

## Dr. Alvin Foord – Cazenovia, New York

By Dan Weiskotten

Alvin Foord (1799-1877), a physician, druggist, and patent medicine maker from Cazenovia, NY, was known across the country during the 1840s, 50s and 60s for his famous patent medicines such as "Pectoral Syrup," "Tonic Cordial," and "Universal Pills". Foord obtained his Doctorate at Dartmouth College and began his medical career in Cazenovia in 1828. After nearly 20 years practice as a physician, Foord "broke down in health" and became a druggist. Feeling moral obligations to sell cures that really worked, he prepared his own formulas using tried and true chemicals and compounds. In 1858 he gave up the drug store and devoted his full time to manufacturing the medicines that would make his name an almost household word in the mid-19th century.

Foord's Pectoral Syrup is advertised locally as early as 1842 and in 1851 it was advertised as "For sale in every Town and Village in this country." One of his day books, which still exists in private hands, shows that he shipped cases of his medicines all over New York, and as far away as Cincinnati and Chicago. In August 1855 he announced that he had doubled the size of his Pectoral Syrup bottles without proportionally increasing the price! Foord's Tonic Cordial and Universal Pills are found as early as 1844, and his Citrine Ointment as early as 1851. He may have been producing earlier than 1842, but the newspapers for this important period are missing. In 1855, according to the census of that year, Foord annually produced 200 dozen (2,400) bottles of Pectoral Syrup, 300 dozen (3,600) bottles of Tonic Cordial, and 100 dozen (1,200) boxes of pills.

Several of his recipes are known and it is seen that he used a wide variety of natural herbs and extracts, some of which are quite unsafe to use without extensive knowledge of their effects, but most of which are today used to some extent in folk and herbal medicine practices. Exotic compounds and herbs from all over the world went into making his various medicines and pills. His primary ingredient, though, appears to be somewhat less dangerous: the recipe for making 25 gallons of Pectoral Syrup calls for 180 pounds of sugar! In other evidence to the heavy use of sugar, the 1855 census shows that he used 2000 (two thousand!) pounds of sugar in the single year of the 1855 enumeration! (He did use \$300 worth of "Drugs" that year.) Several of the recipes show that his concoctions included alcohol, a favorite ingredient of many 19th century medicine men, but it is clear that Foord primarily used the alcohol as a dissolving agent for other compounds.

Dr. Alvin Foord was a Dartmouth graduate, completing his *Doctorate of Medicine* some time in the late 1820s. Exactly when he first came to Cazenovia is not known, but he first advertised in the Cazenovia newspapers that he had a Doctor's Office on the north side of the Public Square in September of 1828. In 1829 he became a member of the Madison County Medical Society (see his interesting 1867 paper read before the society). About 1831 he purchased the property west of the Public Square (and near the Presbyterian Church). (See the 1852 map of the Village of Cazenovia). This property (the early history of which is in the next paragraph) included what is today 19 and 21 Albany Street. In July 1832 Foord moved his office to a building somewhere on the lot (there had been houses and a store on this lot since 1800 so it may have been in one of these). The drug store seems to have remained in or near his house for a short time and then he moved it to somewhere in the center of the business district. In January 1848 he announced that he was going to close his store on March 1, of that year, which he did, but he moved to a new location.

The spot where we know Foord had his first store, at 21 Albany Street, just west of the Presbyterian Church, was formerly the location of the store and post office of Jabish N.M. Hurd which was opened here about 1800. An 1809 map of the village Jail Limits shows that Hurd's store was located on the corner of Albany Street and the Public Square, and it is presumed that his residence was situated fronting Albany Street just to the west of the store (at 15 or 19 Albany Street). Hurd kept his store until

1820 and the post office until 1822. In 1827 Hurd moved to Albany and sold the large surrounding lot to Augustus W. Smith, a math professor who soon became the principal of the Oneida Conference Seminary (he later was a teacher at the Naval Academy in Annapolis and then, after 1851, was a principal of a Wesleyan University in Middletown CT).

About 1831 the house and lot were purchased by Dr. Alvin Foord, who continued to live there until 1866. The 1852 map of Cazenovia Village shows a large house on the western half of the lot and the eastern part, where Hurd's store had been, is vacant of buildings.

