

Milton Marion Fenner and his Times

By

Douglas H. Shepard

for

The Darwin R. Barker Historical Museum, Fredonia, NY, 2009

Milton Marion **Fenner**, the seventh of nine children of Christopher C. and Lucinda (**Fross**) **Fenner**, was born on 28 July 1837 in Stockton NY. He attended the local schools and the Ellington Academy (incorporated 11 February 1853), then Allegheny College in Meadville PA. Their Alumni Affairs office records show him in attendance from 1854 to 1856. He also "taught seven terms of public and select schools in New York [*The Fredonia Censor* of 7 November 1917 reported that he taught the public school in Laona before going to Flint MI and Michigan" during this period, after which he attended The Eclectic Medical College of Cincinnati. On 22 May 1860 he received his M.D. degree and set up practice in Flint MI.

However, on 12 July 1861 he enlisted as a private in Co. A, 8th Michigan Rgt. (He was not yet 24.) He served with distinction and was promoted to First Lt. on 1 October 1862. In May 1863 he was commissioned assistant surgeon, U.S. Navy. In the spring of 1864, he came home on a leave of absence at which time, seeing an opportunity in Jamestown NY, he resigned his commission and set up a private practice there as an Eclectic Medical Doctor. Eclectic Medicine was a practice that opposed the earlier "heroic" measures of bleeding, purging and the like. Instead, it attempted to bring together more benign treatments and remedies, especially the use of botanic medicine and medicinal herbs, as well as physical therapy. **Fenner** apparently did well with his new practice although he took time out to invest in the new oil fields in Pennsylvania in the winter of 1864-65 from where, after his speculations eventually led to serious losses, he returned to his medical practice in the summer of 1865. In addition, he began to edit an Eclectic Medicine publication, *The Medical Progress* and, in 1865, he was appointed city physician of Jamestown.

Perhaps it was that additional income that enabled him to court and marry Louisa Georgiana, daughter of the prominent woolen manufacturer, Daniel H. **Grandin** of Jamestown. The wedding took place on 5 June 1866; the groom was 30, the bride 23. **Fenner's** practice flourished and he became a prominent member of the State Eclectic Medical Society. During his time in Jamestown, several laudatory articles were written about him, giving some insight into his work. The *Jamestown Journal* described his office in the Hall Block: Receiving Room, Counseling and Operating Room, and a Laboratory. Here "the Doctor has a complete dispensary of eclectic practice, whereby he can have recourse to a large number of remedies not commonly found in drug stores. The laboratory is provided with chemical apparatus for the preparation and combination of medicines of various powers and qualities, enabling him to adapt a remedy to any dispensed in any of its forms." On the day the reporter visited, "his rooms were thronged with patients." On that day he made up over sixty different prescriptions. Another article, in the *Chautauqua Democrat*, described his involvement with the Annual Meeting of the

Eclectic Society in Albany, ending with "he is the author of a series of Resolutions, unanimously adopted by the Society condemning medical empiricism and immoral medical advertising, and urging the necessity of elevating the standard of medical attainments." However, in an interesting piece, the *Advertiser and Union* of 5 March 1869, in an attempt to underline the value of advertising in newspapers, stated that **Fenner's** very successful practice was in part due to "the liberal use he has made of printer's ink."

For some reason, as popular and successful as he was becoming, **Fenner** decided in 1869 to move his practice to Fredonia, which apparently had a need for another Eclectic Medicine practitioner. There had been others in Fredonia earlier. Dr. George L. **Whitford**, originally of Addison VT, then Rock Island IL, had moved his practice to Fredonia in May 1861. He lived first on Center Street and then bought the **Doolittle** property about at today's *132 West Main Street* in May 1862. At a meeting of Eclectic Physicians held in Dunkirk on 15 September 1865, **Fenner** was elected Secretary and **Whitford**, Treasurer. At that same meeting, **Fenner's** friend and colleague, Dr. A. F. **Jennings**, became a full-fledged member of the Society. **Whitford** became a permanent member of the State Society in June 1867 but soon after resettled in Michigan when his place in Fredonia was taken by **Jennings**.

Alvah F. **Jennings**, nine years **Fenner's** senior, had been a practicing physician in Western New York as early as 1850. (Oddly enough, he was recorded in Harmony NY by the 1850 Census-taker on 19 August and in Mina on 16 November.) In 1860 he was still in Mina. In February 1868 he moved to Fredonia, buying *37 Central Avenue* from S. L. **Bailey**. For the 1870 Census, he described himself as a Real Estate Agent, so he must have given up his medical practice at some point after his move. In June 1868 another Eclectic physician moved, or rather returned to Fredonia. That was W. S. **Wilbur**, no stranger to Fredonia. Born in Walworth NY in August 1830, he was living in Hamlet NY when he began attending the Fredonia Academy in 1849 and again in 1855. He attended and graduated from the Cincinnati Eclectic Institute, **Fenner's** alma mater. After marrying in Quincy IL, he returned to Fredonia in June 1868 opening an office at 12 West Main Street. He later moved his office to his home at 43 Water Street,

It is not likely that **Wilbur** would have encouraged a competitor to join him in Fredonia. More likely it was **Jennings** who suggested that **Fenner** give up his Jamestown practice. In July 1869 he relocated to Fredonia opening his medical office on the second floor of the newly renovated building at 2 West Main Street, while he and Mrs. **Fenner** took up residence with the **Jennings** family at their home on Central Avenue. In mid-November of 1869 the **Fenners** moved from the **Jennings** home to an apartment on the second floor of the very new Union Block, 1-5 East Main Street, across the hall from the *Censor* office. Years later, the editor/publisher, Louis **McKinstry**, who had first met **Fenner** when he was home on leave in 1864, remembered that "Dr. **Fenner** and his wife took modest rooms on the same floor, across the hall from the *Censor* office, and calls were soon being exchanged every day." The **Fenners** continued to live in the Union Block for some time.

The large building across Water Street where **Fenner** set up his office had opened in March 1868 as a dry goods store. On 11 August 1869 the elegantly refitted building opened again as J. B. **Putnam** & Co.'s grocery store, and in the *Censor* of 25 August 1869 appeared a description of "the medical and surgical rooms of Dr. M. M. **Fenner**." His rooms "being already visited by numerous patients with nearly every variety of ailment."

The first time **Fenner** advertised in *The Fredonia Censor* was in the issue of 21 July 1869. As "Physician and Surgeon" his office was at 2 *West Main Street*. However, by November of that year he had improved his address, at least rhetorically. In a new advertisement in the *Advertiser & Union* of 19 November 1869 he described himself as "Attending Physician and Surgeon to the Fredonia Institute of Eclectic Medicine and Surgery," that is, his office, still at 2 W. Main Street.

