

FINAL DRAFT

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HUNT'S REMEDY

(Fear of ILLNESS and DEATH were used to promote
this nineteenth-century nostrum)

Researched, organized, illuminated, and presented

by

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Note:

*This article was inspired by material presented to **The Little Rhody Bottle Club** by **Richard Sheaff**, the foremost collector and student of Hunt's Remedy and William E. Clarke. In addition to decades of study of Clarke and his famous remedy, Sheaff (of Scottsdale, Arizona) is also the designer of the 1998 U.S. commemorative postage stamp featured in **Fig. 19**.*

Origins

To sell patent medicines, according to one turn-of-the-20th-century writer, “You may wheedle him, cajole him, intoxicate him with promises, tickle his fancy or *frighten him out of his boots.*” The latter is the approach used to promote HUNT’S REMEDY, the “*Great Kidney Medicine that cures dropsy and all diseases of the kidney, bladder and urinary organs – never known to fail.*”

According to historian Henry W. Holcombe, the old man represented in **Fig. 1** is the one who put *Hunt’s Remedy* before the public. “*If he were alive today he would look upon his labors with pride and thankfulness. The consciousness of having done good to a vast number of suffering fellow beings would be a reward for this philanthropic man.*”

According to local legend there was a very important ingredient in the *Remedy*, the name of which has not been passed down in history. The unnamed ingredient was a root dug from the ground. It flourished in old pastures and along the roadside in portions of the U.S. It was well known to the early Dutch settlers of the Island of Manhattan. Prior to 1700, Dutchmen drank a mixture of the root, and other vegetable substances, in their Schnapps. The old Brevoort estate, now the vicinity of Broadway and Eleventh Street in New York City, was noted for growing the root. What is now the heart of the city was then open fields.

Dr. David Hosack was a noted physician in New York City who had an extensive practice during the latter part of the 18th century and until his retirement in 1835. Local historians recorded that Hosack and the influential Brevoort family encouraged the use of the root-based medicine as it cured many cases of liver, kidney and bladder troubles. Dr. Hosack gave his recipe to a number of his pupils. One of the pupils, it is said, saved the life of a Mr. Hunt, a New York City resident, who was afflicted with Bright’s disease (kidney malfunction) and Dropsy (excess water in body tissue). He was cured, after



(Fig. 1. Mr. Hunt)

taking the medicine for about a year. His “bloated flesh,” according to the locals, was reduced, and his vigor restored.

In 1860 a cured and healthy Mr. Hunt obtained a copy of Hosack’s hand-me-down recipe for the medicine that cured him and began to manufacture it as “Hunt’s Remedy.” He sold it widely and regular and homeopathic physicians used the medicine from its introduction. Supposedly it had larger sales in New England than any other proprietary medicine.

The Revenue Act of 1862 required that a revenue stamp be affixed to each bottle manufactured. Mr. Hunt did not take advantage of the new law that allowed for the creation and use of “private die” revenue stamps – he utilized standard generic government-issue revenue stamps.

After Mr. Hunt’s death, his widow continued to manufacture (**Figs. 2 & 3**) the Remedy. The late Dr. John C. Peters of New York City assisted Mrs. Hunt in improving the recipe; finally in 1872, she sold the revised recipe and the right to make the medicine.



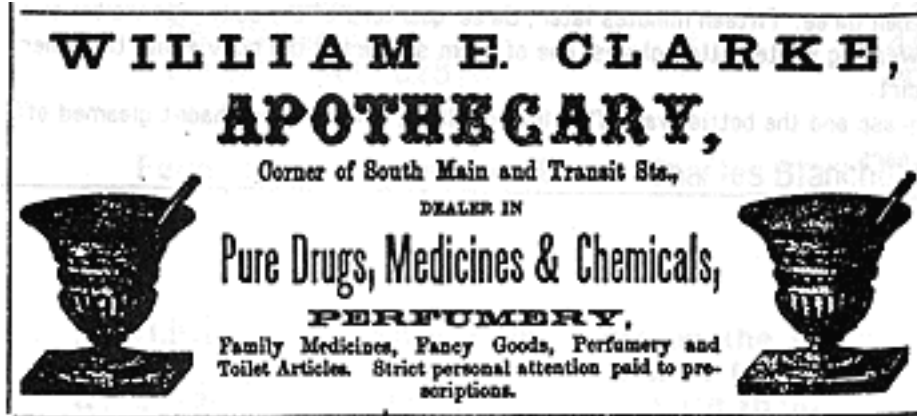
(Fig. 2. Hunt's adv card [1])



(Fig. 3. Hunt's adv card [2])

A New Owner

On May 9, 1872, Hunt’s Remedy (“*The Great Kidney Medicine*”) was purchased by William E. Clarke, an apothecary of Providence, Rhode Island (**Fig. 4**) the home of the remedy. Being an astute businessman, few months later, he registered the name “HUNT’S REMEDY” as a trademark with the office of Librarian of Congress at Washington, D.C.



