

Dr. JW Poland: The Headache Killer!

by Michael George



Dr. J. W. Poland

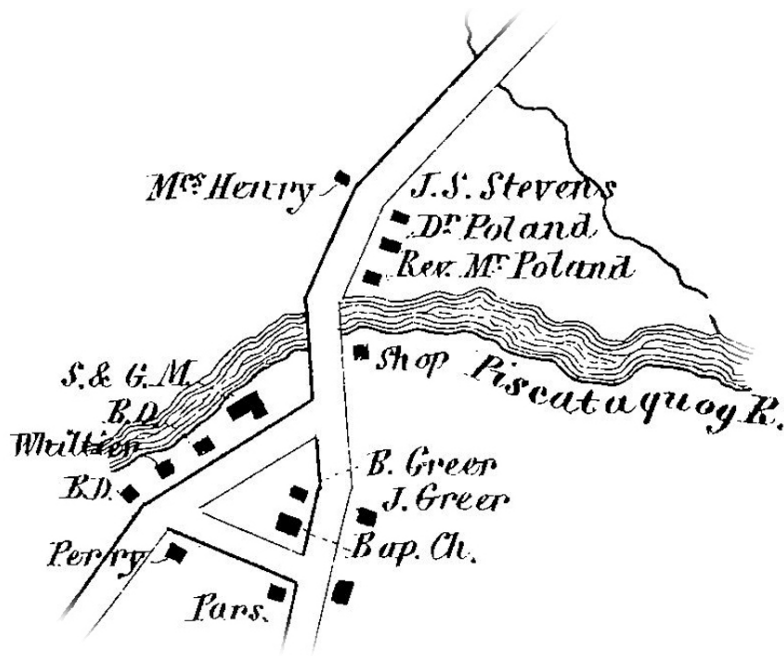
It was June 1981, and I would be finishing the 8th grade in two days! Since I already knew that I passed with a solid "C" average, did I really need the last two days of school? Trout fishing at our hot spot, Nurses Cove, sounded much more appealing! Since my friend Alan wholeheartedly agreed to venture as well, we skipped school and pedaled off on our Huffys!

The cove was located in wooded area behind a couple of old houses. We made our way along the river, eagerly casting away. As I was landing a nice little rainbow trout, I noticed a few shards of glass along the river banking. It was a difficult decision, but I continued reeling in the fish, then looked at the shards! I picked up the largest piece, and it was embossed, "WHITE PINE COMPOUND"... this was the best catch of the day, and my first introduction to Dr. Poland. Twenty years later, I would discover that I was fishing in Dr. Poland's back yard that day!

Reverend, Humor Doctor, Headache Killer... who was Dr. Poland?

James Willey Poland was born in 1808 in Stoneham, MA. After a few college courses, young Mr. Poland decided to pursue a career as an evangelist, and was ordained in 1834. It seems that Poland's faith was put to the test after the passing of his first two wives and a daughter, within a 5

year period. He married his 3rd wife in 1841. Poland continued preaching in Massachusetts, New York, and throughout New Hampshire before settling in Goffstown, NH around 1844, in the home that abuts one of my favorite fishing spots!



Map showing the home and office of Dr. Poland, aka Rev. Poland.

In the early 1850s, Poland's search to cure his own ailments, along with a little entrepreneurial spirit, propelled him down a path of medicine and he began to "spread the good word" of his new remedies and elixirs. With the podium and a captive congregation as his audience, as well as his own publication, *Uncle Jesse's Gazette*, the self-proclaimed "Dr." Poland began to distribute his wares. Poland's first and most successful concoction was his "WHITE PINE COMPOUND" which he developed from tree bark extracts to treat himself. Poland went on to market this product, as well as numerous other products. Other products included Humor Doctor, Cedar Plaster, White Mountain Bitters, Headache Killer, Diarrhea Elixir, Hair Preserver, and Poland's Magic Powders. For business purposes, Poland moved to Melrose MA, before eventually moving back to Goffstown until he passed in 1882.

The Great New England Remedy! White Pine Compound!!

The White Pine Compound originated in the Spring of 1855, as Poland cured himself and other family members with an extract from pine tree bark. Surprisingly, it cured the throat irritations and cough. Within a few years, advertisements claim, "The White Pine Compound is known all over the United States and Canadas as the most valuable medicine exhaust, for throat and lung difficulties, and for kidney complaints!" Poland's advertisements always included testimonials, usually from well known doctors and clergymen. Eventually this quack medicine also seemed to cure diabetes! Yes, the miracle drug of the 1860s!

The earliest bottle form to hold the White Pine Compound was a tombstone shaped bottle with an indented arched panel embossed simply, J. W. POLAND. These bottles were first produced at the glass factory in South Stoddard (olive amber) and the same mold was later used at Lyndeborough (aqua). These bottles are very rare. Small sample bottles embossed, "POLAND" exist as well.