Also in 1869 he was appointed Fredonia's Physician to the Poor, (which post he held through 1872). In 1870 he had been made a U.S. Examining Surgeon, one of the physicians who were called upon to validate or deny pension requests by veterans of the Civil War. **Fenner** had devised a questionnaire, "Blank printed Questions" which could be sent to any patient who was unable to visit his office. From the answers provided, "he can usually get a good understanding of the case, and prescribe, sending medicine by mail or express." This seems to signal his first tentative steps toward a change in career direction. Where he had been a very popular physician, he now determined to go into the wholesale manufacturing of medicinal cures for some common ailments. As *The Fredonia Censor* of 7 February 1872 said, he was going to "manufacture his popular remedies for the wholesale trade." What these "popular remedies" consisted of had been described in a two-page advertisement in the 1868 *Excelsior Almanac & Business Directory* of Jamestown.

"Dr. **Fenner's** Specific Lung and Throat Remedy" was a package sufficient to make up a "half-pint of beautiful, pleasant and efficient syrup." "Dr. **Fenner's** Specific for the Itch" consisted of "two large bottles, containing an *external application* and a *blood medicine*." "Dr. **Fenner's** Liver and Blood Alterative and Tonic Compound" was "A Specific for all blood diseases." One package made one quart of syrup. And "Dr. **Fenner's** Liver and Blood Pills" was described as "An admirable *Cathartic* and *Aperient*." All of this was during his Jamestown period, before he ever came to Fredonia. It seems a safe assumption, then, that he continued to supply his prepackaged cures after he opened his office in Fredonia in 1869. When he decided to expand his activities, he rented the front rooms on the second floor of 2 *West Main Street*, adjacent to his office, in February 1872 and, by May expanded yet again. The *Advertiser & Union* of 3 May 1872 reported that **Fenner** had rented the basement under the **Putnam** Bros. store, a space "formerly occupied by **Bartram's** meat market."

Charles E. **Bartram** and a younger brother, Amos, had opened the "meat and oysters" market in May 1868 in the basement of 2 *West Main Street* with a "convenient entrance" on Water Street. The May dates probably mean their lease had run out. Amos then joined L. L. **Crocker** and Henry **Burr** to form **Bartram, Crocker & Co.** and in October opened another meat market on the other side of Water Street across from the basement space

Fenner had moved into. He was going to use the additional space for manufacturing and storage. To do this, he apparently needed some financial help since, *The Fredonia Censor* of 1 May 1872 had reported, **Fenner** sold a one-quarter interest in his "People's Remedies" to his brother-in-law, Samuel **Grandin** of Jamestown, Georgiana's younger brother. The *Advertiser & Union* of 26 April 1872 carried a paragraph highlighting one of **Fenner's** products. "There is a medicine that cures Biliousness, Bad Breath, Headaches, Dyspepsia, Deranged Stomach and Bowels, Jaundice, Nervousness, Scrofula, Sleeplessness, Salt Rheum, pimples on the face, moths, all Skin and Blood Disorders, and beautifies the complexion,— It causes the head to become clear, and the patient energetic for business when dull or indisposed from biliousness or impure blood. It cleanses and produces appetite, strength and vigor. It does all these things with certainty, by acting upon the causes of disease, removing all humors and impurities from the blood, and toning up the stomach, liver, bowels, nervous system, heart and lungs. It is pleasant to take, and its effect on the system is warming and agreeable. Its name is **Fenner's** Blood and Liver Remedy and Nerve Tonic. Price \$1. Sold by most druggists everywhere, or send \$5 to M. M. **Fenner**, Fredonia, N.Y., and receive six bottles by return express."

It is worth stopping here for a moment to give some perspective to this prescription. To a modern eye the sweeping claims seem excessive, if not fraudulent, but not from a contemporary's point of view. We can find some clarification in a major address that **Fenner** gave to the regional Eclectic Medical Society meeting in May 1867. In it he summarized the errors of the earlier theories of medical practice. The basic problem, as he dramatically described it, was that the patient who was ill was seen as someone who, in a sense, had been invaded by a demon which had to be violently exorcised. The infamous bloodletting, purging and the like was the old school's attempt to drive the devil out. They misunderstood what illness was all about. Illness was a malfunctioning of one or more bodily organs. When heart, lungs, stomach, liver and other vital organs were working as they should, there was no illness. Cures, then, had to help one or more affected organs return to their full functioning. Using herbal and botanic elements, these prescriptions were designed to gently cleanse the organs of whatever was impeding their functioning. Obviously, a prescription that had the same curative powers for more than one organ would be a cure for more than one ailment.

In his address, **Fenner** described the situation this way. To the older school of thought, "Disease was regarded more in the light of an evil spirit pervading the body, which should be attacked in a violent way and routed from its citadel by potent and destructive agencies, rather than in its true light and nature. To this end the veins were opened and the life and energy of the patient were abstracted; drugs were administered to impoverish and liquify the remaining blood, and to complete the work of destruction strict starvation was enjoined. Disease was thus rendered less demonstrative in its manifestations, which result was hailed as a partial rout of the infective enemy, and the attacks were renewed and repeated with the hope of wholly expelling him from his fastness, the principle [*sic*] question involved in the prognosis being as to whether the patient's strength of constitution was sufficient to hold out till the expulsion could be effected, after which a recovery might be looked for." **Fenner** then added "It is a significant fact that might be expected to have some bearing on the value of this mode of medication, that the

expulsion of disease and death of patient were often contemporaneous events." Probably the most elegant rephrasing possible of the comedian's punch line: "The operation was successful but the patient died."

What did Eclectic Medicine offer in place of these methods? "Its investigations in general pathology have demonstrated the important fact that disease is not an entity per se, not a thing foreign to the system, that by some chance means has entered it, and must by strong and noxious drugs and heroic means be driven out. It is rather a condition of the system, or a portion of it. As seen by the observer it is but the manifestation of an effort the system by its nature or its constitution puts forth for the repairs of injuries done to its tissues." And "The physician is called upon to support the system and maintain it in its integrity, instead of tearing it down, as of old, and aid nature in the work of repair and restoration to health in her own way." As **Fenner's** 1872 advertisement said, the medicine worked "by acting upon the causes of disease, removing all humors and impurities from the blood, and toning up the stomach, liver, bowels, nervous system, heart and lungs." In another advertisement, that in the *Advertiser & Union* of 25 October 1872, he offered his Golden Liniment and Ready Relief for Pain, a bottled cure for "violent *pain*, cramps or diarrhea."

Most of **Fenner's** time was now spent on manufacturing his cures, closing down his medical practice for a period. However, *The Fredonia Censor* of 26 February 1873 announced, in a curiously worded paragraph, that Dr. **Fenner** "having so arranged the management of People's Remedies as not to require his entire attention," would resume his medical and surgical practice as of 1 March 1873. He may have resumed his office hours, but he was still very much involved with the commercial manufacturing business he had begun. The Barker Historical Museum has a partial transcript of a notebook from this early 1873 period. (Luckily, the *Martonis Fenner Collection* includes a photocopy of the first part of the original against which to compare the transcript.) The transcript was done by **Fenner's** granddaughter, Peggy **Fenner Aular**, and given by her to the Museum. It is a very revealing document consisting of 19 numbered pages, two unnumbered pages, and eleven loose leaves unnumbered but some of them dated.

