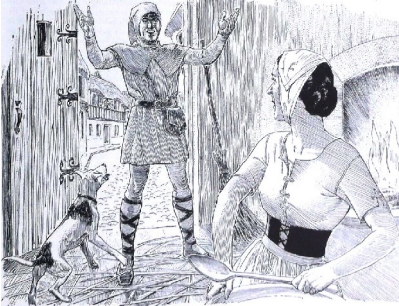


## Sterling Drug, Inc. (XI): Acquisitions: Frederick Stearns Co. & Nyal Co.

THE IMPORTANCE OF IDENTITY

*"I've a new name, Woman  
... I'm Tom TOWNSEND!"*



In this old, old world, surnames are new. They are added names . . . created names . . . mothered, as all inventions are, by necessity! When populations were small and human contacts few, one name was enough. But duplications

in time began to make identification difficult. So Simon became Simon the Fisherman. And as time went on, there came a day when Tom—one of hundreds of Toms in London—returned to his thatched hovel at the very end of town with a new name, Townsend, to set him unmistakably apart from all the others.

From beginnings such as this came our most priceless heritage as individuals—a name to which we are born; an identity which we cherish and guard proudly all through life!

**STERLING DRUG INC.**  
MAKERS OF  
BAYER ASPIRIN . . . PHILLIPS' MILK OF MAGNESIA  
DR. LYON'S TOOTH POWDER . . . MOLLÉ SHAVING CREAM

Born in the people have learned to trust

JANUARY 1944

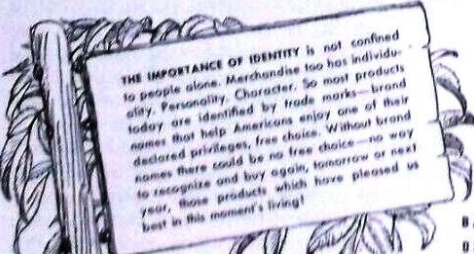
**IN this old, old world, surnames are new. They are added names . . . created names . . . mothered, as all inventions are, by necessity!**

**When populations were small and human contacts few, one name was enough. But duplications**

in time began to make identification difficult. So Simon became Simon the Fisherman. And as time went on, there came a day when Tom—one of hundreds of Toms in London—returned to his thatched hovel at the very end of town with a new name, Townsend, to set him unmistakably apart from all the others.

From beginnings such as this came our most priceless heritage as individuals—a name to which we are born; an identity which we cherish and guard proudly all through life!

**STERLING DRUG INC.**  
MAKERS OF  
BAYER ASPIRIN . . . PHILLIPS' MILK OF MAGNESIA  
DR. LYON'S TOOTH POWDER . . . MOLLÉ SHAVING CREAM



Born in the people have learned to trust

### 1944 Sterling Drug Co. Ad Emphasizing New Name

Sterling Drug, Inc. was a major pharmaceutical company within the United States and throughout the world from the time it received its new name in 1942 until the end of the 1980s. However, as noted in the prior chapter, once the founders of the company were removed in 1941, the hunger to conquer the entire world of pharmaceutical and home service products, already quieted by the economics of the Depression, diminished further. As a major supplier of drugs to the U.S. Armed Forces fighting during World War II, as well as working to foil German trade in South America while building its own trade, as set out in the previous chapter, Sterling continued as a prominent pharmaceutical player after the war and did continue to make notable acquisitions during this period. Since these acquired companies are the

principal focus of this series of articles - which shows how the proverbial “mom and pop” businesses of the Nineteenth Century were vacuumed into a very tiny group of extremely large and powerful organizations that still bear the name “Big Pharma” today - rather than Sterling’s specific day to day business decisions in the mid-Twentieth Century years - it is upon the first of these acquisitions, the Frederick Stearns Co. in 1944, that this article will focus. Subsequent articles will recount the balance of its acquisitions and until its own acquisition led to its ultimate dissolution.

### Frederick Stearns Co. Battleship Revenue Cancels Recognized In BDR2







Essentially managed by a single family for three generations spanning almost ninety years, Frederick Stearns Co. company was a drug manufacturing concern based in Detroit MI whose operations stretched around the world. After a scarring early ethics hiccup by its founder, it adopted a philosophy of marketing a line of non-secret medicines whose contents and uses were both simply and plainly disclosed and described. Its direct approach to treating ailments stood apart from virtually everyone else's in the field, eschewing the hype, secrecy and phony promises of cures that normally surrounded proprietary medicines. Yet that early ethics incident engendered a deep and lasting hatred and distrust among rivals who viewed the founding Stearns' "openness" as an excuse to substitute cheap ingredients for tried and true medicines.




FREDERICK STEARNS.

### **1887 Sketch of Frederick Stearns**

The founder and first Frederick Stearns (1831-1907) fitted perfectly the Horatio Alger paradigm of the Nineteenth Century “rags to riches” story. With his roots firmly established in the early Puritan stock of colonial Massachusetts<sup>1</sup> (as every Nineteenth Century industrial mandarin desired to have), he was described in a contemporary trade magazine biography as a “quiet, shy lad” who grew up in Lockport, NY in Western New York State marveling at the dazzling displays he beheld in the windows of the drug store of George W. Merchant (1807?-1867), the namesake proprietor of Merchant’s Gargling Oil, one of the earliest of the best-selling popular Nineteenth Century proprietary medicines whose own private die proprietary stamps and story are chronicled in Holcombe’s book. Stearns was apprenticed to a druggist in the nearby city Buffalo NY at age fifteen and spent nearly ten years learning the business and attending pharmacy lectures at the University of Buffalo, ultimately becoming a partner in the prominent Buffalo drug store of Amos I. Matthews (1817-1906), before moving on to Detroit, a location he had chosen on an earlier visit, making a storied, almost legendary, crossing on foot of the solidly frozen Detroit River from Windsor, Ont. on New Year’s day 1855.