(Fig. 4. W.E. Clarke Apothecary ad)

William E. Clarke, who'd been a practicing pharmacist in Providence since about 1860, went off to the Civil War in 1862. In 1863 he mustered out and returned to Providence where he married Emma Mason and went back into the pharmacy business.

In 1864, he was operating an apothecary shop located at 233 South Main Street in Providence. Within three years he had moved to 28 Market Square selling medicines, perfumery, and the usual toiletries of the time.

A short time later he opened a second shop located at the corner of Broad and Mathewson Streets.

Mr. Clarke wasted no time in beginning the manufacture and promotion of Hunt's Remedy. For example, beginning on June 3, 1873 there was in nearly every issue of *The Opera Glass*, a newspaper in Providence, a small advertisement such as this:

**"Hunt's Remedy – The Great
KIDNEY MEDICINE
A Positive Remedy for Dropsy and all diseases
Of the KIDNEYS, BLADDER and urinary organs.
For Sale by all druggists."**

Sales evidently were increasing because the next year advertisements were more than twice as large.

Within a year or so Mr. Clarke introduced *Hunt's Health Pills and Liver Cure*, familiarly known as "Little Gems" (Fig. 5). The claim was to cure "*Sick Headache*,

Nervous Headache, Bilious Disorders, Jaundice, Malaria, Costiveness, Dyspepsia, Indigestion, Dizziness, Drowsiness, and All Liver Trouble."



(Fig. 5. Hunt's Health Pills tin sign)

In 1872, Clarke closed the Broad Street shop, but kept the Market Square store operating for seven or eight more years. That was the same year in which he took over Hunt's (kidney) Remedy that was located at 310 South Main Street in Providence.

Clarke ran this company from 1872 until 1885, all the while manufacturing his own CLARKE'S INFALLIBLE EYE WASH, CLARKE'S TOOTHACHE DROPS, and CLARKE'S FLORENTINE DENTRIFICE as well as HUNT'S REMEDY.

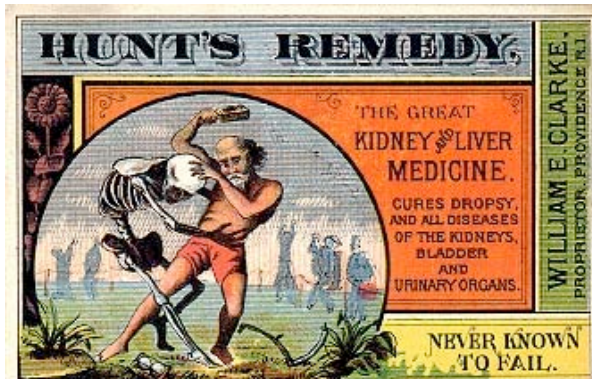
Few bottles used for Hunt's Remedy remain from that early period and those that do are not found in large numbers and consequently are of definite interest to collectors. In 1938, historian Henry W. Holcombe described the bottle featured in **Fig. 6** as follows:

The blue-glass [aqua] bottle measured 65 by 35 by 175 mm. tall. In raised letters [embossing] on the front was 'HUNT'S REMEDY' and on the back 'William E. Clarke, - Providence, R. I.' in two lines of capitals. The label was die cut, rounded at the top, printed in black, and measured 43 by 117 mm. The direction sheet folded around the bottle. The outside wrapper, printed in black and red, in four panels, was 258 by 230 mm. over all. The facsimile signature of 'W. E. Clarke' appeared on the back panel. The top and bottom were sealed with red wax, while the 6¢ private die stamp was affixed to the top of the wrapper.



(Fig. 6. Hunt's Remedy bottle [2])

In 1872 when Clarke purchased the rights to Hunt's Remedy, one of the assets Mrs. Hunt turned over to Mr. Clarke was the rights to the unregistered trademark that Mr. Hunt had developed to represent his Hunt's Remedy (Fig. 7). *[An example of that early trademark, imprinted on an 1870s trade card sold at auction in 2000 for \$525, a large amount of money for a trade card.]*

