



One of the exciting events of those bygone days was the coming of a patent medicine show. The Black Hotel then, now called the Stagecoach Inn (Old Stagecoach Stop), was always the headquarters for Dr. Buck's Famous

Elixir medicine shows.

The coming of this show was looked forward to by the youngsters because of the animal show they usually had, or a clown or two, always music of some kind, trumpets blaring, noises of all kind. Some of the oldsters, I imagine, looked forward to this coming,

since the doctor's elixir cured all aches and pains [and] because it was about 25 percent proof. So who needed more proof to convince one of making one feel better?

Dr. Buck made [it] by stirring, mixing, bottling, and labeling a secret concoction in the backyard of the Black Hotel. And as near as I can remember, he needed a little cascara, some brown sugar syrup, some wintergreen or mint flavor, some prune juice, and some water, and the rest Virginia Dare wine. He used a pint bottle and had a well-marked, lettered, and colored label on the outside. The flavor was tasty, the aroma pleasing, the results satisfying, if taken sufficiently. The crowds gathered in the tent and the barker started his pitch in such a fashion.

(In a high, fast pitched voice)

"Ladies and gentlemen, the good doctor brings you the opportunity to

rid your system of the miseries of ague, summer flux and indigestion, that restless feeling that only certain ages experience, that turning and teasing and tossing of sleepless nights. Its good for heartache, heartburn, dyspepsia, loss of appetite, hot flashes, and muscle spasms, earaches, toothaches, or any kind of pain. Its secret formula is in this large bottle and it only costs a dollar. Three of them for two dollars. I don't want to pressure you but think it over my friends while Jack, the trained donkey, shows you a trick or two. I'm going to give away a five dollar bill, a brand new crisp five dollar bill to anyone, whoever it might be, who can stay on Jack's back for three minutes. Mind you, just three minutes. Who wants to try?"



Usually some young man, as did this particular night, saw a chance to make five dollars and volunteered to ride Jack. The donkey stood perfectly still until the rider secured himself on the donkey's back. The rider usually leaned forward, hugged the animal around the neck, lapping the feet and legs under the belly of the donkey. When the rider said "Ready", the time started and the donkey tried to throw

off his load. For two minutes this battle went on and just before the three minutes was up, a whistle would blow and the donkey would duck his head real low and run for the tent opening under a stretched tight rope that caught the rider by surprise and swiped him clean from the animal. Off of the back he went and into the sawdust.

"Sorry my friend, better luck some other time." And then went the sales pitch and the famous elixir started to sell.

"Sold out again, Doctor", a salesman would yell and a filled basket would soon replace the one just emptied.

This went on until the supply was gone or the demand fully accommodated. If the demand was slow, the price was lowered. An even greater bargain than three for two dollars prevailed.

Pulaski County operated under a local option law in those days and sale of liquor, as such, was prohibited. But medicine with these healing qualities, such as Doctor Buck's Famous Elixir, was a gift to suffering mankind. Maybe I should say thirsty mankind, too.

Audio tape memoirs of Dru Pippin, Tape 2, 1975.
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