**HIGBY & STEARNS,**  
WHOLESALE  
**Druggists, and Dispensing Apothecaries !**  
**MANUFACTURERS**  **AND**  
OF **PHARMACEUTICAL**  
**Pure Chemicals, Preparations.**  
Importers and dealers in every variety of Merchandise belonging to a  
legitimate drug trade, and used by the  
**PHYSICIAN, SURGEON, DENTIST AND CHEMIST.**  
No. 162 Jefferson Avenue,  
Between Woodward Ave. and Griswold-St., - - - **DETROIT, MICH.**

We are Agents for  
**PALMER'S PATENT LUG, PHILADELPHIA.**  
Pamphlets describing this invention sent pre-paid on application. See article  
in the May number of this Journal, page 515.

AGENTS FOR J. W. PHELPS' APPARATUS FOR  
**Ruptures, Fractures, Deformities, etc., im-**  
**proved Trusses, Abdominal Supporters,**  
Spring Boots for weak ankles, Club foot Apparatus, complete sets of Splints, etc.

TILDEN'S FLUID AND PILLULAR EXTRACTS IN ANY QUANTITIES.

**MAGNETS ELECTRIC MACHINES,**  
Of all the popular makers. We have one made expressly for us, surpassing  
in power and beauty of finish all others. Single magnet \$10.  
double magnets \$15 each.

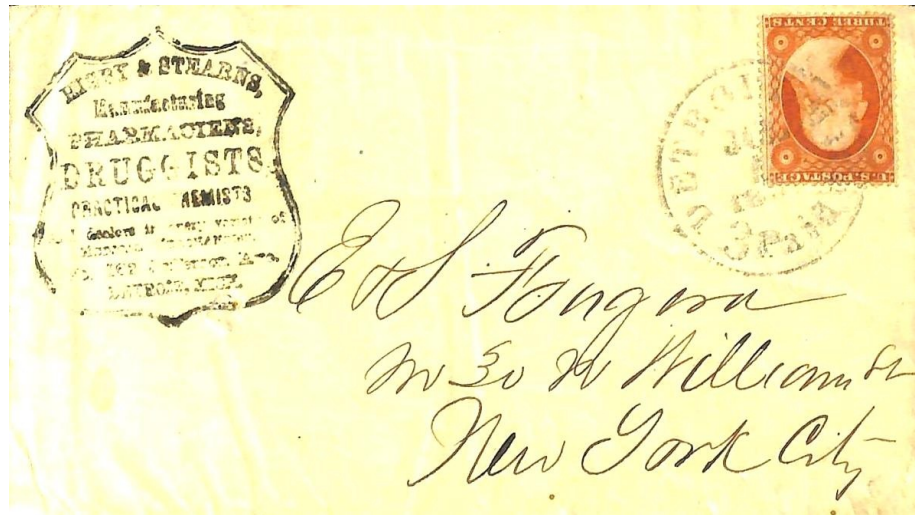
We are continually receiving from his factory,  
**Tiegan's Celebrated Surgical Instruments,**  
including all the novelties of interest to the Surgeon in that line.

We are Agents for ABBEY'S GOLD FOIL, WATT'S PREPARED SPONGE  
GOLD; The Depot for Michigan for  
**Chevallier's Celebrated Dental Instruments.**

Vaccine Virus, from reliable sources, constantly on hand.

WINES AND LIQUORS, FOREIGN AND NATIVE, CONSTANTLY ON HAND  
orders by mail promptly attended to. HIGBY & STEARNS.

**1856 Higby & Stearns Ad**



**1859 Higby & Stearns Cover**

E. & S. FOUGERA, NEW YORK AND BROOKLYN,

General Agents for the United States for

Blancard's Iodide of Iron Pills—Lebel's Savonules of Copaiwa—Laville's Liqueur  
and Pills against the Gout—Vitaline Steck de Stuttgart—Boudault's  
Peppin—Fougera's Dragees of Santonin.

Agents for

GARNIER, LAMOUREUX & CO'S MEDICATED DRAGEES,

And we keep, also, other French articles, not mentioned in the list above.

DISCOUNT—FIVE per CENT for CASH.

N.B.—Country Druggists will please send with their orders a draft on New York, or the money in a registered  
letter; otherwise the express expenses for collecting the money on delivery of the goods, will be to their charge.

### LEBEL'S SAVONULES OF COPAIVA, ETC., ETC.,

E. & S. FOUGERA, New York, Agents for the United States.

COPAIVA deservedly holds the first rank among the remedies used internally for the cure of Gonorrhoea, Gleet,  
Pleur, Ailuro, and its uniformly action on the stomach, causing nauseous eructations and gastric disarrange-  
ments, renders its continued employment often impossible; its nauseous taste begets the most complete repugnance,  
rendering a discontinuance of the medicine imperative.

Lebel's Savonules remove completely, these objectionable concomitants of the crude article. Its elegant  
form and disguise, under a coating of sugar, as a Dragee, neither offends the sight or displeases the pal-  
ate.

The Balm, by its saponification with an alkali, is modified in such a manner as to render its digestion easy and  
its absorption more ready and so longer liable to disturb the digestion or to irritate the mucous membrane of the  
bowels.

Alkalies have been long used in familiar prescriptions to increase the efficacy of this remedy, and that such is  
their action is the generally received opinion of the most eminent Physicians of this and other countries.

Furthermore Lebel's preparation ensures a genuine and reliable article, as an inferior or adulterated Copaiwa  
can not be saponified so as to form a paste to be coated with sugar. Therefore those Savonules so prepared are a  
sure test of the purity of the drug.

