

The Early Caro Apothecary

By Mark R. Putnam

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In writing about the early druggists of Caro, one might be remiss if one did not mention Indian Dave who was born at the beginning of the 19th century. Dave provided herbal cures to local people—he also sold ginseng and other remedies to a drug firm in Detroit.

Alexander P. Cooper was connected with the early logging trade of the Cass River beginning in 1853. He was later a part of Washburn & Cooper a company that sold medicines in early Caro.

In Caro's early history, there were doctors who dispensed medicine; however, in 1869 Caro businessmen also included J. Phipps who was a druggist.

In 1869, Edward Belmar was in Caro keeping a hotel and general store. At his leisure, he put together Belmar's Adhesive Salve, Magic Oil, and other medicinal items. In 1871, a fire destroyed his building. He nearly lost everything.

In 1872, Timothy Lowthian was a Caro druggist. Later, he would be a physician and surgeon.

Michigan State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1875, lists three Caro druggists— W. J. Graves a physician, W. W. Acker, and Washburn & Cooper.

By the 1880 Census, Caro Druggists were George Cooper the twenty year old son of Alexander Cooper; J. F. Street of Bay City; and Gottfried Schoettle a German who would later manufactured soda pop in Ann Arbor.

In the fall of 1882, Canby Reece from Ontario arrived in Caro. He became a well known and established Caro druggist near the end of the 19th Century. His reputation was solid as a businessman, and he had a high-minded ability. With each passing year, he also gave clear evidence of his high moral and ethical character and his reliability. Canby Reece would disappear from the Caro picture, however. In the fall of 1912, he bought the Kincaid Drug Store in Grant, Michigan, and then moved to that location. Mr. Reece was a Caro druggist for thirty years.

Michigan State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1897, lists three Caro druggists— Canby Reece, Wm. O. Luce, Jr., and Beckton & Co.

Five years later, *Young & Company's Business and Professional Directory of Central Michigan, 1902*, lists four Caro druggists—Canby Reece, W. O. Luce, H. E. Montague, and J. L. Beckton.

From the effort of the latter three people, three major drug stores emerged in Caro during the late 19th and early 20th Century.



The Moore Drug Store:

In 1881, William O. Luce, Jr., the son of a doctor, was the proprietor of a vital Caro store that sold newspapers, stationery, and drugs. Mr. Luce formulated a number of trade drugs that he patented. He was also the Caro Postmaster. Near the end of the 19th Century, Luce Drugs moved to the corner of State and Lincoln St. in Caro. By 1908, because of his failing health, he moved to Denver, CO. where the air was drier and thinner. Mr. Luce was a Caro druggist also for nearly thirty years.

Mr. Luce sold his store to Olin & Son—a physician and druggist. In just a couple of years, Olin & Son sold to George H. Moore.

In 1920, 38 year old, Mr. Moore was politicking and campaigning along with dispensing medicines. Mr. Moore became President of the Village of Caro. He died in 1951 also having served over thirty years as a Caro druggist.

In 1951, Maurice C. Hover purchased the Moore Drug Store. Under John Roberts, Mr. Hover had apprenticed in Akron, MI. In 1918, Mr. Hover was a pharmacist having graduated from Ferris State University. For a time, he worked in Detroit, and in 1937 he came back to Tuscola County where he worked for Mr. Moore. In 1951, Mr. Hover bought the Moore Drug Store. Mr. Hover would devote over fifty years to pharmacy, thirty-three years of which were in Caro.

In 1970, Don and Sheila Everts who owned the Caro Pharmacy purchased the Moore Drug Store from Mr. Hover.

The Palmer Drug Store:

Also beginning in 1881, in Caro, David A. Horner sold paints, oils, books, newspapers, stationary, and other sundry items. His store was a cornucopia of items. In 1892, Joseph L. Beckton bought the Jesse McIntyre inventory, and in 1894 he bought the Horner Store.

Mr. Beckton was a pillar of knowledge and a master in filling prescriptions and in managing a business. As a young man, he moved from Ontario to Port Huron and began work at the Robert Burwell Drug Store. After working in Marlette, Mr. Beckton moved to Caro where he and Mr. Burwell purchased the Horner Store. With thrift, Mr. Beckton in a few years bought out Mr. Burwell, and by his attention to detail he greatly profited in his venture. His meticulousness and carefulness complemented the abilities of the other the merchants in Caro. As his business grew, he soon took on a leadership role in the Caro community and in Tuscola County. Mr. Beckton became President of the Village of Caro and Chairman of the Tuscola County Board of Supervisors, now called Commissioners along with other civic positions, also. In 1913, Mr. Beckton retired from pharmacy to organize Peoples Savings Bank in Caro. Joseph Beckton married Jennie Palmer the sister of Carl Palmer.