The location of the store that Foord had occupied before March 1848 is not known, but I presume it was located in the business district. A few days after he closed it George Sheldon reopened it as a drug store. In July 1848 Sheldon was joined by Charles C. Curtis as Sheldon & Curtis and they stayed together until August of 1849. Sheldon left town in 1851 but no mention was ever made of where this store was located except to say that it was in the place formerly occupied by Dr. Foord! On March 1, 1848, when Foord vacated his old store, he immediately moved into a new one at 45 (or thereabouts) Albany Street (this would be right over the "R" in "ALBANY STREET" on the 1852 map). In January 1850 he opened a Doctor's office in the second floor over his store. The September 20, 1854 *Cazenovia Republican* noted that Foord's store was robbed, that of April 27, 1857 noted that the awning over his storefront had collapsed from too much snow, the April 7, 1858 *Cazenovia Republican* notes that Foord had given up the drug business to devote more time to manufacturing his celebrated medicines and that he had relocated to Mill Street just south of Albany Street.

In 1866 Foord sold his home property at 19 Albany Street to George S. Ledyard and the "ancient building" that had been long occupied by Foord was removed. Ledyard built the house which still stands (see photo at top right) for his mother-in-law, Mary J. Fitzhugh. It was designed by Horatio Nelson White, a Syracuse architect, who also designed many buildings in Syracuse and several in Cazenovia. This once fanciful house has long been stripped of its ornate exterior decoration and the fanciful woodwork which surrounded the porch, windows, and under the roof line.

Upon selling the old place to Ledyard, Dr. Foord built a new home close to the corner of the Public Square near the Presbyterian Church. Groundbreaking of the new and modern place took place in July 1867. This house still stands and is owned by the Presbyterian Church. It has become known in the 20th century as the "Wendell House. It was originally clapboard covered, with wooden quoins on the corners but has since been covered with artificial siding which detracts from its original appearance.

Dr. Foord was active in local politics but usually served as chairman of civic committees rather than as an elected official. The family attended the nearby Presbyterian Church. Tax records indicate that in 1863 his annual income was \$625.00, 1864 less than \$600.00, 1865 \$794.00, 1866 \$1278, 1867 \$1283, so it seems that business boomed just after the war and he was able to build a finer home.

Alvin Foord died April 16, 1877, age 78 years. After he died his wife, Emily, lived in the house for several years. He and his wife and several other members of his immediate family are buried in Cazenovia's Evergreen Cemetery. I do not know the later history of the house and family.

**An 1856 Recipe for Dr. Foord's Pectoral Syrup**, from a Recipe Book in the possession of David Foord, a direct descendant of Dr. Alvin Foord:

(I have taken the liberty making spelling corrections and extending abbreviations and dittos.)  
(Information and links to botanical sources and chemical compounds follow the recipe.)

**Rx** Pulverized Rad **Senka** ----- 3. lbs ----- 3. lbs  
Pulverized Rad **Squills** ----- 6. lbs ----- 6. lbs

Boil gently in 15 Gallons of water two or three hours so as to strain off 10 gallons -- soon as cooled enough to handle. Then add 180. lbs of White Coffee Sugar, clarify with the white of 1 Dozen Eggs. -- and dissolve in same while hot 2 1/2 ozs **Sulphate Morphine** & 1 1/2 ozs **Tartrate of Antimony**. When Cool make an emulsion by (*heating / beating*) 2. lbs of **Balsam of Peru** with 1. lb of **Gum Tragacanth** dissolved into a stiff paste. Also dissolve 1/2 lb of **Gum Camphor** in 2 quarts of Alcohol and add both and stir briskly until well mixed. Strain and draw when milk-warm.

**.....THIS FOR HISTORICAL PURPOSES ONLY. I DO NOT RECOMMEND RECREATING THIS MEDICINE OR ENDORSE USING THESE COMPOUNDS!!! GO SEE A REAL MODERN DOCTOR!!!**