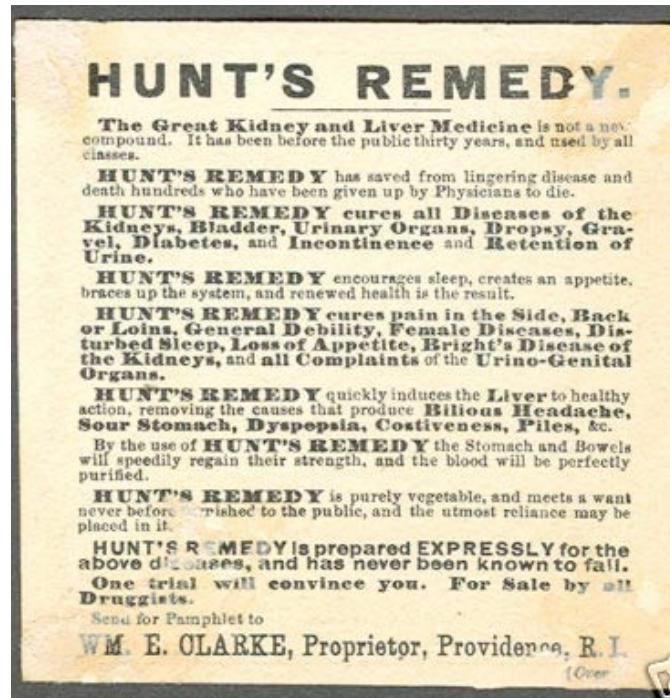


(Fig. 7. Earliest tradecard [sold for \$525 in 2000])

Hunt's trademark offered the image of a man fighting off a skeleton with the aid of a bottle being used as a club. Soon after Mr. Clarke took ownership of Hunt's Remedy in 1872, he redesigned the old trademark. He retained the same theme – an image of a man fighting off a skeleton with the aid of a bottle used as a club (Figs. 8 & 9).

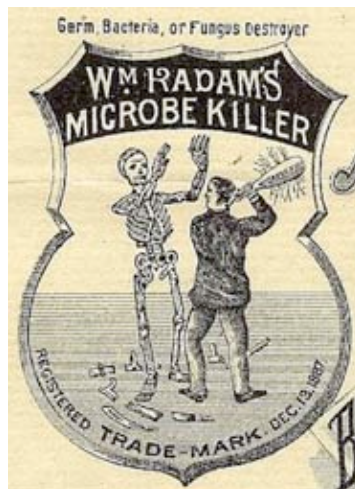


(Fig. 8. Trade card)



(Fig. 9. Trade card reverse)

[Sidebar: In the late 1880s another soon-to-be-famous patent medicine vendor copied, without apology, Hunt's Remedy's advertising logo. William Radam's Microbe Killer featured the copied theme of a man battling a skeleton with a spiked club (Fig. 10) in his extensive advertising and on his now-famous bottle (Fig. 11).]



(Fig. 10. Radam's Trademark)



(Fig. 11. Wm Radam's Microbe Killer)

Unlike the late Mr. Hunt, Mr. Clarke came to realize the advertising- and image-advantage of having a private die revenue stamp for his Hunt's Remedy. In late 1878 Mr. Clarke directed the National Bank Note Company of New York (under contract from the

U. S. Government) to engrave dies for both sizes of his Hunt's Remedy. The proof of the 6¢ black revenue stamp to be affixed to the large \$1.75 bottle (**Fig. 12**) was approved in January 1879. The proof of the 3¢ blue stamp for the smaller 75¢ bottle (**Fig. 13**) was approved in April 1880 and it quickly became one of the most popular Private Die revenue stamps.



(Fig. 12. 1880 Hunt's Remedy private die revenue stamp [rs57])



(Fig. 13. 1881 3\$ Hunt's Remedy private die revenue stamp [rs56])

While printing technology of the time was able to print in many colors, the government only offered private die revenue stamps in one color. That made Clarke's trade cards for Hunt's Remedy much more colorful than its single-color revenue stamps.

Consequently Hunt's Remedy print advertising, in color, is quite expensive today in the collector marketplace. A rare specimen of the earliest Hunt's Remedy trade card, circa 1860 (Fig. 7), as briefly mentioned before sold at auction for over \$500 in 2000. Recently more than \$300 was paid for an example of the 1872 redesigned trade card (Fig. 8). Another famous and popular, but not so expensive or hard-to-get trade card used to promote Hunt's Remedy (**Fig. 14**), featured a pretty young girl dressed in a sailor suit. Another example of the advertising art is shown on the Hunt's Remedy bottle label itself: (**Fig. 15**).