In 1903, Carl Palmer was sweeping the floor at the Beckton & Co. Store. By 1906 Mr. Palmer was the druggist at the store. In 1913, he purchased Beckton & Co. and changed the name to Palmer Rexall Drugs. His store was on State St. across from Moore Drugs. In 1972 Mr. Palmer was Caro's oldest merchant. During his life time, Carl Palmer was elected as President of the Michigan Rexall Druggists Association, and with the passing of Mr. Palmer so passed the continuance of his store.

The Hooper Drug Store:

In 1901, at 23 years of age, Hamilton E. Montague was the proprietor of the Caro Drug Company. In that year, his drug store booklet described the prescription department, use of distilled water, and his system for drug testing and checking. The booklet also included specialties, side lines, and suggested prices. The end of the booklet was composed of a section devoted entirely to wit and humor. The Montague operation relied heavily on the soda fountain.

In 1908, Mr. Montague sold the Caro Drug Company to George Trestain. Four years later, in 1912, Lawrence Hooper bought out Mr. Trestain.



Lawrence Hooper was a druggist who served Caro for thirty-four years. He was born in Caro and apprenticed under Mr. Beckton. Mr. Hooper became a pharmacist. After spending a year working in pharmacy in Imlay City, in 1912 he returned to Caro and bought the Trestain store. Hooper Drugs was located in the Opera House Block. Mr. Hooper became Indianfields and the the Village of Caro Treasurer along with being a Caro Trustee. The atmosphere at the store was ebullient and effervescent. In 1913, a sign outside the store read that root beer and ginger ale were for sale. Hooper Drugs was near the theater. It was the paramount place in Caro in which to buy a Sunday, banana split, ice -cream cone, or soda-pop at the fountain. On Good Friday, 1933, a fire charred the Opera House Block. In recovery, Hooper Drugs purchase newer equipment that helped make the store when it reopened the most modern and most eye-catching store in the county. Hooper's brightly lit glass windows and display cases and the soda-fountain drew people from everywhere in Tuscola County.

In 1922, William Harold Galloway was a registered pharmacist at Hooper Drugs. Mr. Galloway married Gladys Kincaid who was a clerk at the store. Mr. Campbell also worked as a pharmacist for Mr. Hooper. In 1946, when Mr. Hooper died suddenly of a heart attack, the store was purchased by Campbell & Galloway. The Campbell and Galloway association lasted for 18 years. In 1964, Campbell sold to Galloway. Mr. Campbell then worked at the Caro Regional Center where in 1976 he retired. Harold Galloway would work at Hooper Drug Store nearly fifty years before he retired. In 1971, Mr. Galloway sold the store to Robert Davison, et al, who operated the store for a number of years before it closed in the late 20th Century.

The Caro Pharmacy:

In the mid to late 20th Century a turning point would arrive. Donald Everts was from Vassar and worked in a Vassar pharmacy beginning in 1945. In 1957, he was a pharmacist. Sheila Wiley Everts, his wife, was also a pharmacist. In 1961, the Everts bought the Caro Pharmacy that was established by Glen Alles in 1954. The Caro Pharmacy located at the corner of State and Burnside St. became very successful and beneficial to the community. In 1970, the Everts bought Moore Drugs from Mr. Hover and hired G. W. Howard of Bay City to staff the store. The store soon closed and consolidated with the Caro Pharmacy. Mr. Howard then operated a drug store at the corner of Hooper and Gilford St. that lasted for just a few years.

Don and Sheila Everts sold Caro Pharmacy to Douglas and Judy Ettema In 1976. Don Everts afterward worked at the Caro Regional Center where in 1992 he retired. Over the years, Mr. Ettema had a number of staff pharmacists who worked at this store. During his ownership of the Caro Pharmacy, he was President of the Michigan Pharmacists Association. By 1989, the Caro Pharmacy went through a transformation and became an extraordinary apothecary. The Ettema's renovated the nearby Robert J. Putman Building and moved the Caro Pharmacy into the building. There the pharmacy space was doubled, and additional prescriptions could be filled. The pharmacy also sold office supplies, jewelry, cosmetics, and giftware. The Caro Pharmacy would dissolve however near the end of the 20th Century.

Today, the Robert J. Putman Building is the address of SRS Pharmacy Systems that writes software that allows pharmacies to operate more efficiently and accurately.

There are a number of pharmacies and pharmacists in Caro today—hospital, clinical, and community.

The early Caro apothecary was a model of drug, or prescription, health care.

Even today, the traditions of the early Caro apothecary still ring true. Pharmacists—Caro pharmacists—are one of the greatest assets that we have . . . even today. They deserve a generous and enormous thank you for the work that they do!