Lebel's Savonules have been used in Paris by the most celebrated practitioners in Venereal Diseases.—MM Fuchs  
Emond, Cullerier, Vital de Cuvier, Gilbert, &c., etc. and they have received their highest commendation.

In addition to the savonules of Pure Copaiwa, M. Lebel also prepares

The Savonules of COPAIVA and IRON.

The Savonules of COPAIVA, CUBEBS and RHATANY.

Dose from 8 to 12 Savonules, two or three times a day.

Agents: Higby & Stearns, Pharmacologists, Detroit, Michigan; T. Metcalf & Co., Pharmacologists, Boston,  
Mass; Andrews & Thompson, Pharmacologists, Baltimore, Maryland; Hazard & Co., Pharmacologists, Philadelphia,  
Penn.; Purcell, Ladd & Co., Richmond, Va.; A. J. Matthews, Pharmacist, Buffalo, N. Y.

### BLANCARD'S PILLS OF UNCHANGEABLE IODIDE OF IRON.

The only formula adopted by the French Academy of Medicine. Authorized by the Medical Board of St.  
Petersburgh. Honourable Mentions at the Universal Exhibitions in the cities of New York,  
1853, and Paris, 1855.

EVERY Physician, every work of Medicine, regards the Iodide of Iron as an excellent preparation, which unites  
the properties of both Iodine and Iron. It is especially useful in Chlorotic, Strumous, and Tuberculous Affections,  
in Leucorrhoea, Amenorrhoea, etc.; it strengthens Lymphatic and Debilitated Systems.

Each Pill contains one grain of Iodide of Iron, and is covered with one-fifth of a grain of minutely pulverized  
Iron, and the whole coated with a layer of Balsam of Tolu.

Dose: 2 to 4 Pills a day.

N.B.—Iodide of Iron which is impure, or which has undergone a change, is an uncertain, and sometimes a  
dangerous, remedy, in consequence of the presence of free Iodine; the Physician can always assure himself of the  
purity of Blancard's Pills, by means of the seal of sensitive silver which accompanies them. None are genuine  
which have not this sensitive silver seal attached to the lower part of the cork, a green label bearing the following  
inscription: "Général. Depot to the U. S. at E. & S. FOUGERA'S, New York," and the facsimile of Mr. Blan-  
card, Pharmacie, rue Cassette, 60, à Paris.

GENERAL AGENTS FOR THE UNITED STATES, E. & S. FOUGERA, PHARMACEUTISTS.

No. 30 North Wall Street, New York, and 169 Alliance Street, Brooklyn.

AGENTS: Higby & Stearns, Pharmacologists, Detroit, Mich.; T. Metcalf & Co., Pharmacologists, Boston, Mass.; Andrews & Thompson,  
Pharmacologists, Baltimore, Maryland; Hazard & Co., Philadelphia, Penn.; Purcell, Ladd & Co., Richmond, Va.; A. J. Matthews, Pharmaceu-  
tist, Buffalo, N. Y.

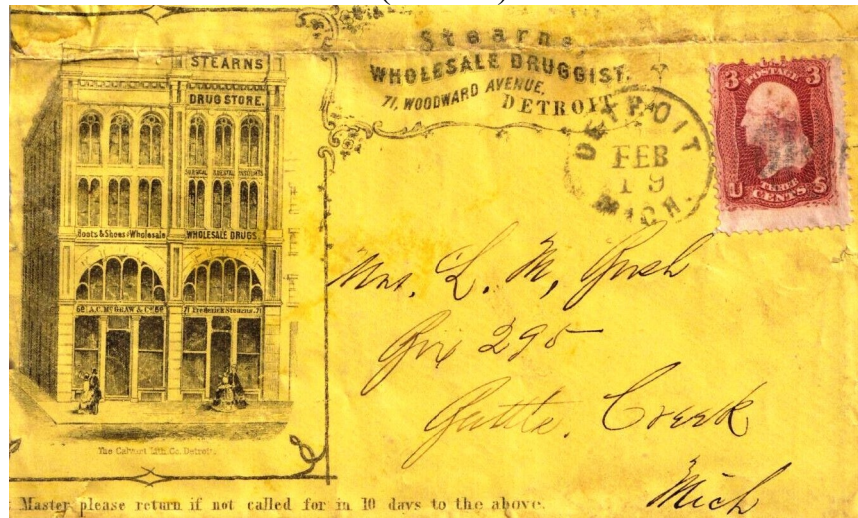
## 1860 E. Fougara London Ad Showing H & S As Detroit MI Agent



## 1863 H & S Token Used In Place of Coins During Civil War

By April, 1855, Stearns had established a retail and wholesale drug business in Detroit with a partner, Lewis E. Higby (1829-?). Stearns had great plans for his operation and moved quickly to implement them. He traveled incessantly to visit his customers, solicit orders and build his reputation. In 1860, for example, he obtained a listing in a London medical journal as a part of an ad taken by E. Fougara of New York City, one of the principal importers of European medicines in the Nineteenth Century,

as Fougere’s agents in Michigan for French pills Fougere imported to the U.S. He also quickly became involved in editing the local medical journals as well as local and national professional associations. His capacities and talents must have been obvious to his contemporaries since his rise was meteoric. By 1867 he was the president of the American Pharmaceutical Association (“APA”).



1865c Stearns Cover

Meanwhile, Stearns had also expanded his business by being appointed as a provisioner for Michigan Union troops during the Civil War. Through this boost to his revenue, he attempted, little by little, to establish a manufacturing business to complement his retail and wholesale trade. The retail store moved twice to larger locations, then Stearns bought Higby’s interest around 1864 and Higby thereafter completely disappears (both as a character in Stearns’ story and, in fact, from the contemporary extant historical record).

