



The Sanderson family were active in the drug business in Richmond Hill for almost 50 years from 1869 to 1918. Henry Sanderson was born in England about 1816. Henry and his wife Elizabeth purchased land at the corner of Yonge and Centre Street East in 1848. Henry was a farrier or horse shoer and later advertised himself as a veterinary surgeon and druggist.

His eldest son, John Henry, was a member of the first graduating class of the Ontario Veterinarian College in 1868. John set up his practice next to his father's store. In 1869 they expanded their business by purchasing the stock of R.H. Hall, another Richmond Hill druggist. Henry's second son, William, was also a druggist and worked in the family business. John later manufactured patent medicines while it appears that William provided prescription drugs.

In 1885 Henry retired and the business became known as Sanderson Brothers. William died in 1915 and the last record of the firm was in 1918.

Albert Hill, a long time Richmond Hill resident, recalls the Sanderson's store. He said that John Henry was Superintendent of the Methodist Church Sunday School. Mr. Hill worked for another Richmond Hill druggist, George H. Glen, for a short time.

One of the products they manufactured was H. Sanderson's Infallible Oil. In the language of patent medicine sellers it was known as a "cure". It was good for just about everything that bothered man and beast and could usually be taken internally or used externally. These bottles have been found in aqua (6 inch) and clear (5 inch).

In 1880 the Sanderson's purchased a wagon to sell their products. It was built by a Mr. John Wright and cost \$200. The Richmond Hill Liberal reported on June 4, 1883 the "J.H. Sanderson started on Tuesday on his Eastern trip with his supply wagon containing Sanderson's Infallible Oils and Balsams of Life. He intends going as far as Brighton and will be gone about two weeks". This may explain why the Infallible Oil bottle is not uncommon

in Southern Ontario.

An advertisement for J.H. Sanderson, V.S. listed a number of H. Sanderson's products including: Infallible Oil, Condition Powder, Heave Powder, Balsam of Life, Iron Age Tonic, Diuretic and Purging Balls, Antibilious Pills, Cholera Specific.

Druggist advertising and patent medicine almanac's can be very helpful in identifying the different products they made. I have in my collection a sample of Sanderson Brothers Iron Age Tonic which was dug in Toronto in 1991. Until seeing the above advertisement in the Richmond Hill Library Archives I did not know for sure it was a local bottle.

The bottle itself is 8 inches in height, aqua and square. It is embossed on one panel with Sanderson Brothers Iron Age Tonic. The Business was known as Sanderson Brothers from 1886-1893. Tonics were used to improve one's overall condition in the event of illness or fatigue. A turn of the century do-it-yourself guide stated that tonics are a class of medicines which gradually and permanently increase the tonicity and general tone of the system; strengthening and invigorating it when weakend and debilitated, increasing appetite, assisting the digestion and thus building up the entire system. Angelica, arsenic, black cahosh, boneset, burdock, chamomile, cinchona or Peruvian bark, golden seal, elecampane, iron, pepsin, quinine, sarsaparilla and wild cherry are in the class of tonics.



Mr. Harold Sanderson of Markham (not a direct relative) has a copy of a bookmark from the drug store that lists a number of other products they sold; Sanderson's Quillean Fluid, Sanderson's Winter Balm, Sanderson's Magic Cough Syrup, Sanderson's Universal Liniment.

He recalls his father getting a letter from a Toronto drug wholesaler back in the 1940's or 50's asking if Sanderson's products were still available!

Notices in local papers from 1867 on indicated that other articles sold in their store were described as "kept by druggist generally". These included; Drugs, Paints, Perfumery,

Bicycles, Chemical Oils, Medicines, Toilet Soaps, Dye Stuffs.

They were also a long distance station for the Bell Telephone company.

The Sanderson's were an example of druggists who made both patent and prescription medicine. One of their advertisements read "physician prescriptions carefully compounded and all orders attended to with care and dispatch". It would appear that this was a common practice amongst druggists of this period as I have come across others who made products like Howarth's Carminative Mixture, (Howarth's, Toronto) No Mo-odo (W.H. Lee, Toronto) and Maltopsyn (Hazen Morse, Toronto).

When a collector thinks about patent medicine, products that had a national or international market come to mind, like Dr. Thomas's Electric Oil or Radway's Ready Relief. The Sanderson's however were entrepreneurs in their own right, active in veterinarian services, prescription drugs and patent medicines for almost half a century in Richmond Hill and beyond.

*SPECIAL THANKS TO;  
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