The majority of glass vessels produced are embossed, J.W. POLAND'S / WHITE PINE / COMPOUND in an indented front panel. These bottles are usually in aqua, or occasionally in a light apple green color. I would be very interested to find one in amber! These bottles are almost always smooth based, however, occasionally found with a pontil mark.



Bottles, DR. J. W. POLAND'S (inside arched panel) containing White Pine Compound. The amber one is from South Stoddard, NH and the aqua one is from Lyndeborough Glass Co. These "tombstone" bottles are very rare!



Close-up - DR. J. W. POLAND'S (inside arched panel) in a rich tobacco amber color.



Bottle, DR. J. W. POLAND'S / WHITE PINE / COMPOUND



The graphical White Pine Compound label was also applied on to the tombstone bottles.

Poland's Daily Diaries!

As a young collector, I was intrigued to learn about this local preacher / medicine man. As chance would have it, I had an opportunity to purchase some of the early diaries / manuscripts of Dr. Poland. These fragile documents are like little time capsules, with a handwritten entry every day! I was so excited to look through them, and honed in on the earliest, the 1859 diary. Carefully flipping to the first entry, I read the bold words in pencil, "I have a terrible headache today!" I thought, well that is odd, but I continued to find that these headaches were a very regular occurrence. It is no wonder that one of his remedies was DR. POLAND'S / HEADACHE KILLER! This is a very intriguing bottle! It is oval shaped and boldly embossed, and has an oversized squared collared top. These are usually a light green color, and quite crudely formed. Almost always smooth based, however, I have seen this bottle with a pontil mark.



Bottles, J. W. POLAND'S / HEADACHE KILLER



Bottles, DR. J. W. POLAND'S/HUMOR DOCTOR. This bottle is known in 3 sizes.



Labeled HUMOR DOCTOR bottles. Interesting image of Dr. Poland on the box!

Further excerpts from these diaries (1859, 1863, 1873, 1877, 1882) reveal much of Poland's daily life as well as business ventures and contemporary events. Poland had regular interaction with other merchants and agents such Weeks & Potter, Geo Goodwin, Wheeler & Perkins and George Swett. He also interacted with Charles Barrett (from South Stoddard Glass Factory and Lyndeborough Glass Company) and surprisingly the Whitney Brothers Glass Factory in NJ. An entry recorded on

June 11, 1863 states, "wrote to Whitney Bros. for glass bottles". Until this reading, I had always assumed that the near-by Lyndeborough Glass Company produced ALL of the aqua and light green bottles. I am not surprised since these New Hampshire glass factories also had some ties with the Whitney Brothers.

Poland also writes about the status of the civil war, a few entries include:

May 10th, 1863-
"Richmond has been taken!!"

July 7th, 1863-
"Great victories! Lee is now retreating."



Diaries of Dr. J. W. Poland- 1859, 1863, 1873, 1877, 1882

Along with the diaries, I obtained documents regarding the sales of Dr. Poland's wares and even interests in his patent medicines. These documents detail Poland's sale of interest in the White Pine Compound to Geo Goodwin of Boston. Goodwin was already marketing his *Indian Vegetable And Sarsaparilla Bitters* at the time, along with numerous other medicines. Poland also had numerous agents offering his wares throughout the Northeast including George Swett and The New England Botanic Depot in Boston.

C I R C U L A R .

I have just completed arrangements with a partner, by which *one-half* of my interest in the White Pine Compound is transferred to said Partner. We have appointed GEO. C. GOODWIN & Co., of Boston, (11 Marshall Street), our General Agents for New-England. Our State Agents for New-Hampshire are Tewksbury & Wilson, Manchester. By this appointment of Agencies, I relinquish the wholesaling of it, and none of the White Pine Compound will be commissioned.

The Medicine is in such demand, that Dealers will *buy* it; and to such, the Agents will sell on very liberal terms. Orders will be addressed, for the present, to one or the other of the above-named Agencies.

J. W. POLAND.

Goffstown Centre, N. H., March 1, 1860.

TO DEALERS.

Having discontinued the General Agency for the sale of the White Pine Compound, we send you our Tariff of prices at wholesale. We will deliver in Boston, when desired, without additional expense;

Five Gross at one time, \$30.00 per Gross

One " " " " \$34.00 " "

Half " " " " \$36.00 " "

Less than half Gross, \$ 3.25 " Doz.

Our terms are strictly Cash.

Respectfully,

J. W. POLAND & Co.

May 29, 1863.

\$30 per gross = a little over 20 cents per bottle.

I'll take 5 gross please!

The last diary (1882) includes Poland's final entries before his death. There was a severe drought during this time. On August 23, while bedridden with severe colic spasms, Poland notes, "The trees are dying, corn and beans are spoiled, and there is great pain. Will the Lord not hear the Earth?" Dr. James Willey Poland passed away on September 16, 1882.

Michael George can be contacted at earlyglass@gmail.com.