**Identification of ingredients:**

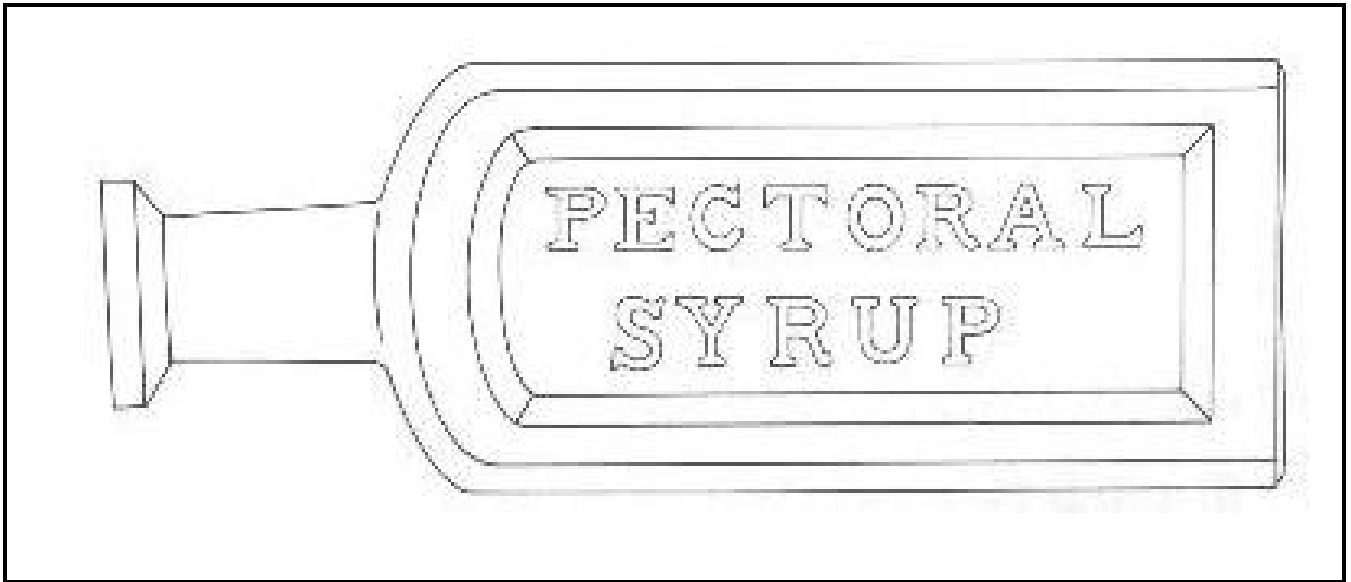
- Senka is probably Senega, also known as Rattlesnake Root, a plant found native to North America, is used to treat asthma and a number of respiratory ills.
- Squill is a potent and quite poisonous plant extract used to stimulate the heart and as an expectorant and comes from the Mediterranean region...
- Sulphate Morphine, also known as Morphine Sulphate, is an analgesic and sedative.
- Tartrate of Antimony may be antimony potassium tartrate, also known as Tartar Emetic, a toxic substance that is used (in small doses) in medicines, as an emetic and expectorant, and to produce sweating.
- Balsam of Peru is an aromatic resin from trees growing in Paraguay and is used as a stimulant and expectorant, and for rheumatic pains and chronic coughs.
- Gum Tragacanth is an ancient natural compound used to improve the viscosity of medicines and other liquids (such as pie fillings and salad dressings)
- Alcohol had its obvious soothing effect on the patient, but the relatively small amount alcohol used in the recipe indicates that it was used primarily as a dissolving agent for the Gum Camphor.
- Gum Camphor is used to stimulate heart action and circulation and comes from subtropical regions of the world.



**Editor's Note:** This article was copied from the internet. Dan Weiskotten was a local historian from Cazenovia who unfortunately died of a heart attack last year while working in his garden at the young age of 43. For more information on Dr. Foord see- (<http://rootsweb.com/~nyccazen/Shorts/Questions/AlvinFoord.html>).



**Photo of aqua Dr. Foord's Tonic Cordial bottle, Cazenovia, N.Y.  
These bottles are known both with and without pontil marks**



**Drawing for Dr. Foord's Pectoral Syrup bottle (shown smaller than actual size)**

Front: **PECTORAL SYRUP**

Right: **DR. FOORD'S**

Back: no panel

Left: **New York**

Size 7.5 x 1.75 x 2.5 inches

Drawing and information from Joseph K. Baldwin's (1973) *A Collector's Guide to Patent and Proprietary Medicine Bottles of the Nineteenth Century*. Thomas Nelson Inc. New York, NY

There are at least two sizes of Pectoral Syrup bottles, some are pontiled and others case made, and some have "Cazenovia / NY" on one panel.