The loose leaves seem to record **Fenner's** trial runs in making some of his remedies in bulk, unlike the individually prepared prescriptions that he had provided his patients until then. The dated pages are for February 8, March (?)14, March 15, May 19, May 29, June 20 (two pages), July 9, and July 23, 1873. **Fenner's** handwriting is quite difficult to read and the transcript indicates by line dashes or question marks what Mrs. **Aular** was not sure of. This is especially true of the loose leaves containing **Fenner's** memoranda of the various trial runs. However, because the formulas are repeated, where an ingredient was illegible in one record, it can often be supplied from another. The dated entries seem to make a pattern. On 8 February 1873 he began preparing his Catarrh Remedy and again on 15 March. Mrs. **Aular** dated one sheet as 14 March but questioned the month. It is more likely to have been 14 May. In that case, he began running his Capitol Bitters recipe then, started another batch on 19 May and a third on 29 May, which he completed on 2 June. If it took five days to complete, that would mean he finished the first batch on 19 May, the day he started the second.

On 20 June he prepared a "Salt Rheum Ointment," a very simple task involving a large amount of lard mixed with two ingredients. (In contrast, Capitol Bitters had called for twelve ingredients requiring mixing, steeping, heating, cooling, stirring, straining and bottling.) After the Salt Rheum was done, he began making a Catarrh Remedy and another batch starting on 9 July. There is a separate undated memorandum of his preparing a Catarrh prescription which may have been done after the 20 June but before the 9 July batches. On 23 July he began another Capitol Bitter run. However, there is also an undated memorandum of a Bitters preparation that could have preceded the 23 July batch. Finally, one other undated memorandum is for the preparation of his Golden Relief formula, one of his most popular concoctions. That, of course, could have been fitted in at a number of places in this February through July 1873 calendar.

By contrast, the entries in the notebook are sets of directions for others to follow, perhaps using whatever version of a prescription, recorded in the dated memoranda, seemed best. (This may be what he meant by having "arranged the management of People's Remedies.") The Title Page/Table of Contents has "Blood & Liver Remedy [p.]2, Capitol Bitters 8, Catarrh 12, Improved Cough Honey 16, Golden Relief 18, Salt Rheum Oint[ment] [no page number], St. Vitus Dance [Specific] [no page number]." The first entry, the Blood & Liver Remedy & Nerve Tonic, begins with a list of 27 ingredients such as "2 lbs Sarsaparilla root (American Ground)," "2½ lbs Senna Leaves powdered," and "100 lbs Granulated sugar." After the list is a note "Make 40 gallons, as follows — Take all the roots, barks, leaves and berries. . . ." with a lengthy and detailed description of each step in the process to be followed. The instructions end with "Buy the Root & Barks of **Star & Pettit**." That is John S. **Starr** and James **Pettit** of Versailles. [*Ed. Note: James, a Civil War veteran, was the grandson and son, respectively, of Underground Railroad conductors James **Pettit** and Eber **Pettit**. They were forerunners of **Fenner** in the manufacture of medicinal cures. The younger James also had a son Eber.*] Then, Buy the Senna Leaves etc. from what Mrs. **Aular** read as M. **Kepon & Robbins**, 91 — Street New York. That was **McKesson & Robbins** at 91 Fulton Street. The alcohol in the mixture was to be purchased of **S.Bohrer** ? Cleveland. Sugar, allspice and cloves were to come from C. J. **Moore** of 14 Front Street, Rochester ,NY.

The second set of instructions, beginning on p.12, is for the Catarrh remedy which uses a number of ingredients reduced to an impalpable powder, done by **McKesson & Robbins**, "billed '**Fenner's** Camphor Mixture'" to be put up in boxes "bought of **Spooner & Bauer**, 209 Canal Street, N.Y." Apparently the powdered ingredients were provided by **McKesson & Robbins** and the complete mixture was to be put into individual boxes purchased from **Spooner & Bauer**. The third, Improved Cough Honey, was on pages 14 and 15, but was then crossed out and begun again on p.16 (which is what the Table of Contents has) and finished on p.17. However, Mrs. **Aular** noted that a sheet had been added between 16 and 17. It contains two variants of the cough mixture, one making two gallons, the other 10 gallons. This may be another undated memorandum of several trials to make the basic ingredients. Beginning on p.18 are the instructions for making **Fenner's** Golden Relief, a cure for pains and inflammation. In the list of ingredients, Mrs. **Aular** had difficulty with several entries. "Oil [of] Cognput" should probably be

read as "Oil of Cajuput," also known as White Tea Tree, Swamp Tea Tree, or White Wood. Another ingredient she rendered as "Cornan Tivet?" and later "Gornan Livet?" This must have been German Liver [Bitters], a standard mixture brewed, according to **Fenner's** instructions, from Gum Licorice, Gum Hemlock, Oil of Hemlock, and Alcohol.

The next set of instructions, for a Salt Rheum Ointment, is on an unnumbered page. It has the added note "Making — **Pettit & Barker**" meaning it was to be made up by that local firm. [Ed. Note: *This is the elder Eber **Pettit** and his son-in-law Darwin R. **Barker**.*] This relates to the entry of 20 June 1873 on the loose pages where the same formula — 150 lbs Lard, 25 lbs Ox[ide] of Zinc and $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. of Benzoin Oil — has the added note "Send to **Pettit** in 3 pails in jars to be ground." Although the Table of Contents lists "St. Vitus Dance" as the last entry, there are no directions in this transcription so that leaf, if it ever existed, must have been lost. These records from 1873 are not completely clear. However, they do show in some detail the activities **Fenner** was involved in that lie behind the simple February 1872 announcement that he was going to "manufacture his popular remedies for the wholesale trade" and that of February 1873 that he would resume his practice as of 1 March 1873.

As we have seen, he was very much involved with testing and manufacturing his remedies as well as analyzing his costs and profits. At several places in the 1873 notes he itemizes his costs and on two unnumbered pages after p.19 he works out the cost of each ingredient, the wholesale prices and his profits. These accounts are for the first six of his prescriptions. They do not include the St.Vitus Dance remedy, whatever that was, so he may well have intended to include it but then changed his mind. He certainly had a prescription, because the ailment is included in a two-page advertisement in the 1868 *Excelsior Almanac & Business Directory* for Jamestown, NY as one he was prepared to relieve or cure. In the *Martonis Fenner Collection* is a form letter from **Fenner** dated in 1874 and a set of Invoices from People's Remedies dated from 13 November 1873 through to December 1919 which enable us to determine about when he added a new prescription to his list of remedies. What the Invoice dated 13 November shows is that the St.Vitus Dance Specific was indeed now on his list.