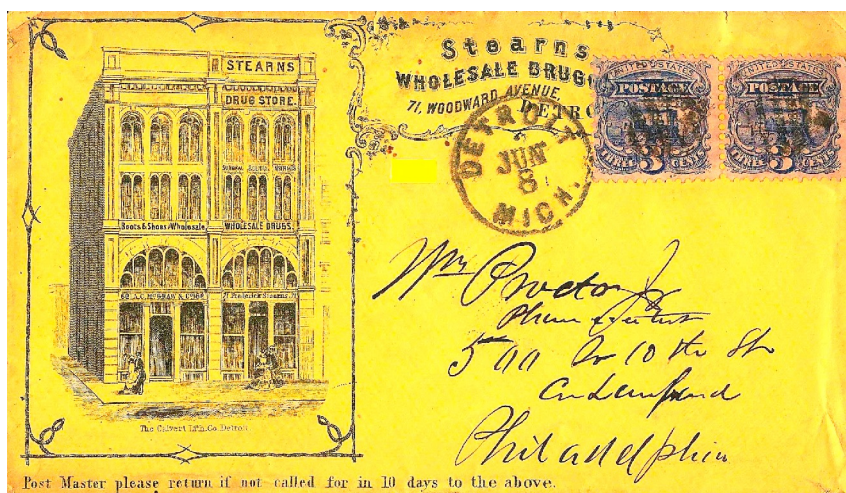


1869 Back Of Cover Ad For Sweet Quinine

Yet Stearns’ entry into the manufacturing business caused a dispute which marked a turning point in his life. In 1868, he marketed a product called “Sweet



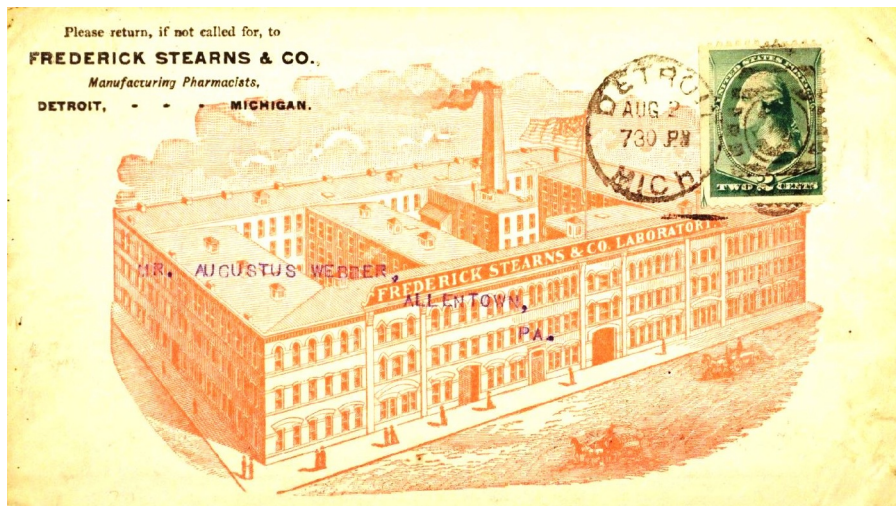
Quinine” as a febricide, or fever reducer. One of his contemporaries investigated the ingredients and demonstrated that rather than containing quinine, it contained a different and cheaper, though, nearly similar alkaloid, cinchonia, normally considered too bitter for contemporary chemical compounders to use. The APA asked Stearns to withdraw the product on the grounds that the product name was a misrepresentation. Stearns argued that since the two substances functioned the same way, and since he had developed a method to render cinchonia as palatable as quinine, there was no actual misrepresentation. The APA disagreed, and upon the motion of Dr. E.R. Squibb (1819-1900) (whose name remains enshrined in the contemporary Big Pharma manufacturer Bristol Myers Squibb), voted by a margin of nearly than 3 to 1 to expel Stearns from the APA.



**1869 Stearns Cover**

Not only did Stearns suffer that diminution of his reputation, but twice in 1871 alone he suffered the common occurrence of drug manufacturers of having his laboratory burn down, on the latter occasion with a loss of four lives. Nevertheless, he persevered in pushing his business in the direction of manufacturing rather than retail, each time rebuilding his factory larger and sounder. He also rebounded from the APA’s drubbing of his good name by announcing to the industry that he would henceforth market a line of goods called “non-secret medicines” which would bear their formulas and their uses on the packaging, explicitly for the purpose of replacing proprietary medicines on pharmacy shelves. By 1876, he had brought them to the industry where they met with great success, and were dubbed the “New Idea.” He also sponsored a news letter by that name within the industry both to trumpet his products and denounce and reveal the secret formulae behind patent medicines. In 1882, he decided to devote his entire business to manufacturing and sold the retail and wholesale trade portions - by then the largest in Michigan - to Henry J. Milburn (1847-1899).

Milburn, who had begun working for Higby & Stearns at age 13 in 1860, had earned Stearns' partnership in 1871. His later career has already been outlined in an earlier chapter of this column in connection with his subsequent partnership with F. F. Ingram (1856-1932). While both Ingram and Milburn achieved success notable enough to merit discussion in these columns, it was Stearns, who by his steadfast determination, established himself as the earliest pharmaceutical manufacturer in Detroit, a masterful achievement because by the end of the Nineteenth Century, Detroit was regarded as the center of American drug production. Beyond jettisoning the retail business, in 1882, Stearns incorporated the manufacturing business with working capital of \$200,000 and in 1887, he transferred active management of his company to his son, Frederick K. Stearns (1854-1924).



