

L. A. Wharton Notes Changes in 50 Years of Pharmacy

The Daily Times News (Burlington, North Carolina)

By Don Metclaf on May 4, 1959

The most notable changes that has taken place in the pharmacy field in the past 50 years has been a tremendous increase in the number of drugs available and a resulting decrease in disease.

That is the opinion of a veteran Gibsonville druggist, Lee A. Wharton, who recently was honored by the North Carolina Pharmaceutical Association for having more than 50 years of service as a licensed pharmacist.

At the state association's annual meeting in Asheville, he was inducted into the Fifty Plus Club and presented a plaque in recognition of his service.

Mr. Wharton has spent his entire career as a pharmacist of Gibsonville Drug Company, of which he is principle owner.

In addition to serving as the town's only pharmacist, he also often was called upon to substitute for the local doctor in the early days, and he is noted for his aid to young people trying to get ahead in the world. In conjunction with this later activity, Mr. Wharton is affectionately known as "Pappy" by young people of the community.

In speaking of the increase of the number of drugs, the veteran pharmacist points out 90 per cent of the drugs available now were unknown 10 or 12 years ago.



HONORED FOR SERVICE—Lee A. Wharton, veteran Gibsonville druggist, holds the plaque awarded him by the North Carolina Pharmaceutical Association for more than 50 years of service as a pharmacist. He began his career in the pharmacy field in 1906 and became a licensed pharmacist in 1909. (Times-News Photo)

“The drugs that helped to eliminate pneumonia, such as penicillin and other antibiotics, are one of the greatest gifts mankind has ever known,” he states, pointing out that pneumonia used to cause a large number of fatalities, especially among elderly persons.

He cites the development of new drugs in general as “a wonderful thing,” stating that “new medicines have completely revolutionized the health of the nation.”

Mr Wharton says that the increase in the number of drugs has made it necessary for a druggist to keep a much larger inventory; but that has not made filling the prescriptions any harder.

Mr Wharton has made it a point to keep his drug store up to date, both in appearance and in the type of merchandise handled.

In keeping with this aim, he recently designed a system of drawers for holding bottles on the shelves which greatly increases efficiency of a pharmacist and provides better utilization of shelf space.

The drawers, each holding about 20 bottles, have transparent fronts to permit a quick identification of contents. When the pharmacist wants an item behind the front row of bottles, he has only to take out the entire drawer, rather than moving a group of bottles individually.

Mr Wharton also takes pride in his prescription department, and he points out that he has a number of customers from Burlington and Greensboro, who bring prescriptions to his store to be filled.

He attributes his reputation as a pharmacist to the fact that he always has tried to be fair and has not made substitutes in filling prescriptions.

Although he will observe his 71st birthday this month, he still follows a full schedule in the drug store, working 10 to 14 hours a day, six days a week.

During his 50 years in the field, Mr. Wharton has filled more than 700,000 prescriptions. He was the only pharmacist in Gibsonville until last fall, when he secured the services of Mrs. Maryellen Milloway Holt, Burlington pharmacist for one day a week.

It was in the horse-and-buggy days, when the town’s only doctor would be away on calls over a long period of time, that Mr. Wharton often was called upon to substitute for the doctor. His activity in this respect usually consisted of giving first aid to persons who received severe burns or cuts.

Another change that he noted is the tendency of drug stores to carry an increasing number of items not related to the drug field. He points out this trend began after World War I, but that it did not reach major proportions until the period following World War II.

Mr. Wharton is a lifelong resident of this area, and he resides on the family homeplace on Highway 70-A between Gibsonville and Greensboro.

He graduated from Page's School of Pharmacy in Greensboro, which no longer is in operation, and began his service at Gibsonville Drug Company as an apprentice 1906. He became a registered pharmacist in 1909, and he and his partners bought the drug store in 1914. The store has been in the same location since he began working there.

Mr. Wharton is married to the former Lilly Phillips of Gibsonville. They have one son, C. A. Wharton, who works with his father in the drug store, one daughter, Mrs. C. W. Yow of Greensboro, and two grandchildren.

Mr. Wharton is a Mason and a member of the Alamance County and North Carolina Pharmaceutial Associations and of Bethel Presbyterian Church.

Perhaps his service to the community can best be summed up by the inscription which appears on the plaque he was awarded by the state association.

It reads as follows: "In rognization of developed service to pharmacy and to the general welfare of his community for more than fifty years, Lee Alexander Wharton has been selected for special honor and induction into the Fifty Plus Club of the North Carolina Pharmaceutical Association."

Source: [04 May 1959, Page 2 - The Daily Times-News at Newspapers.com](#)