

tract a wider readership—although it is well researched, well organised, well indexed and pleasantly illustrated—but it will form an important resource for researchers in the history of medicine.

Di Tibbits
University of Melbourne

Pharmacy Families: Henry Francis in Australia 1849–1999. By David & Kathleen E. Sharpe (B. D. Cossar, 1999, xi + 195, hard back, \$30, from Henry Francis Chemist, 286 Lt Bourke St, Melbourne, Vic. 3000, or the Pharmaceutical Society, Vic. branch, 381 Royal Pde, Parkville, Vic. 3052)

What drives the founder of a successful business in the professional sciences? The pursuit of scientific excellence, money, influence, community care, personal fulfilment? For Henry Francis, who spawned a pharmacy chain of twenty-nine branches in Australia including some in Myer stores, a particularly important stimulus was the need to prove his worth in the eyes of important people in his life.

Suffolk-born Henry arrived in Australia in 1852, a 22-year-old with high-level training in pharmacy. An apprenticeship spent working with his pharmacist father, George, and further training in the London firm of Jacob Bell provided the ingredients for advancement. But Henry was not excited by a career in pharmacy.

Against his parents' wishes he left England for far-flung Australia, intent on making his fortune on the goldfields. Within a year of arriving he reluctantly concluded that he was not suited to the gold-digger's life and returned to 'the old business (pharmacy) which I'd hoped to have done with'. After working for a few years in a chemist and druggist store in Swanston Street, Melbourne, Henry helped purchase a pharmacy in thriving Kyneton, an important stop on the road to Sandhurst (Bendigo), north-central Victoria. By the late 1950s he and his brother-in-law owned two pharmacies in Kyneton and another at Woodend, fifteen kilometres closer to Melbourne.

He might have consolidated the business at that point, having amply demonstrated that he had a sound business sense and the

gumption needed to succeed in pharmacy. However, there was now another 'doubting Thomas' in his social circle in the person of Mr William Lavender, a Police Magistrate, Commissioner of Crown Lands, former Superintendent of the Long Point penal settlement at Maria Island, Tasmania, and, most importantly, the father of his girlfriend Grace.

The story goes that Mr Lavender considered Henry to be a mere tradesman in potions and, as such, unworthy of his daughter's hand. And so Henry set his sights on establishing a business in the heart of Melbourne, the acme of professional pharmacy achievement in those days. He took his chances in late 1860, selling up his interests in Kyneton and Woodend and purchasing a going concern in Bourke Street. It proved to be a shrewd move for professional and personal reasons; within a few years he was able to refit the shop and marry Grace.

The story of the Henry Francis chain—continued by son George, nephew Rawson, and then by three generations of the Cossar family—makes interesting reading particularly for those intrigued by the genealogy of entrepreneurial enterprises. But there are times when the minutiae of who purchased what pharmacy when and from whom overwhelms the discussion of developments in the pharmaceutical world, which the book's jacket suggests readers will find within.

This may reflect the very real difficulties faced by authors with little background in important aspects of the subject about which they are writing. The authors, Kathleen and David Sharpe, admit to such problems in the preface and acknowledgments, stating that they 'lacked pharmaceutical knowledge and have been on a steep learning curve during the five years it took to do the job'.

The book is clearly meant to celebrate the Henry Francis chain and those who helped shape it—the members of the Francis and Cossar families, franchisees, apprentices and managers, all of whom are named in the extensive appendices. This adulatory tone extends to the statement that the business has reached its sesquicentenary, a statement repeated in the title of the book and in a chapter heading. It is a claim that relies on an acceptance of the proposition that the Henry Francis business was started by an unrelated pharmacist, Samuel Croad, who, in 1849, opened the Bourke Street pharmacy that Henry Francis purchased in 1860.

Since the Henry Francis business officially celebrated its centenary in 1949, the sesquicentenary claim is disappointing, stretching a white lie a bit further. At least if a bicentennial publication on Henry Francis Chemists ever makes it to market there is an opportunity for someone to disprove the comment attributed to British statesman Arthur Balfour that 'History does not repeat itself. Historians repeat each other'.

Ann Westmore
University of Melbourne