1885c Stearns Cover





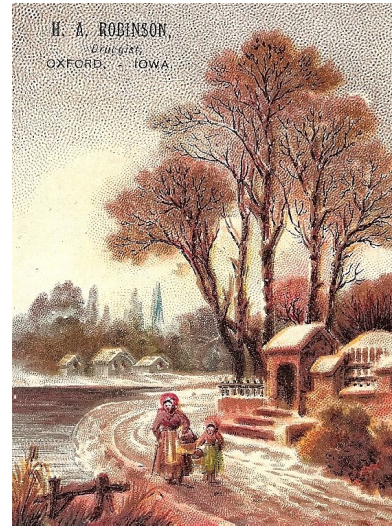
— STEARNS' —  
**NON-SECRET + FAMILY + REMEDIES.**

THE TIME IS RAPIDLY PASSING wherein the public are satisfied with family medicines made after secret recipes, and vended as specifics for ALL diseases. Intelligence and education so freely spread abroad in our land by its public schools and colleges results in a more general diffusion among the people of practical knowledge concerning medicine and its proper use. Hence we find that good prescriptions, prepared in popular forms, at reasonable prices, without any secrecy, and without any claims as absolute specifics, and such as are suitable for most common ailments, appeal to the common sense of the community and meet a want therein hitherto long felt, and as yet but little developed.

STEARNS' NON-SECRET FAMILY MEDICINES are prescriptions representing the most advanced pharmacy, and found to be of best use in treating the diseases most common, and, possibly, least dangerous, concerning which the public itself is best informed, and in the treatment of which the same public is always desirous of doctoring itself, for which it will not seek a physician anyway.

STEARNS' NON-SECRET FAMILY MEDICINES are put up in liberal sizes for the money; the formula after which they are made is printed in plain language on the labels; excellence of material and care of compounding are warranted, and we have no hesitancy in recommending them to our patrons. Ask your Druggist for a Descriptive Circular.

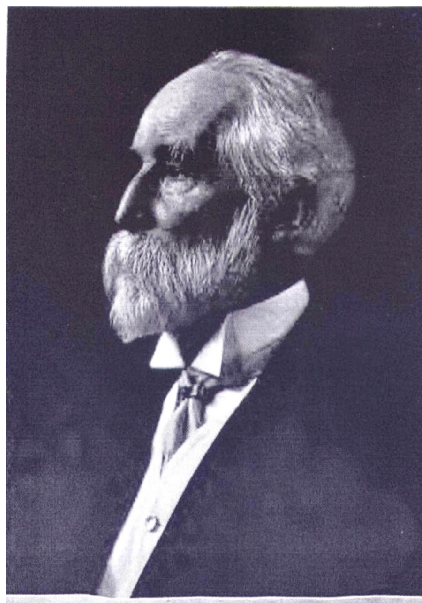
MANUFACTURED BY  
**FREDERICK STEARNS & CO.**  
 DETROIT, MICH., U. S. A.



## 1880s Stearns Trade Cards Advertising Non-Secret Medicines



## 1883 Stearns "New Ideas" Newsletter



FREDERICK STEARNS



In retirement, the elder Stearns filled out his profile as an industrial merchant prince by embarking upon traveling the world to educate himself, which he had never had time to do previously. According to one trade magazine report, he wintered variously in “Florida, California, Mexico and the West Indies.” When he died in Georgia in January, 1907, he was on his way to Egypt yet again. During his travels, he amassed a variety of collections, including coins and stamps, but he gave his three major collections, of oriental pottery, shells and musical instruments, to various Michigan institutions ensuring his reputation as a generous donor to, and patron of, the arts. His collection of shells was so vast that he had published a book on “Marine Mollusks of Japan” which was co-authored by a scholar in the field.



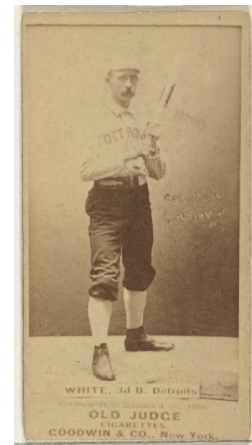
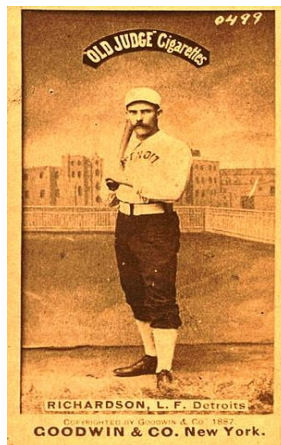
FREDERICK K. STEARNS.

### **1887 Sketch of Frederick K. Stearns**

In 1887, when he became president of his family’s vast and still potentially growing business, Stearns’ son, Frederick Kimball Stearns, was one of those relatively few heirs whose poise and leadership equaled that of his father. He received his middle name, Kimball, from his mother’s maiden name. Born in Buffalo in 1854 and educated at a private school in Detroit, he matriculated at the University of Michigan, but dropped out in his junior year to join the family business. Supposedly, he began as a laboratory hand and worked in every department to learn the business, although his initial title appears to have been Secretary-Treasurer. While juggling the business successfully, he wore many other hats as well.



