the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science. And the first Chairman of the first Board of Trustees of that organization was Samuel Price Wetherill.

Grandson of Samuel Wetherill, Sr., who had established a drug business at Front and Arch Streets in 1785, and third son of Samuel Wetherill, Jr., a father whose life's endeavor was the education of his four boys in the pure and applied sciences such as Chemistry, Pharmacy, Astronomy, Mineralogy and Horticulture, Samuel Price Wetherill was born in 1790. As he progressed under proud parental guidance he exhibited a marked aptitude and fondness for Chemistry and Botany, a trait and an achievement which made him the logical nominee for the post of presiding officer of the College's Board of Trustees in 1821, and his later election to the second vice-presidency of the institution. Aside from these positions of honor and service, his chief claim to fame came after his father's death when he inherited a large farm which he used almost exclusively for the culture of the

* Presented before the Section on Historical Pharmacy, A. Ph. A., Atlanta meeting, 1939.

¹ Registrar, Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science.

finest variety of grapes. His success in this field was outstanding, the terraces of the farm overlooking a creek near Philadelphia being a mecca of interest for two or more decades after his untimely death in 1839, when he was still a young man intensely interested in his college duties, his chemical experiments and his avocation of grape-growing.

It is interesting to note that three others of the more than three-score intrepid young men who founded the first college of pharmacy in America bore the name of Wetherill—John P., George D. and Charles. In addition to this, six more of the Wetherill family either held membership in the College corporation or graduated from its prescribed courses of study within the first fifty years of its existence. Ashfield H. Wetherill held membership from 1824 until 1834, Dr. William Wetherill held membership from 1837 to 1872 and John Wetherill, Jr., was on the roster from 1837 until 1856.

In 1842, Samuel Wetherill, great-grandson of Samuel Wetherill, the first manufacturer of white lead in the United States, received the degree of Graduate in Pharmacy (Ph.G.), for which he qualified through study and through submission of a thesis on *Juglans Cinerea*. In later work with the New Jersey Zinc Company, this member of the family, the first one to hold membership, and, in addition, actually receive a diploma from the College, invented the Wetherill Furnace, for making metallic zinc, and also the Wetherill Porous Hearth Furnace for making zinc oxide direct from the ore, important innovations in the zinc industry of that day. The town now known as South Bethlehem, Pa., grew up around the zinc business which he founded there, and in fact, for two years bore the name of Wetherill in his honor.

He organized a company of cavalry in Bethlehem, Pa., which became a unit of the Eleventh Pennsylvania Cavalry of which he served as Senior Major throughout most of the Civil War. He was brevetted by an Act of Congress Lieutenant-Colonel, U. S. Volunteers, "for gallant and meritorious service through the campaign of 1864 against Richmond, Va." Until the time of his death in 1890 he was prominent in Masonic circles.

J. Bloomfield Wetherill, a member of the College from 1858 to 1869, received his Ph.G. degree in 1857, using as his thesis subjects *Barosma Crenata* and *Barosma Serratifolia*. For a number of years he practiced Pharmacy in Memphis, Tenn., but later turned to the study of Theology, attaining to positions in the Episcopal Church with appointments in Rome, Italy; Newark, New Jersey; and New York City. He died in 1886.

Henry M. Wetherill, Jr., received his diploma as a graduate in Pharmacy with the class of 1872. He went on to the study of Medicine, specialized in the treatment of insanity and became a noted alienist, being appointed to the secretaryship of the Pennsylvania State Board of Lunacy and Charity. He died in 1904.

The present chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science is Samuel Price Wetherill, Jr., great-great-nephew of the original holder of that office. Our contemporary member of the Wetherill lineage, born in 1880, and whose father attended the College in 1866 until other duties called him elsewhere, is also a chemist, having received the degree of Bachelor of Science from the University of Pennsylvania in 1903. He is president of the Wetherill Engineering Co., and of the Hyper-Humus Company, this latter organization specializing in organic soil-conditioning and fertilizing products the origination of

which were due largely to the company president's knowledge of Chemistry and his heritage of chemical and biological study and achievement.

Civic-minded, and with a sincere belief that interdependence and coöperative human progress is the answer to most of the world's problems, Lieutenant-Colonel Wetherill, who served in France as Major in the Motor Transport Corps during the World War, is an enthusiastic speaker, author and worker for community betterment. It is this unbounded enthusiasm and leadership, this desire for a higher plane of life that caused his election to the College trusteeship in 1921, and his election to chairmanship of the Board, to succeed the late Joseph W. England, in 1934.

Thus the influence of a scientific family, despite the fact that few of them remained long in pharmaceutical practice, is felt in Pharmacy, and especially through pharmaceutical education at the Philadelphia College, for the first chairman of the Board and the present chairman are as one in insisting that standards be kept high, that orderliness and honesty of purpose be foremost, and that professionalism be uppermost in the minds of those who go out into the world through education received at the institution of his administration.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE ATTEMPT OF THE SOCIETY OF
APOTHECARIES TO ESTABLISH THE DRUG TRADE
IN COLONIAL GEORGIA.*

BY JOSEPH KRAFKA, JR., M.D.¹

While the Trustees for the establishment of the Colony of Georgia made plans to put the Colony on a self-supporting basis by introducing silk culture, a small group of men, headed by the King's physician, Dr. Hans Sloane, proposed to break the Spanish monopoly on American medicinal plants by introducing these plants locally.

The Spanish drug trade had developed as a result of the efforts of Phillip II, who had sent Hernandez to Mexico in 1570 (1). During his six years' stay he had studied the local flora and later wrote sixteen volumes describing some twelve hundred plants, including those in use by the Indians as medicines, such as: jalap, sarsaparilla, gum copaiba and liquid amber.

Sloane was a man of wide interests. In 1722, he presented the Botanic Gardens at Chelsea to the Apothecaries Company (2). As a young man in 1687 he had been personal physician to the Duke of Albemarle when the latter was Governor of Jamaica (3), and had written at length on the plants of the New World. He had sent some eight hundred plants to Rae in England (4). Being of a pecuniary nature, he was quick to recognize the profit to be made on medicinal herbs and had stocked up on Peruvian Bark before he returned home. As a shrewd manipulator, he enlisted the interests of the Apothecaries Company in his scheme, since the latter controlled by royal charter the sale of drugs in and around London, and had a monopoly of sales to the Army and to the East Indies Company (5).

Sloane, while not on the Board of Trustees for the Colony of Georgia, was commissioned to collect money for this worthy cause (6). His contributions, how-

* Presented before the Section on Historical Pharmacy, A. PH. A., Atlanta meeting, 1939.

¹ Univ. of Georgia School of Medicine.