

Moore & Miller Pharmacy

Founded: 1826

Location: Market Street, above Second Street, Vincennes (1842); east side of Main Street between First and Second Streets (1858); 221 Main Street (1875–85); 15 West Third Street (1885); 221 Main Street (1885–)

In 1826 Dr. W. W. Hitt opened a pharmacy to serve the growing population of Vincennes, remaining in business until selling out to J. B. Colwell & Company in 1841. In 1999 it was Indiana's oldest continuously operating pharmacy. Between 1826 and 1835 Hitt was joined in the business by a Mr. Orrick. J. Sawyer took Orrick's place until 1841. Colwell did not last long, however, selling the business to Dr. Joseph Somes in 1842. Somes continued to operate the company for a decade before Charles H. Clark purchased the concern. Clark had apprenticed, both under Somes and others, for fourteen years before becoming the store's proprietor. Clark sold the business to A. M. Andrews in 1859.

The business was generally a continual partnership, or nearly one, between doctors and a pharmacy owner, with many of the pharmacy owners themselves doctors. Hitt, for example, operated the pharmacy, while Sawyer ran the medical practice. In the nineteenth century the store acted almost as a general merchandise mart. As with many businesses at the time, barter was as good as coin. In 1843, for example, Somes received wheat in lieu of cash. The partners took out newspaper advertisements reminding customers of the numerous patent medicines they carried, such as Wilders Western Tonic and Dr. Murphys Coated Vegetable Pills. In the early part of the nineteenth century the pharmacy acted as a wholesale provider to doctors around Vincennes, even shipping the smallpox vaccine embedded in wax.

By the time Charles Clark operated the business, it not only dispensed medicines, but also sold perfumes and nonmedical chemicals. A. M. Andrews sold the business in October 1866 to the partnership of Moore and Merryman. Ruben G. Moore was a medical doctor, but spent most of his time in the pharmacy. Moore was born in Indianapolis in 1837, coming to Vincennes the same year he purchased the pharmacy. Within four years a Mr. Harris took over as a partner to Moore.

In 1875 the business had grown and needed more space. A three-story iron and stone building was erected at 221 Main Street to accommodate both the retail operations of the firm as well as its wholesale and packing segments. Two doctors, Mantle and Fairhurst, had their offices on the second floor, along with the wholesale and packing department. The first floor was used for retail pharmacy space. In addition to various remedies, the partners also had an octagon soda fountain and a perfume counter. A decade later a fire destroyed the top two floors of the building, causing a total of \$15,000 in damages and forcing the partners to move operations, temporarily, to 15 West Third Street. In the 1890s Harris left the firm, and a Mr. Kennedy became a partner.

By the turn of the twentieth century the pharmacy continued to sell medicines, both wholesale and retail, as well as paint, soap, and perfume. Around 1908 the pharmacy changed to Moore and Miller, the designation it retained in 1999. John Miller became the druggist in the partnership, while Moore practiced medicine on the second floor.

Miller continued to run the business into the 1950s. He was hard of hearing and, according to Bob Harmon, the current owner and a stock boy under Miller in the 1940s, anyone in the store would be able to hear the prescribed remedy of the customer's

condition. Miller believed that most people's problems were with their bowels. He would regularly ask if there had been movement recently, sometimes to the distress of customers who knew their neighbors might be within earshot. According to Harmon, Mill was equipped with a wry sense of humor and loved to play practical jokes on both his customers and his employees. He was also distrustful of the banking system, possibly because of problems caused by the Great Depression, and was known to keep money hidden in secret places in the store. Economy was important to Miller. To save money, packages were hand wrapped and tied with cotton string instead of using a costly bag. During Miller's tenure the company continued to engage in some wholesale operations, buying large quantities of chemicals and powders to be mixed as needed or sent out to doctors' offices in the area. Miller sold various cures that he had either created or had been passed down to him, including an athlete's foot ointment.

Harmon bought the store in 1970 and continued to run the pharmacy at its downtown location in 1999. The building in the 1990s not only served as a pharmacy, but also was something of a museum. The look of the 1880s was retained in both the décor and some of the products offered by Harmon. An American flag with forty-five stars, yellowed pictures, and the original journals kept by the owner's predecessors adorned the store. In addition, Harmon and the pharmacist, Joe Marley, continued to create hand lotion, liniment, and athlete's foot cream from old Moore and Miller recipes. The pharmacy made home deliveries into the 1990s and added bulk candy, wine-making items, and gifts and souvenirs to its product list.