

Kemp & Lane - Jell-O and Abbot-Downing

by Lynne Belluscio

Orator Woodward, who would eventually buy Jell-O from Pearle Wait and make millions from America's Most Famous Dessert, also owned the O.F. Woodward Medicine Business.

In 1883 he bought the formula for Kemp's Balsam and began manufacturing the patent medicine in three or four rooms over the F.T. Wilcox Store on Main Street. In 1891, he moved his operation further down Main Street to the Kavanaugh block and bought the rights to Lane's Tea, Lane's Cold Tablets, Kemp's Laxatives, Sherman's Head Ache Remedy and Raccoon Corn Plasters.

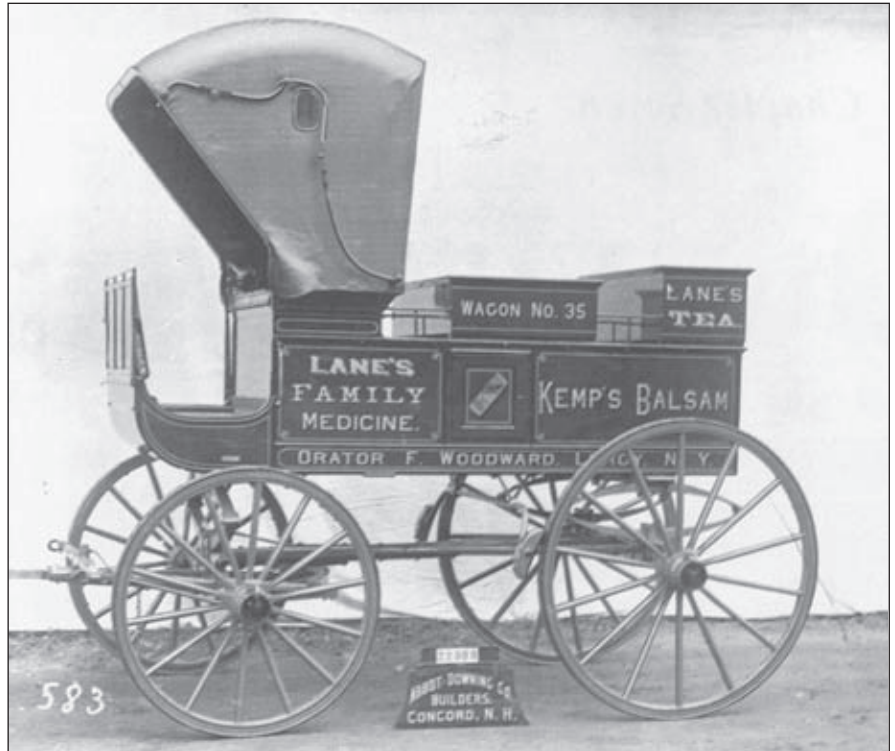
Through shrewd advertising and a hardy corps of traveling salesmen, Woodward became a wealthy businessman in Le Roy. His salesmen traveled extensively and Woodward sent them out on some of the finest horse-drawn wagons manufactured by the Abbot - Downing Coach Company from Concord, New Hampshire.

The Abbot-Downing Company had its beginnings in 1813 and manufactured a wide variety of horse-drawn vehicles. By 1830 they had perfected the "Concord Coach" which became the standard for the industry. After the Civil War the company provided stage coaches for Wells Fargo and the Concord Coach was

shipped to South America and sixty coaches were sold to South Africa. The company was so well known that in New York and Boston they maintained service departments. By 1890, Abbot-Downing in New Hampshire was building nearly 2000 vehicles a year. The Concord shops employed 250 men, while forty men worked in New York City and another fifteen men supervised the lumbering business in Vermont. The main plant utilized 400 tons of iron and steel and half a million feet of lumber.

In the 1880s, when Orator Woodward was buying wagons for his salesmen, Abbot-Downing was utilizing interchangeable parts. Wagons were assembled in New Hampshire and then taken apart and shipped by rail in pieces, which according to their advertising occupied less space and consequently at a lesser price.

One of the Kemp and Lane



wagons is pictured in Charles Fox's book "Working Horses." The photograph above is from the collection of the New Hampshire Historical Society. Since the wagon is number 35, it is assumed that Woodward had quite a fleet of medicine wagons on the road. These specialized wagons were built with compartments, sliding trays and cubbyholes. Every available space had a hinged door. The roof had railings to hold bulky merchandise. Looking

at the pictures of the Kemp and Lane wagons, it is easy to understand that Woodward, once he bought the rights to Jell-O, had some of his old medicine wagons repainted as Jell-O wagons. The Jell-O wagons were replaced with trucks in 1916. An interesting note: in 1916 Abbot-Downing marketed its first Concord Motor Truck, but Jell-O, (Orator Woodward died in 1906) bought their new trucks from the Stewart Motor Company in Buffalo.

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