

WHY DO SOME BARBERSHOPS HAVE RED AND WHITE STRIPED POLES IN FRONT?

The Answer:

It's not because barbers used to sell sticks of peppermint candy. They never did. That colored pole harks back to a time when your barber was much more of a cut-up than you might imagine.

The local barbershop was once a bloody place. Barbers doubled as doctors, dentists and surgeons. One procedure they specialized in was bleeding patients, a supposed common "cure" (when it didn't kill you) for many illnesses several centuries ago.

In order to increase the flow of blood the customer was asked to squeeze a pole to put pressure on the veins. The poles often got splattered with blood. Dripping wet and bloody red, they were set outside to dry. In the tradition of contemporary hygiene, used white bandages were draped on the poles to dry.

And that's the origin of the red and white icon outside of today's barbershop.