

Dr. Milton M. Fenner

1837-1905

Milton Fenner was born July 28, 1837, the seventh in a family of nine children. He was born and spent his early years in South Stockton, working on the family farm. Mr. Fenner always aspired to become educated, but the death of his father when he was 13 forced him to stay home to support his mother and siblings.

In 1855 he was off to Allegheny College and eventually received his M.D. from Electric Medical Institute, Cincinnati, Ohio in 1860. Dr. Fenner started a private practice in the Flint, Michigan area. After about a year in that practice, the Civil War began. Dr. Fenner immediately enlisted, and was appointed hospital steward and war correspondent for two Michigan newspapers.

He was quickly promoted in rank due to valorous conduct. During the siege on Fort Pulaski the captain and first lieutenant of his company both resigned, and Dr. Fenner assumed responsibility and led the company during the battle. He was the first lieutenant in the trenches at the fall of Ft. Wagner.

In April 1864, he became Assistant Surgeon of the U.S. Navy and was a staff member of Admiral Dahlgren's on board the Philadelphia the night that Fort Sumter was attacked. Dr. Fenner also served as a first lieutenant under General Sherman.

While on a leave of absence from the navy, Dr. Fenner visited the Jamestown area and found an opening in the medical field. He resigned his post with the Navy and stayed in Jamestown practicing medicine and publishing "The Medical Progress" a monthly publication devoted to medicine and caring for the sick. In 1866 he became the consulting physician for the Chautauqua County Insane Asylum.

In 1869 Dr. Fenner moved to Fredonia and established his famous "Peoples Dispensary of Medicine and Surgery". His practice grew quickly and soon more people were in search of his cures than he could personally see. In 1872 he began to manufacture the Peoples Remedies on a large scale. There were 11 original products and salesmen covering most of the United States to sell them. Fredonia, New York became well known as the home of the Peoples Remedies. All told, at least 31 different remedies were made throughout the years.

The remedies were sought far and wide; some are still in use today. Many stories of the healing powers of the Peoples Remedies have been told and retold. Dr. Fenner was recognized as having a very unique gift of understanding not only in medicine, but how infections worked and pain could be relieved. Because of his brilliance, Dr. Fenner was in great demand as a speaker.

In 1870 the US Government appointed him Examining Surgeon (today known as the Surgeon General) and in 1872 he was elected President of the Eclectic Medical Society of the State of New York. Dr. Fenner was elected Supervisor to the Town of Pomfret twice. He then made a successful bid for the New York State Assembly, winning by a larger majority than had ever been given to a candidate from that district. In 1890 he was appointed Deputy Collector of the Port of New York.

In 1903 he enlarged his factory because of the overwhelming business. He was very active in the local community, supporting many worthy causes including the fire department that bears his name to this day. In 1900 he purchased the Chautauqua County Fair Grounds and made significant improvements to the site.

Dr. Fenner died in March 1905 at the age of 68. The March 22, 1905 edition of the Fredonia Censor included a two-column picture of Dr. Fenner along with headline, "Our Foremost and Most Valuable Citizen Has Passed Away."

The Fenner home on Central Avenue still stands today and has become part of the SUNY Fredonia Campus; being used as administrative offices.