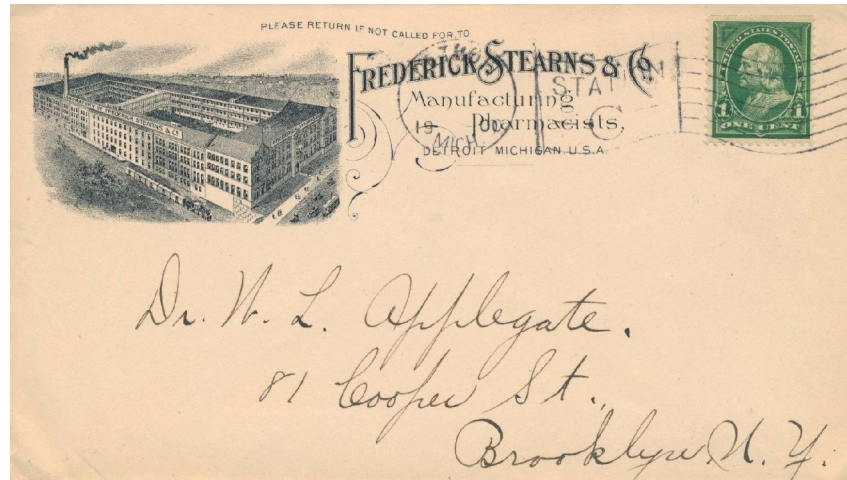
### 1887 Detroit Wolverines



### The “Big Four”: 1B-Dan Brouters, 2B-Hardy Richardson, SS-Jack Rowe, 3B-Deacon White

Early on Frederick K. made quite an impression both in the company and in the city of Detroit. Apparently the Steve Cohen of his day, in 1885, he bought the lackluster Detroit Wolverines baseball club, which had existed in the National League since 1881. In his most decisive move, for \$7,000, he purchased a quartet of infielders, known as the “Big Four” who had been playing together for the Buffalo Bisons, a team suffering financial difficulty. With the infusion of Stearns’ money and the talent it bought, the 1886 Wolverines finished second in the National League and in 1887 won it all. Stearns then challenged the St. Louis Browns, winner of the American League, to a World Series exhibition post season of 15 games played in various cities around the country including St. Louis and Detroit. The Wolverines won by a margin of 10 games to 5, claiming victory by chalking up win number 8 in game 11. No less than

four future Hall of Famers played on the 1887 Wolverines. However, the triumph was short-lived. The following year, due to injuries, the Wolverines finished only fifth in the National League, causing Stearns to disband the team entirely after the season and sell the players to various other teams to recoup his investment. In connection with other more cultural pursuits, Frederick K. also served as the President of the Detroit Athletic Club, the Detroit Musical Society, and the Detroit Orchestral Association, which ultimately morphed into today's Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and was a trustee of the Detroit Museum of Art.



**1900 Stearns Cover**

With all its attempts to create and publicize a line of non-secret medicines to demystify patent medicine nostrums, the Stearns Co. never escaped criticism from competitors for allegedly substituting cheap ingredients in place of effective ones. In 1894, a rival Detroit manufacturer, Parke Davis & Co., (who also cancelled battleship revenue stamps and who also eventually will have its day in this column) published a long critique of Stearns in its own house organ called *Therapeutic Notes*. After repeating at length the tale of Stearns' expulsion from the A. P. A., now twenty-five years in the past, the article went on to state:

Cut off from all pharmaceutical association, branded and dishonored among pharmacists, Stearns & Co. now started out to create a new business, regardless of ethics, of pharmacy, of medicine, or of public welfare. This new inspiration—worthy of the prophet on whom it was bestowed—was the so-called “non-secret business.”



The idea was simply this: By costly and energetic advertising, the patent-medicine people had created a large demand for their products. Stearns & Co. now proceeded to ascertain by analysis or conjecture, more or less accurate, the composition of each patent medicine on the market; imitations, as close as possible in taste, color and appearance, would then be prepared; bottles, labels and wrappers would be made to simulate the original patented article as closely as the law would permit. The labels would be printed or lithographed, with a blank space at the bottom, and in this blank Stearns & Co. printed the name of the purchasing druggist who would thus assume responsibility for the results of each sale to the public.

...

Many druggists objected to urging on the customer "something just as good" when a prominent patent medicine was demanded; patent medicines were an evil, to be sure, but their owners were nevertheless entitled to protection in their property rights. Two wrongs do not make a right; and the harm wrought by a patent-medicine man surely does not justify the theft of his advertising and reputation, flimsy as the latter often may be.

...

The novelty of the non-secret traffic has now worn off; druggists have awakened to the danger and discredit which must result to them; and Stearns & Co. have gained the ill-will of many whom in the past they have used as a tool or catspaw.

The notion of non-secret medicines and "new ideas," praised by admirers for openness and honesty, remained derided by rivals as cheap showmanship and was never forgiven.



### Stearns Head Ache Relief (SHAC) & SHAC Wafer

**Reaping a Profit.**—Thousands of druggists are to-day reaping the profits from the National Advertising Campaign which has for its slogan—"Shac and Headache." Nearly twenty million people read the SHAC advertisement in the popular magazines and you should be ready to supply the demand.

SHAC is a very profitable 25c article and always makes a satisfied customer. For over twenty years it has been the big selling relief for aching heads and the big sales to-day are a testimonial to the efficacy of this popular headache remedy. SHAC has won its way through its own merits, through the indorsement of millions who have used it for headache and through the good salesmanship given it by the retail druggists.

Buy SHAC by the gross and display it in your windows and on your show cases. Co-operate with SHAC national publicity by advertising it in the motion picture theatres and in the newspapers of your town.

### 1914 Stearns Trade Journal Ad For SHAC

Stearns also occasionally drew criticism from the medical profession as well.

One of its significant products was SHAC (Stearns Head Ache Cure). In 1907, the American Medical Association (AMA) issued a warning that SHAC was being foisted on the public through ads placed in New York City subway cars (the most modern means of transportation then only three years old) which suggested that it was a sure cure for headaches. Reminding doctors that [under the new federal law requiring disclosure of ingredients] SHAC's packaging stated that each SHAC wafer contained 4 grains of acetanilid, a potentially heart stopping poison, the AMA chided that users who believed that more of a good thing would help *more* might be in for a tragic surprise. When a new edition of the AMA's *Nostrums & Quackery*, a compilation of articles deriding patent medicines was published fifteen years after the original article, it still contained a cross-reference to that warning lest doctors forget. Over the ensuing years, Stearns gradually reduced the amount of acetanilid in the SHAC wafers until it was eventually supplanted entirely by aspirin.