The portion of the New York State Census for 1875 dealing with "Industry other than Agriculture" recorded his Patent Medicine business with \$2000 invested in Real Estate, \$1500 in Tools and Machinery. The estimated value of his annual production was \$30,000. The "Motive Power used" was "Hand," and the business employed five men and one woman. Mrs. **Fenner** is listed in the individual census portion as a Book Keeper, so she may have been the woman. There were also four girls under the age of 18 employed. (The average monthly wages were \$75 for the men, \$23 for the women, and \$8 for the girls.) At the time of this census the **Fenners** were living in a brick house valued at \$3000 on West Main Street very near to Chestnut and Seymour streets. A comment in *The Fredonia Censor* of September 1881 mentioned that the **Fenners** were boarding at Mrs. **Weller's**. Since the 1883 Directory lists a Mrs. J. W. **Weller** about at today's 120 West Main Street, we can be pretty sure they had left their little apartment at 1 East Main Street once they could afford better accommodations, at least by the time of the 1875 Census, if not earlier.

Having started with his seven basic elixirs, by 1879 they had increased to nine, adding an Eye-Salve remedy and Vegetable Blood and Liver Pills. This growth in his business did not prevent **Fenner** from involving himself in town politics. In 1878 and again in 1879 he was elected Pomfret Town Supervisor by very healthy margins. He followed that up by being elected to the New York State Assembly for 1880 and again in 1881. One of his major involvements was in the fight over allowing margarine to be colored to look like butter, a serious problem for the state's dairy industry. He successfully fought that effort and one of his arguments had to do with the question of what unsafe or unhealthy ingredients were hidden in the margarine formula. In the meantime, his patent medicine business continued to grow but, late in 1881, tragedy struck. Mrs. **Fenner**, who had been ailing for a short while, died on 3 September 1881. She was buried in Lake View Cemetery in Jamestown in her family's plot.

By all accounts Dr. **Fenner** was devastated at the loss of his young wife, only 39 at the time of her death, but the demands of his large and growing business probably helped him gradually recover from his loss, and, of course, he was still in the Assembly. In December 1881 he took a step further in his medical enterprise, buying 2 *West Main Street* outright from the **Putnam** brothers for \$9,000, and taking most of the building for his People's Remedies operation. *The Fredonia Censor* of 21 December 1881 reported that he would expand into the rear 30 feet of the first floor, leaving to the **Putnams** "the remaining 70 feet to the front" for their (by 1881) dry goods business. His work continued as before, but soon there were more important changes. In 1882 **Fenner** brought his brother Wallace **Fenner** to Fredonia to manage his patent medicine works. With the factory under supervision, Dr. **Fenner** was able to turn his attention to other areas. At some time early in 1883 he formed the Buffalo Mutual Life and Reserve Association with himself as President. On 6 July 1883 he bought today's 178 *Central Avenue* at a Sheriff's sale. The previous owner, Robert **Wolfers**, who had built the first Fredonia Normal School building and had built this house for himself and his family, had been forced to default on his payments. **Fenner** acquired the property for \$2,603 with the help of his brother. (The deed in L.175, p.100, is dated 9 July 1883 and is made out to both of them.) However, in March 1884 he was able to buy Wallace's half interest in the property to become sole owner. All of this activity had to do with the next big change in his life: On 28 March 1883 he married Florence **Bondeson** of Jamestown whose family had lived in Ellicott for a time. At the time of their marriage, **Fenner** was 47, Florence was 22. How the two met was detailed in a dispatch of 31 March 1883 from Jamestown to *The New York Times*.

ROMANTIC MARRIAGE: DR. FENNER, OF FREDONIA, WEDS A YOUNG POST OFFICE CLERK.

JAMESTOWN, March 31. — Dr. M. M. Fenner, a wealthy physician, of Fredonia, in this county, was married this week under rather romantic circumstances. Mrs. Fenner, the Doctor's first wife, a daughter of Daniel Grandin, Esq., one of the leading citizens of Jamestown, died between one and two years ago. Dr. Fenner was at that time a candidate for the Assembly, and on one of his visits to Jamestown on a

*political errand he met Miss Florence **Bondeson**, a young lady of Swedish parentage, who was employed in the Post Office. She is a remarkably handsome blonde, and very intelligent. The doctor was charmed with her personal beauty, and within a few weeks was engaged to marry her. The matter was kept as quiet as possible, but when Miss **Bondeson** resigned her position and went to a neighboring city to attend a young ladies' seminary, the village gossips connected the circumstances and the engagement became generally known. Two weeks ago Miss **Bondeson** returned from her school and on Wednesday the wedding took place at the home of an uncle of the bride in Bradford. Owing to the high position occupied by Dr. **Fenner** in this section of the State, and also because the bride is hardly half the age of her husband, the marriage has caused an endless amount of comment. Although the intentions of Dr. and Mrs. **Fenner** are not definitely known, it is understood that they will take a trip to California before going to their home in Fredonia.*

The **Bondeson** parents, John and Charlotte, were both from Sweden. He was born in 1836, she in 1838. According to what they told the census-taker in 1900, he emigrated from Sweden in 1855, she in 1857, and they were married in 1857 according to the 1910 Census. One real oddity is the 1860 Census entry for Sugar Grove, Warren County PA where he is entered as "John **Jones**", 24, M[aster] Carpenter, from Sweden and his wife Charlotte, 22, also from Sweden. It is possible he was trying to distance himself from whatever problem he had left behind, or this could merely be a clerical error on the part of the census-taker. There are no other "**Jones**" families nearby in this census section, however, which just leaves the puzzle unanswered. By 1870, when the family was settled in Ellicott NY, it was with the **Bondeson** name, John, 34; Charlotte, 32; Florence M., 9; and Emanuel, 4. John **Bondeson** was identified as a carpenter/joiner. Also in the household was August **Strand**, 28, from Sweden, "learning carp/jnr"; Swan **Palm** [Sven Gelm?], 58, from Sweden, a carpenter/joiner and Mrs. **Bondeson's** father; Sarah **Gelm**, 57, her mother, from Sweden; and John **Anderson**, 20, from Sweden, a carpenter/joiner. Although the bride was not known in Fredonia, the *Censor* of 4 April 1883 was able to report that the presiding minister, the Rev. M. D. **Kneeland** of Fredonia's Presbyterian Church had "found the bride a lovely young lady, as pleasing in manners as appearance." The newly married couple immediately left for a month's honeymoon in California, where **Fenner's** mother and a brother lived.

Less than a year after the couple's return, in March 1884, **Fenner** made another dramatic change. He bought the old Methodist Church property at today's 44-46 *Center Street* and, in April, moved his People's Remedies factory there. In the summer of 1839 a large, three-story building (two full stories and an attic over a raised basement) was erected on the site to be the Fredonia Methodist Episcopal Church's second meeting house. It served until 1869 when a new building was put up on Church Street and the old structure was sold off. The Rev. D. S. **Steadman** bought it and turned it into a two-family home with storage, kitchens and wash rooms in the basement. The **Steadmans** lived on one floor, Prof. H. R. **Sanford** and his family on the other. It was later owned by H. D. M. **Miner** from whom **Fenner** bought it in March 1884. The Sanborn Insurance Co. maps (1886, 1891, 1896, 1902, 1907, and 1912) provide some useful details about the layout and operation of the medicine factory. In 1886 on the basement level were the printing office

and the bottling and packing operation. On the first floor were the laboratory, stock rooms and folding machine, as well as the main office. On the second floor was an apartment with additional storage in the attic. On the *44 Center Street* side was an elevator; on the *46 Center Street* side a coal-fired boiler for steam heat and a 5 horsepower engine. Over the years more outbuildings were added as warehouses, and the factories original power source was a water motor.

