

**Fisher Drug  
 Remedy was  
 Stimulating  
 Tales of Earlier  
 Days**  
 By Bob Dewel

Here's a Baraboo product from the past, an elixir that tasted great. It made you feel good. It was sold throughout the Midwest, and it was manufactured in Baraboo by the barrel. The formula was a guarded secret for decades, but we have it—The Fisher Drug Store Health Restorer!

Health Restorer was the name at first, but the brothers were forced to change it. The State Health Department strongly pointed out that it did not happen to restore health. No problem, the name was simply changed to Fisher's Tonic and Laxative.

In the days when people thought most things could be cured by a good flushing out, it sold like hotcakes. Knowing a good thing when they see it, the brothers soon produced a Carbolic Salve and a Fisher Bros. Liniment.

The formula for the Health Restorer would be a pharmacist's nightmare today. On a copy of the original formula in an 1894 notebook, we can count a dozen ingredients. The first ingredient was senna, a cathartic, with instructions to "let macerate in cold water for six hours. Express and add alcohol and percolate" One suspects that the alcohol was the principal ingredient; some say as much as 30%.

Some ingredients, like nutmeg and caraway and cinnamon and oil of Orange make it sound fairly palatable, along with "sirup". But don't laugh—one man was "reported" to have lived to 105 "but did have some coughs". The concoction was prepared by the barrel, as shown in an attached picture

The genealogy

Much of the material in this story was supplied by a descendant, Herman Fisher of Wilmington OH, with additional verification from Baraboo's Tom Biege. Old timers will remember Mrs. Marjorie Stekl, also a descendant. There were close social ties to their contemporaries, the Ringling Brothers.

The parents of the three brothers were Louisa (Schlegamilch) and Frederic Fisher of Germany, and the sons retained German as their first language. The first brother, August, arrived in Baraboo in 1877, purchasing the G.H. Bacon Drug Store.

In due time, he took in two of his younger brothers, Herman and Ernest. The only true pharmacist was Ernest. A fourth brother, Frank peddled the products throughout the Midwest. The store soon prospered, and the brothers participated in civic affairs with August serving as Mayor for a time. Despite the religious domination of those times, the store was open all day on Sunday.

It is said that the first two telephones in town were the drug store and Dr. Farnsworth, who rented upstairs. The first call was a trial between the two, and it is said that Herman was having trouble understanding Farnsworth's broken English. He resorted to German, and Farnsworth was astonished that the telephone would "sprechen du Duetsch" as well as English.



In the basement of the Fisher Drug Store.

One of the brothers regards the barrels of Fisher Drug's "Health Restorer". This was sold throughout the Midwest, and was the source of considerable income, hence his respectful gaze.

There were eight children in the original family, whose descendants carry many family names familiar to Sauk County residents. You can see the Fisher file and others at the Sauk County Historical Society. The Society also has the plug silk hat August wore as mayor.



Fisher Drug. Herman in doorway with hat. Dr. Farnsworth in upper window. Is the man by the alley packing a piston in his hip?