

## Samuel B. Hartman and Peruna

Samuel B. Hartman studied medicine and practiced as a surgeon throughout the country. Once settled in Columbus, Ohio his focus turned to manufacturing Peruna, a medicine for catarrh, an inflammation of the mucous membranes. Many ailments were supposedly symptomatic of catarrh, including problems of the head, throat, lungs, and stomach, la grippe, neuralgia, malaria, and scurvy, just to name a few. In reality it was the 28 percent alcohol content that made it so popular.

As the demand for Peruna grew so did the need to produce the drug at a greater rate. In 1883, Dr. Hartman built a two-block long factory on Rich Street to manufacture the nostrum. In 1898 he built a Surgical Hospital and Sanitarium at 4th St. and Main. To some, this area of town was known as Perunaville. The Sanitarium, which later became a hotel, was needed to house the many patients who came from far and wide to the hospital. Guests were housed in such a grand style it was later known as one of the best hotels in Columbus. The hospital offered all sorts of cures, including Swiss massage movement and Medico electric baths.

When Hartman's fortune grew, he built a large office building and a theater. But one of his grandest accomplishments was a 5000-acre farm south of Columbus along High Street. It was a model farm bound in white board fencing with 26 structures including a hotel. To bring people to the farm and Peruna to the city, he built a streetcar line that ran from Columbus to the farm.

Dr. Hartman is portrayed as a hard working yet affable person. He was frugal, went to bed early, got up early and took a cold bath each day. Ironically, he seldom drank.

Peruna fell upon hard times around 1905. First, the government banned its sale on Indian Reservations due to its alcoholic content. Then, when the Food and Drug Administration came into existence, Hartman was told he needed to sell Peruna as an alcoholic beverage or change the formula. The IRS decreed that anyone who sold it must have a liquor license. In 1907 the formula was reduced to 20 percent alcohol. Some of the devotees to Peruna were not happy and sales were never quite the same.

### Sources

- *History of Ohio* by Emilius Randall, 1912
- *Timeline*, November/December 1995