Knowing that a new water supply system was being put in place must have entered into **Fenner's** calculations when he bought the large structure on Center and Barker Streets. How that new system came to be is also revealing. There had been discussions about a new water supply for some time. Preliminary surveys were promising, but little progress was made until the State Legislature, with Dr. M. M. **Fenner** now representing the District in the Assembly, created a Board of Water Commissioners on 14 April 1882. The Commission consisted of the big names in the community: O. W. **Johnson**, E.A. **Curtis**, T.S. **Hubbard**, Lorenzo **Morris**, Darwin **Thayer**, L. B. **Greene**, C. M. **Howard**, G. M. **Tremaine** and, of course, M. M. **Fenner**. Financing was a serious problem. Beginning in December 1883 bonds to pay for the extensive work were hard to sell because they carried a low 4% interest. Some were sold to a few individuals and to the Cemetery Association until, as a later account in *The Fredonia Censor* of 24 December 1884 reported "finally Hon. M. M. **Fenner** by correspondence with Mr. **Grandin** of Tidioute Pa., disposed of the entire balance of bonds on hand" and saved the day. The old Village water supply system was replaced by the municipal water works once the reservoir was completed in July 1884 and one of the by-products of the new system was the opportunity to use the increase in water pressure to run small water wheels, the water motor or turbine, to operate light machinery. For example, **Parker & Miller** were grinding coffee in this way at their grocery at 14 W. Main Street, followed by machinery at **Parson's** watch repair shop at 16 West Main Street, using water power controlled by a foot pedal, and later J. C. **Birdsall** ran his shirt factory machines using water power. In addition to the Medicine Factory's water motor, they ran the elevator hydraulically as well.

Although, in 1873 he had announced that he was resuming his practice as physician and surgeon, it seems clear that at least by the time he moved the People's Remedies to Center and Barker Street, he no longer maintained a medical office anywhere. A lengthy biographical sketch of **Fenner's** career appeared in George O. **Seilhamer's** 1898 *History of the Republican Party*, a sketch **Fenner** apparently found very useful since excerpts appeared in various forms in his medical publications regularly from 1898 on. That sketch stated that **Fenner** "since 1869 has been engaged in active practice and the manufacture of his proprietary medicines. . . ." In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, this must be considered a polite exaggeration. What he was involved with was time-consuming enough. Even as early as March 1869 when **Fenner** sold his Jamestown practice, the *Advertiser & Union* had commented on his "liberal use. . . of printer's ink." "Dr. **Fenner** has advertised himself liberally," the *Advertiser* explained, and it was going into these details "to counteract the popular belief among old doctors that the use of printer's ink by a physician is disparaging to his profession."

We can see some of what the *Advertiser* was referring to in a printed letterhead **Fenner** used at least as early as 1874. Originally, he had done the traditional thing, a discreet advertisement in the local newspapers simply giving his office location and hours. However, once he had begun the People's Remedies business, his letterhead reveals that he was also "Physician and Surgeon to the Fredonia Institute of Medicine and Surgery for the treatment of all Chronic Diseases." In other words, his medical office at 2 West Main Street. By the time he issued a People's Remedies pamphlet in 1879 he had advanced to become "Physician and Surgeon-in-Chief to the People's Dispensary of Medicine and Surgery." However, a detailed biographical sketch from 1880 appearing in the 1881 *Atlas of Chautauqua County* describes him as a manufacturer of medical remedies, having a controlling interest in the Dunkirk & Fredonia Street Railroad, and a member of the Assembly. There is no mention of a private medical practice. In addition the *Jamestown and Dunkirk Directory 1881-1882* simply lists "patent medicines, Water Street." The 1883 Directory for Fredonia has "Proprietor People's remedies" and the 1887 Directory also lists him merely as 'People's remedies manuf.'

Considering everything he was involved with, it is no wonder if his medical practice had to be curtailed. As the prime mover in establishing the Buffalo Life and Reserve Association, in 1883, *The New York Times*, later describing him as "'Doc' **Fenner**, a wily politician of Fredonia," stated that he was "the godfather of the Life and Reserve Association." He was President of its Board of Directors and was renewed in that position in 1884. Moving People's Remedies in that same year to the large building on Center and Barker Streets also entailed a complete change from the "Hand" power operation of 1875 to steam powered machinery and a full print shop to stock and oversee. Wallace **Fenner** continued at 1 Water Street, which suggests some work was also being done in the old location. By February 1884 **Fenner** had added a Kidney and Backache Cure to his list of medicines as well as his Pleasant Worm Syrup. It was in 1884 also that he was honored by one of the companies of the Fredonia Fire Department. Back in September 1873, Cataract Hose Co. No.2 had been organized. Later, with the advent of the municipal Water Works system, the whole department was reorganized and, in May 1884, the men of the former company appeared at the **Fenners'** door to request permission to be named "The **Fenner** Hose Co." Permission was granted, the newly named group received a handsome donation, and, on 26 June 1884, **Fenner** was named an honorary member of the company. (The Fenner Hose Cart, a relic of that time, can be seen at the Fredonia Fire Department Fire Museum attached to the Fire House.)

There are many signs of **Fenner's** increasing affluence. In January 1884 he bought two fawns to begin populating his "deer park" at his home on Central Avenue. The Assessment Roll of 1884 notes his house on one acre assessed at \$3300 (roughly \$60,000 in today's dollars), the Barker Street property at \$2,200, and stock in the Fredonia National Bank. In July 1885 he bought a burial site in Forest Hill Cemetery, but not just a lot. He bought an entire Section, Section Z. (In September 1886 he had it bonded to provide for perpetual care.) Although he had not been an Assemblyman since 1881, he had continued his involvement with local and state politics. One particularly significant event occurred during the 1885 campaign of Judge Albion **Tourgee** of Mayville. **Fenner**, according to a retrospective piece in *The New York Times* of 23 July 1893, with former

Senator **Sessions**, presented themselves as rival candidates from Chautauqua to Perry **Vedder**. At the convention, as the *Times* characterized it, "**Fenner** and **Sessions** turned their delegates over to **Vedder**, who was thus nominated." (The *Times* later described the same maneuver as taking place at the convention of 1899.)

The year 1885 also brought a bit of a problem, a foreshadowing of trouble for the patent medicine industry just over the horizon. Questions had been raised by some of the druggists and others in the trade whether they would be liable to extra taxation for selling **Fenner's** Capitol Bitters because of its alcohol content. In January 1885 he issued a full-page form letter quoting the Commissioner of Internal Revenue and the Collector in the Buffalo office that "from the information furnished by this office, together with the formula sent by you regarding their composition, that your bitters are so highly medicated as to preclude their use as a beverage." Therefore, they are to be taxed only as medicine, not as Alcoholic Beverages. According to **Fenner's** Notebook of 1873, Capitol Bitters was made up of five spices or herbs, coloring, sugar, 100 gallons of water and 48 gallons of Alcohol. Alcohol or not, the business continued to grow. According to the 1875 New York State Census, there were five males working at the People's Remedies factory. It is not clear if this included his traveling salesmen. That 1875 Census notes two possibilities, Hiram G. **Sisson**, "Patent Medicine Agent" and Z. Elmer **Wheelock**, the same occupation with his territory given as "Michigan." **Fenner** may have had one representative working New York State while the other began with Flint or other Michigan towns where **Fenner** might still be remembered. By the time of the 1880 sketch in the 1881 *Atlas*, he had "six traveling salesmen on the road all the time" and *The Fredonia Censor* of 8 June 1887 reported that he had seven agents on the road.