WAYLAND D. STEARNS.



WILLARD OEHLIGER.



DAVID M. GRAY.



FRED'K SWEET STEARNS.

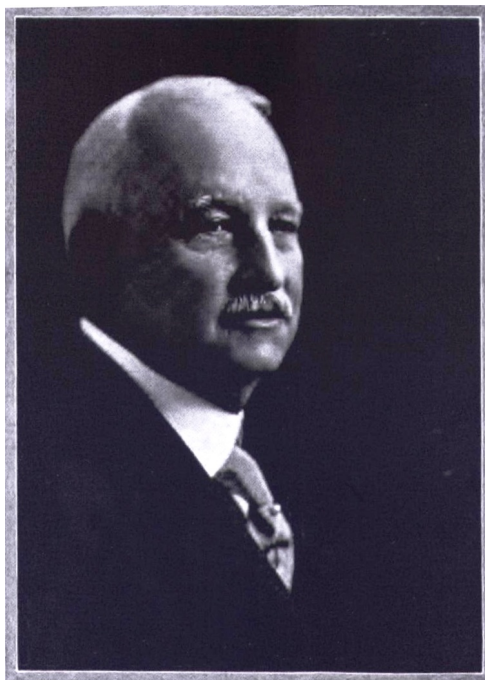
By 1909, Frederick K. had in place a management team in the company that allowed him to focus more on travel and philanthropy as had his father in his later years. It consisted of Wayland D. Stearns (1865-1943), his first cousin, Willard



Ohlinger (1878-1934), David M. Gray (1862-1945) and, his own son Frederick S. Stearns (1882-1951). Wayland Dike Stearns was the son of Frederick's older brother Norman (1823-1872), who had gone into the wool business in New York City as a part of Dike Brothers, his own wife's brothers' firm. Wayland began with Frederick Stearns & Co. in 1884 as an assistant in the manufacturing department and worked his way up to superintendent of the laboratory and eventually to First Vice-President and General Manager. For two years he was Treasurer of the company. Willard Ohlinger was a graduate of the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy who joined the company in 1900 as a chemist in its laboratory and then had risen very quickly through the ranks following in Wayland Stearns' steps. David Gray had begun with the company in 1878 and had gradually risen to the top of the sales department. Frederick Sweet Stearns, like his father and his cousin, received his middle name from his mother's maiden name. He had begun working for the company in 1901, ostensibly following in his father's footsteps by working his way through the various departments and offices. By 1913, he was made Treasurer of the company.



**Stearns Cancels On 1914 U. S. Government Proprietary Revenue Issues**



FREDERICK KIMBALL STEARNS

Frederick K. Stearns became such a traveler, particularly around the U.S., that he was known by the nickname “The Tramp De Luxe.” By 1917, he was building a home in Beverly Hills, CA and moving there permanently, where he became a member of the Board of Directors of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra and the Southwest Museum, the oldest museum in Los Angeles, now part of the Gene Autry Museum.

New York & London Drug Co. Battleship Cancels Recognized in BDR2





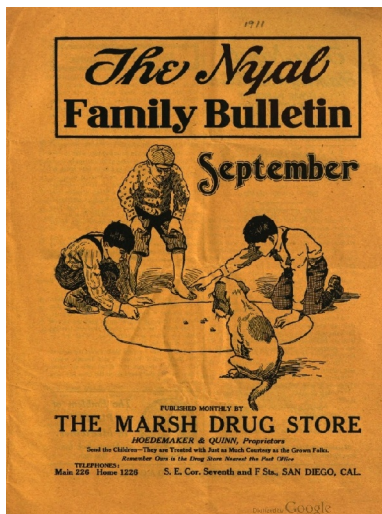
Wayland Stearns, together with Ohliger and Gray, was also instrumental in the formation in 1914 of Nyal Co., as a subsidiary of Frederick Stearns & Co. The idea behind Nyal Co. was to allow the company to again assert a role in the retail end of the pharmaceutical business by creating its own fully internally-supplied chain of drug stores which would compete on an equal footing with Louis Liggett's Rexall group. Liggett approached the opportunity for growth and brand control in the pharmaceutical industry from the retailer's point of view by lining up his retailers first and then creating manufacturing facilities to make his line of Rexall goods. Rexall was always controlled and managed by and for the retailers themselves. Stearns & Co. approached the same circumstances from the opposite pole. It determined to create retail outlets by marketing its own specially created subsidiary brand, Nyal, to a network of retail agents whom it had accumulated over the years. Nyal drew its name from the first letters of New York & London Drug Co. which Stearns created in the 1890s (and which cancelled its own battleship revenue stamps separate and apart from those of Stearns & Co during the Spanish-American War period) to handle goods imported from, and exported to, Europe and secondarily, at least at the beginning, to distribute goods under the Nyal brand.





**New York & London Drug Co. Blood Remedy Bottle and 1913 Chocolate Ad**

By 1909 certain drug stores were beginning to identify themselves as carrying Nyal products, and were also giving away the “Nyal Family Bulletin,” a folksy publication akin to other proprietary medicine companies’ almanacs, and like them, printed by the manufacturer of the proprietary goods, in this case Stearns & Co.’s own New York & London Drug Co., but, as always, bearing the local druggist’s imprint.