(Fig. 14. Hunt's Remedy - girl in sailor suit. Tradecard)



(Fig. 15. Hunts Remedy with paper label)

Another New Owner

In 1882, Clarke was joined by another registered pharmacist, Edward R. Dawley, who, after working for Clarke for several years, became the company's secretary in 1884. A year later Dawley became proprietor of the company and moved the business to 112 South Water Street. Clarke completely sold out to Dawley in 1886, and became an agent for the Eagle Machine Company, 288 Dyer Avenue, but after only a year quit to work at

the Quaker Medicine Company, 6 South Water Street. Clarke remained there until 1891 when he left to become the City Clerk in Providence.

In 1873, Edward R. Dawley was also listed as a partner in “Mason, Dawley, Wheaton & Co.” in Providence. The firm was famous for producing “Alpine Hair Balm” (**Fig. 16**) that was invented in 1860 by partner Charles A. P. Mason an apothecary in Providence.



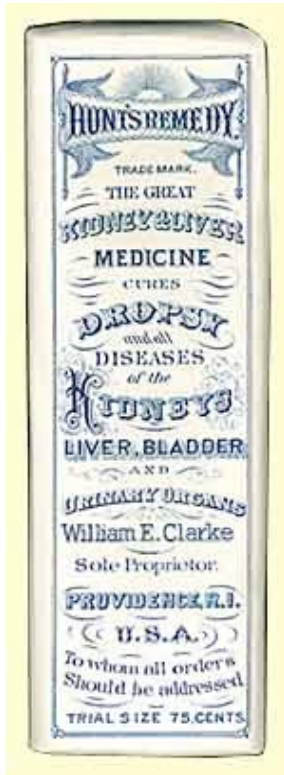
(Fig. 16. Hunt's Alpine Hair Balm)

Dawley continued to run the Hunt's Remedy Co., relocating again in 1894 to 451 South Main Street. Hunt's Remedy was manufactured and marketed in redesigned bottles (**Fig. 17**) & (**Figs. 18; 19**) for several years thereafter and then the nostrum seems to have dropped out of sight altogether.



(Fig. 17. Hunt's (sample) amber)

By 1903 Edward R. Dawley had quit the business and became a “city collector” until his death in 1906.



(Fig. 18. Hunts box wrapper)



(Fig. 19. Hunt's Remedy magazine advertising insert circa 1900)

Finale

A century later, in 1998, a commemorative 32¢ postage stamp (Fig. 20) honoring the 1906 Pure Food and Drugs Act was issued. The stamp was part of the U. S. Postal Service's "*Celebrate the Century*" program honoring the most memorable and significant people, places, events and trends of the 20th century. The modified image is from a proprietary revenue tax stamp and trade card (Fig. 8) for the nostrum, Hunt's Remedy. According to post office literature, “...*the stamp purports to show the product's effectiveness through the allegorical vision of Death being slain by a bottle of Hunt's Remedy.*”



(Fig. 20. 1998 Commemorative 32¢ U.S. postage stamp)

As most collectors of bottles understand, Hunt's Remedy was only one of thousands of such products flooding the U.S. market at the time the 1906 Pure Food and Drugs Act was passed. It was without a doubt, however, one of the most colorfully advertised patent medicines of its time (Fig. 21).

HUNT'S REMEDY.

WILLIAM E. CLARKE, PROPRIETOR, PROVIDENCE, R.I.

THE GREAT KIDNEY & LIVER MEDICINE.

NEVER KNOWN TO FAIL.

CURES DROPSY AND ALL DISEASES OF THE KIDNEYS, BLADDER, LIVER, AND OF URINARY ORGANS.

TRADE MARK.

TO THE DRUG TRADE.

I BEG to inform you that in addition to the "REGULAR SIZE" of **Hunt's Remedy**, I have placed upon the market a "TRIAL SIZE," and trust that you will at once supply yourselves with a small quantity in order to meet the demand which must come. It is the custom of some dealers, both wholesale and retail, to omit ordering a new article until they have had several calls, and while they are frequently losing sales, the dealer who supplies himself early sells a large quantity. **Hunt's Remedy** is not a new compound, and you are probably well aware that it is the most reliable and efficacious **Kidney and Liver Medicine** ever put on the market. This year I shall make contracts for advertising it more extensively and systematically than ever before. Yours truly,

PROVIDENCE, R. I.,
March 1st, 1880.

W. E. Clarke

Hunt's Remedy, Clarke's Florentine Dentifrice, Clarke's Anti-Bilious Pills, Clarke's Tooth-Ache Drops, Infallible Eye Wash, are sold by all Druggists and Medicine dealers.

WILLIAM E. CLARKE, Proprietor.

Trade Supplied by COLBURN, BIRKS & CO., Jobbing Druggists, Peoria.

222

(Fig. 21. Hunt's Remedy advertising [A page from a druggist's catalog circa 1881])

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