A salesman was not all that was added in 1887. On 18 August of that year the **Fenners'** first and only child, Milton Marion **Fenner**, Jr., was born, and by 1888, **Fenner** had increased his holdings on Central Avenue to some 12 acres which *The Fredonia Censor* of 10 April 1889 reported, he intended to make into a model farm. To that end, he had a large silo added to the large barn already on the property and, when his "farm superintendent, Albert **Mau**, married Anna **Berg**, he had a small frame house (180 *Central Avenue*, torn down in the 1940s) built on his north property line where the **Maus** were to live. (It is probably no coincidence that Albert **Mau**, Fenner's farm superintendent, married Anna **Berg** just when a Charles **Berg**, "medicine maker" can be found in the 1889-1894 directories.) As to that "farming," B. F. **Dilley's** *Biographical & Portrait Cyclopedia* of 1891 makes no mention of farming or grape-growing, but the 1898 account does. So we may locate the beginnings of his grape vineyard within that time period. It is possible, also, that there was a connection with his cousin, Byron **Fenner** of Westfield, starting the Chautauqua Fruit and Grape Co. (later the **Fenner** Grape Juice Co.) in that period. One reason why 1891 saw no grape farming on Dr. **Fenner's** part had to do, once again, with politics.

A new President, Benjamin **Harrison**, and his party, the Republicans, had come to power in Washington in 1890 and **Fenner** was quickly appointed Deputy Collector of Customs, something he must have applied for. Miss. E. L. **Crocker's** biographical sketch in *Yesterdays* (Vol.V) states that he held the position from January 1890. However, she

adds that he resigned in August 1891 "because of pressure of his private business." In fact, along with many others, his position was eliminated by the Treasury Department in July 1891. While in office, he was listed as "Deputy Collector of Customs, No.8, Class 4" in the Second Division of the Collector's office. First Division workers saw to the entry and clearance of all vessels entering and leaving the Port; the Second Division checked the goods on each vessel and estimated what duty each merchant would pay. **Fenner** must have been absent in New York City during this period (1890-1891). Soon after his return from his work in the New York City Customs Office, he was faced with another problem, one that was potentially very serious, although it also had some elements of farce.

Once he had established his Buffalo Life and Reserve Association in 1883, he must have turned his attention to other matters. By the middle of 1892 mismanagement, at least, had left the company in such a poor financial condition, that the State Insurance Department in August expelled the then Secretary of the company and instructed the remaining officers to either find new managers or resign. As part of a takeover attempt, the Executive Committee swore in two new men from New York City. They then called a meeting of the Board of Directors and, having a majority on the Board, proceeded to elect two more men from New York City. The rest of the Board of Directors, Dr. **Fenner** among them, objected strenuously. In order to do business, the office safe had to be opened. However, because the woman serving as secretary for the meeting was a **Fenner** supporter, she refused to surrender the key to the safe, ultimately having to climb on top of it, from which perch she refused all demands for the key. *The New York Times* of 10 September 1892 summarized the conclusion quite concisely. "The New Yorkers sent for a locksmith. Dr. **Fenner** sent for the police. Tonight detectives are on guard, so that neither faction can gain the advantage for the time being."

Several weeks later a court decided the company should go "into the hands of a receiver." That seems to have been the end of **Fenner's** involvement with the insurance company. What became of the heroic safe-climber unfortunately is not known. Of course, **Fenner** had all his other projects to engage his attention. His obituary stated that in 1880 he "bought a controlling interest in the Dunkirk and Fredonia Railway Co." Over the years he held various important posts in the company including President, Secretary/Treasurer and Manager. The company had been around a good while. Beginning in 1851 there were horse drawn omnibuses carrying passengers and freight from the railroad depot in Dunkirk down Central Avenue and Temple Street into Fredonia. In 1867 rails were laid and horse-drawn cars ran on them over the same route. That was the company that **Fenner** bought stock in and was now seeking to modernize, changing to electric trolleys. These began running from the Nickel Plate Railroad depot and the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern (later the New York Central) station in 1891.

There were several significant changes in Fredonia growing out of the change to electric trolleys. Heavier rails were needed and, while that was being done, the old tracks, running in front of the hotel from Church to Main Street, were removed and the new ones laid further along Church Street to the new waiting room on Center Street. (That also permitted the Common's lawn to reach to the stone walk in front of the hotel.) A more

significant change was the company's electric power plant that went up about at today's 12 Center Street. The steam-powered generators made enough electricity not only to run the trolleys but, "thanks to the enterprise of Dr. M. M. **Fenner**," later said *The Fredonia Censor* of 11 September 1901, they were able to offer steam heat to nearby public and private buildings as well as electricity to run lights and machinery. The Street Railway's power house had now become a business in itself, and one of its first customers was the People's Remedies operation in nearby Center and Barker Streets. The 1896 Sanborn map shows the change. The "water motor" has been replaced by an electric motor, kerosene and oil lights by electric lights.

How this all came about is a rather complicated tale. Since 1857 the Village of Fredonia had been supplied with natural gas to provide gas lights along its major streets. By early in 1886, with local dissatisfaction about the service, the Fredonia Gas Fuel and Light Co. was formed by a number of investors. The top three were the **Day & Prushaw Co.**, T. S. **Hubbard** and, of course, Dr. M.M. **Fenner**. The company dug more wells in 1887 and added more pipe in 1889. By April of 1890, there were complaints about the cost of lighting and increased support for changing to electric lights. At that point, the Board of Trustees decided not to renew its contract with the gas company and, in October 1890, a contract to build a municipal electric plant on Eagle Street was signed. In December 1890 the first electric street lights were turned on and, at the same time, **Fenner**, on behalf of the Dunkirk & Fredonia Street Railroad Co. applied to the State of New York for permission to change to electric powered trolleys. Once that was granted, a coal-fired power plant was built about where 12 Center Street is today. According to the Trustees' Minutes of 3 June 1891, Dr. **Fenner** reported that the company would be putting up poles to carry the electricity for the trolleys.

The next chapter in this saga was the formation of a company headed by George **Barker**, the Fredonia Electric Light, Heat & Power Co., to test the demand for electric lights "in dwellings, stores and public buildings." That was late in 1891. By June 1892 the Street Railway's response was clear. As *The Fredonia Censor* of 8 June 1892 reported "A small copper wire extends from the dynamo in the Street R.R. power house over the buildings and into a back window of No. 59 Main Street, and another from the same place into the printing room of Dr. M. M. **Fenner** on Center Street. What does it mean? That all the sewing machines in the shirt factory and all the printing presses in the **Fenner** Manufactory are run by electricity, and the engineer at the power house says the expenditure of force for this additional work is so small that it cannot yet be determined." In February 1893 **Barker's** company requested a franchise which the Village Board put off. In April 1893 the Columbia Shirt Co. requested permission to connect to the Street Railway power house, but the Board took no action here either. In May **Barker** again requested permission to put up poles and distribute electricity, and again in July. Finally, in November 1893 the Trustees agreed to let the Fredonia Electric Light, Heat and Power Co. go into business but only if they were in operation by 1 July 1894. On 21 May 1894 the Board received a petition from the Dunkirk and Fredonia R. R. Co. to distribute heat, light and power in the Village, as had been granted the rival company. The Board granted the request. With a huge over-capacity power house already in operation and some trial runs providing electricity to some local businesses, **Fenner's** street railroad company

now became a power company as well, supplying electricity, steam heat and power to any homes, shops or businesses requesting them. To seal the bargain, on 6 August 1894 the company agreed to supply electricity for lights in the Village Hall and George **Barker's** power company disappeared from the records.

Another of **Fenner's** 1890s activities involved the new hotel. Since 1808 when Hezekiah **Barker** built his log cabin/inn, there had been an inn or hotel alongside the Common. When the **Abells** bought from **Barker**, they replaced his inn with a larger, framed structure. It acquired a variety of names according to the owners/landlords, the **Johnson** House, the **Taylor** House and by the 1890s it was the **Park** House. The *Observer* of 21 October 1890 reported that there was talk about people interested in taking the old Park House and replacing it with a finer structure. Frank **Tarbox** had plans for a new building drawn up by a local architect M. E. **Beebe**. The *Censor* of 7 October 1891 reported that **Tarbox** felt that with some financial help he could build it, so a subscription list was started to raise the money. In December 1891 the **Taylors** sold the property to **Tarbox**. A large contributor at this time was another local architect, E. A. **Curtis**, who provided his own plans as well as money. However, there was still not enough to go ahead until M. M. **Fenner** stepped into the breach. The new hotel, the "Columbia" was up and open for business by early 1893. It consisted of the old **Taylor** House portion near Main Street, refurbished, and an addition put on to bring the structure back to Church Street.

While all this was going on, **Fenner** was hardly idle. He had the Chautauqua County Fairgrounds to deal with, for one thing. Back in 1880 the Agricultural Society of Northern Chautauqua had purchased the property, but by late 1890 unpaid taxes caused it to be sold by the County Treasurer to Levi **Forbes** of Jamestown. In 1896 he conveyed the property to Charles E. **Hequembourg**. Unfortunately there was a snag in the proceedings. Back in November 1890 the same property had gone to M. M. **Fenner** and other investors at a Sheriff's sale. There followed some lengthy court proceedings and, in May 1898, the **Forbes** purchase was declared void. As a consequence, with M. M. **Fenner** now sole owner, he could sell to the Chautauqua County Fair Association, reserving for himself the role of Superintendent of Grounds, which role he filled for a number of years.

There seems to be an underlying pattern to **Fenner's** many activities. Once he had established himself as a successful physician in Fredonia, he transformed his tailor-made medicines into a separate income-producing set of standardized remedies; once he had helped establish a municipal water-works system, he moved to separate quarters where he could take advantage of the water power now available; once he had succeeded in changing his street railroad over to electricity, he used the capacity of his new power house to run his medicine factory's machinery and, finally, to sell steam and electricity to Village customers as well; and then there was his print shop. We have seen how important printed matter was in his People's Remedies sales promotion. Indeed, some of his printed material seems to have provided the name for his next income-producing sideline or by-product. Beginning with receipts dated from 13 November 1873, a patriotic design embellished the forms. At the left-hand side of the receipt was a rectangular box. At the top "PEOPLE'S," at the bottom "REMEDIES." and between the two, a large circle

suggesting a medal with "E PLURIBUS UNUM" in an arc across the inside top of the circle. The center was taken up by a fierce looking eagle clutching five arrows over a striped shield. Behind it some flags on poles and a sprinkling of stars.

By 1879 he had devised a new logo. In a brochure copyrighted 1879, the title page has "PEOPLE'S REMEDIES in a slight arc across the top of the page. Below it, the rest of the statement "ARE USED ALL OVER THE WORLD." Between them a dark circle, as in the receipts, but within that a globe showing North and South America and the western parts of Europe and Africa. In a 1904 pamphlet for his Golden Relief the design has been modified again. "Dr.Fenner's People's Remedies" is above the globe and the words "are used all over the world" are inside it. Below that is printed "Trade Mark." Along the left side of the title-page is an athletic figure in a loin cloth and sandals holding aloft a flaming torch. The artist has signed it "M. L. R." That is, Minnie Louise **Reuther**. Although she was, in 1904, a student at the Fredonia Normal School, she also just happened to be the niece of Benjamin F. **Reuther** ("**Reuther** the Printer") who had been the People's Remedies plant Superintendent since 1902.

There is another version of the globe trademark in a **Fenner** Cook Book from 1907. However, what is particularly interesting is that, when he set up yet another sideline, he seems to have had the symbol name the company rather than the other way around. The earliest record we have of this particular venture is an entry in the "Fredonia Business Directory" in *The Fredonia Censor* of 8 June 1887, "GLOBE PRINTING CO." whose product was "Chautauqua Series of Writing Tablets." A later reference in *The Fredonia Censor* of 8 January 1890 is to "The People's Remedies and Globe Printing house establishment on Center Street." The item was about their hydraulic elevator reaching the attic which allowed for more storage. What was not commented on is that, at least by 1889, **Fenner** had established the Globe Printing Co., using the People's Remedies' shop to do job printing as well. Indeed, this may have begun even earlier. *The Fredonia Censor* of 28 March 1888 reported that **Fenner** had purchased "the stock and materials of the Victor Manufacturing Co. and in company with F. A. **Cottrell** [his Globe Printing Co. foreman] will manufacture writing ink, a portion of the People's Remedies building being devoted to the purpose. They are making a very fine article and putting it up handsomely in all the usual sizes from small cones to quart bottles. There is no reason why they should not make this an important industry, as the product can be sold by People's Remedy agents."

The *History of the Republican Party* (1898) contains a series of biographical sketches. The one of **Fenner** notes that in addition to his People's Remedies, "He also manufactures a line of flavoring extracts and conducts a grape and miscellaneous farming enterprise on a large scale. He is furthermore Secretary and Treasurer of the Dunkirk and Fredonia Electric Railroad Company, in which he holds a controlling interest, and which, in addition to an Electric Street Railway between Dunkirk and Fredonia, carries on the business of Commercial Electric Lighting, Power and Steam Heating. It also owns and operates the Gas Plant of the village of Fredonia. Dr. **Fenner** has actively managed the affairs of this [Street Railroad] corporation since 1880, receiving it as simply a somewhat dilapidated horse line, and bringing it up to its present high state of development. He is

also proprietor of the large printing establishment of the Globe Printing Company of Fredonia." So to his many other enterprises we must add proprietor of a large job printing business. (The 1898 biographical sketch is also the first reference to **Fenner** having added flavoring extracts to his offerings. That operation was overseen by **Fenner's** former farm Superintendent, Albert **Mau**.) However, to the printing business and flavoring extracts we must add at least some investment in the Felt Collar Pad factory.

The **Howard** Brothers of Fredonia, in addition to their watch factory on East Main Street, had put up some buildings at *24-30 Cleveland Avenue* in May 1881 devoted exclusively to patent medicines, including the Eye-Salve that **Fenner** had begun competing with in 1877. By 1887 the **Howards** had moved the watch factory to Peoria IL and the Eye Salve business to Buffalo. By December 1888 Joseph **Glidden** had purchased the Cleveland Avenue property and opened a Felt Pad factory, making specialized padding for horse collars. It never did well and by 1892, it was gone. In the previous year, there had been a minor exchange with a neighbor to straighten out a property line. The deed of 10 April 1891 shows neighbor Henry **Smith** and the owners of the Felt Pad factory lot making that exchange. Those owners, in 1891, were Chauncey **Abbey**, John A. **Waterhouse**, George **Barker**, Edwin D. **Mixer**, and, of course, Milton M. **Fenner**.

Although he seems to have ranged rather widely in his activities, there is one aspect of his business dealings that always remained the same, his reliance, wherever possible, on relatives and family friends. When he started the People's Remedies in 1872, his young wife served as bookkeeper. It was in 1882, not long after his first wife had died, that he had his brother Wallace move to Fredonia to serve as manager for People's Remedies. Wallace died in August 1892 and in 1893 the position was taken by Frank **Fenner**, an older brother who had been living in Rochester, NY. He was manager at least through 1902, and, according to the 1905 New York State Census, his sister-in-law, Mary L. **Fenner**, Wallace's widow, was the cashier at the Medicine Factory. Frank **Fenner** was later replaced by Howard **Clarke** who had come to Fredonia in 1899, working in the People's Remedies advertising department. However, he did not come as an unknown quantity. Both he and his younger brother Henry had worked for the **Grandin** Brothers in Pennsylvania. Howard, who had been born in Connecticut in 1858, came to Tidioute with his family when he was still very young. His father, David William **Clarke**, was a petroleum producer and a lumber merchant. After his schooling in Tidioute, Howard, in 1872, entered the **Grandin** Brothers' private bank as a bookkeeper until 1880 when he became manager of the **Grandin** Brothers' lumber mill until 1884. So to the other family members and close friends we must add this associate of the first Mrs. **Fenner's** family to the record.

As the busy 1890s passed and the twentieth century arrived, little seemed to have changed. Then on 25 January 1900, a devastating fire broke out on West Main Street that soon destroyed all the Dunkirk & Fredonia Railroad Company's buildings on Center Street, including the power house and the trolleys. The *Censor* reported there was no insurance coverage. However, by 1903, **Fenner** was in sufficient funds to plan renovations to his Medicine Factory and, on 6 April 1903, the Village Trustees gave their

O.K. to his plans. By May the work had begun. Old outbuildings, a one-story shed and a two-story barn behind the main building were taken down and replaced by a three-story addition to the main factory, 40 feet by 80 feet, almost doubling its capacity. The first floor was to house the printing office which would have "a new Kidder printing press of capacity sufficient to turn out the '**Fenner** Almanac' and the '**Fenner** Cook Book' complete and folded at the rate of 20,000 per hour." The issue of 22 July 1903 reported on the new addition which was "to accommodate a new two color perfecting press and bring some of his other heavy machinery to the ground floor."

Then in August he received permission from the Trustees to build a small double house (13-15) on Forest Place. By November it was up and rented to two tenants. Some of this may have been done to guarantee future income for his family. Certainly the next change was towards that end. That was the incorporation of his thirty-two year old People's Remedies as the "M. M. **Fenner** Company" in February 1904 "for the purpose of manufacturing and selling medicines." The incorporators/directors were Mr. and Mrs. **Fenner**, J.L. and E. B. **Grandin**, and H. M. **Clarke**. The **Grandins**, from Tidioute PA, were his first wife's relatives, to whom he had turned for financial assistance several times. **Clarke**, of course, was the **Grandin** associate who had come to work in the advertising department in 1899. On 11 September 1904, **Fenner** drew up his last will and testament which forgave his brother Rufus W. **Fenner** any debts owed, did the same for his father-in-law, John **Bondeson**, assigning such debts to Florence **Fenner**, and gave the remainder of his estate equally to his wife and son. The executors were to be his wife, Jay Livingston **Grandin**, Jr. and local lawyer B. F. **Skinner**.

These were signs of a drastic change coming. The *Dunkirk Herald* of 1 February 1905, in a piece about **Fenner's** patent medicine business mentioned at the end that "Dr. **Fenner** has retired from active business life and his business is cared for by H. M. **Clarke**, who manages his large concern." (Fenner had been ill for most of 1904 with a progressive, wasting disease. His physician was Dr. Vacil D. **Bozovsky** of Dunkirk who had emigrated from Bulgaria in 1887.) On 14 March 1905 Milton Marion **Fenner** died, age 67. The public expressions of loss were extensive. *The Fredonia Censor* devoted most of its front page on 22 March to a full account of the funeral and of Dr. **Fenner's** life and accomplishments. The story's headline was "Death of Dr. Milton M. **Fenner**. Our Foremost and most Valuable Citizen has Passed Away," and the article ended with a summation of all that he had meant to his adopted town: "We feel that Dr. **Fenner's** life here has been of great benefit to Fredonia and we shall not soon see his equal in enterprise, courage, public spirit and business ability. For these reasons his death is generally deplored."

After his father's burial in the family plot in Forest Hill Cemetery, Milton, Jr., who had been studying at St. Paul's School in New Hampshire, returned to finish his schooling. (He had gone to the local Fredonia school and studied for a time at the Fredonia Normal School, although never graduating. There is photograph in *The Buffalo Enquirer* of 22 December 1905 showing him with the Normal School football team as a left halfback) After completing his studies at St. Paul's, he entered the U.S. Naval Academy, graduating in 1911. He served in the Navy for a period after that. Mrs. **Fenner** continued to live at

the family home, 178 Central Avenue, with her parents next door at 172 Central Avenue. The M. M. **Fenner** Co., with H. M. **Clarke** now as President and Manager, continued selling its patent medicines from the factory on Barker and Center streets until the business was sold to the S. C. **Wells** Co. of LeRoy, NY around 1915. The medicines continued to be offered with the **Fenner** label. Part of the former medicine factory buildings were taken over by Albert **Mau** who specialized in the flavorings that had been part of **Fenner's** operation since 1898. That continued until 1925, at which point both buildings were made into dwellings. In 1942 they were taken down, with only 2 *West Main Street* left as a reminder of where it had all begun, seventy years earlier, in 1872.