**Sept. 1911 Nyal Family Bulletin Cover & 1913 Ad**

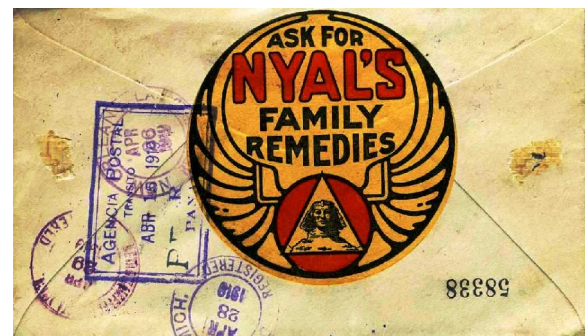
In 1914 Stearns & Co. claimed the number of its retail agents had reached 14,000 (perhaps even larger than the Rexall network of that time). It had been expanding its manufacturing capabilities to meet the increasing demand throughout the period, and determined to launch another subsidiary corporation to handle the retail distribution both for this existing network and to prepare for an even larger anticipated future demand. The company was capitalized at \$2,500,000 and the par value of each share was set at \$10. \$1,675,000 was set aside to be subscribed to by the current shareholders of Stearns “while the balance of \$875,000 will be distributed among the retail drug trade throughout the county,” as one trade magazine heralding the arrival of the new company put it. To make the arrangement seem as flexible as Liggett’s, Stearns & Co. offered representation to retailers on Nyal Co.’s Board of Directors in proportion to the distribution of the stock, which meant that the initial distribution of the twelve proposed Board seats was eight to Stearns and four for the retailers. Rexall aside, in reporting this arrangement, and emphasizing the experience that Stearns & Co. personnel brought to the new company, another trade magazine noted: “In many cooperative enterprises which have been formed it has been the practice to have the cooperative consumers or dealers take out a controlling interest, but this has been a condition of affairs which has usually resulted in disaster.” Stearns took no chances.



**Nyal Co. Cancels on 1914 U. S. Proprietary Revenue Issues**

Whether Nyal was ever as successful as anticipated is hard to gauge from the distance of over 100 years, but its printed cancel on the U.S. 1914 proprietary revenue stamp issue is among the most readily identifiable. Like all patent medicine makers, Nyal had some of its products seized by the government for mis-branding, and Wayland Stearns even had to pay a \$2 fine for Nyal’s own 4 grain acetanilid headache wafers.





### 1918 & 1919 Orders to Stearns From South American Pharmacies

During World War I, Stearns Co. and Nyal flourished and developed their South American market as well. In 1921, Frederick K. relinquished the title of President of the Stearns Co. to Willard Ohliger, but retained control by assuming the newly created position of Chairman of the Board. Ohliger had become First Vice-President and General Manager of the company in 1916 when Wayland Stearns retired. Frederick S. Stearns apparently was brought along more slowly than his father. In 1921, he was named First-President and Treasurer, but assumed the title of Chairman of the Board upon his father's death in 1924.





Underwood & Underwood Studio, N. Y.

FREDERICK S. STEARNS

Frederick Sweet Stearns continued to be in charge either as President or Chairman of the Board, or both, until the sale of the entire company, including Nyal, to Sterling Drug in 1944. He had served as an army captain during World War I and divided his time between Detroit and the Bahamas. Living in Grosse Pointe, MI rather than Beverly Hills, he was active in Detroit social, philanthropic and cultural life. In his obituary, it was noted that in the Bahamas, he often acted as host to the Duke and Duchess of Windsor.

### Stearns & Nyal Products For Sale In The Inter-War Period

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST


**SERVICE NYAL DRUG STORE**

**DRUG STORES Pledged**

QUALITY . . . . FAIR PRICE . . . . FAIR DEALING

1929 Nyal Ad

**I CORRECT ACIDITY**



**Antacid Powder**

Health, comfort and good manners demand that you correct gas-forming conditions, sour stomach, belching and flatulence. Nyal ANTACID Powder does the job quickly.

Spring days bring diet changes. We start reaching out for fresh strawberries, some more green than ripe. Here Antacid steps into the picture as a corrective. Liberty, American Magazine and Woman's World tell the Antacid story to millions this month. You tell it through your windows . . . over your counters. Watch sales increase and profits grow.

I'll be in to see you on or about—

TWO SIZES 50c - \$1.00

YOUR NYAL SALESMAN

**I SOOTHE SORENESS**



**NYALGESIC—**  
for those Spring Aches!

Pain stops—Stiffened muscles relax—Soreness goes away—Just a few drops of NYALGESIC does it and there is no greasiness nor stain.


In the March Woman's World . . . in the March American Magazine . . . in the March 21st issue of Liberty — Nyalgesic again tells its soothing, pain-relieving story to over 21,000,000 potential buyers. Keep Nyalgesic to the front—of your window, of your sales counter, of your cash register.

I'll be in to see you on or about

TWO SIZES 50c - \$1.00

YOUR NYAL SALESMAN

**I STOP BURPS**



Somebody said, "WHAT'S A BURP?"

Nyal is telling over 2,500,000 Liberty readers this month what causes burps and belching and furthermore—WHAT RELIEVES 'EM! Keep a counter and window display busy on Nyal Antacid Powder this month.

You can quickly counteract the acid condition which causes belching, gas, heartburn, and after-meal distress. And you will like the fresh mint flavor of Nyal ANTACID Powder.

Help Liberty help you sell.

I'll be in to see you on or about:

TWO SIZES 50c - \$1.00

Your Nyal Salesman.

**NEEP SWEET**



**NYSEPTOL**  
ANTISEPTIC-MOUTHWASH


Several years ago, an investigation brought out the fact that only four out of ten people use a tooth brush. Probably less than half of that number use a daily mouth wash or antiseptic—and that's in these enlightened United States! What an untouched market for NYSEPTOL—what a swell sales talk you could work up—and what a volume you could do on this profitable Nyal product!

I'll be in to see you on or about

TWO SIZES 50c - \$1.00

YOUR NYAL SALESMAN

**TIS LOVELINESS THAT MEN ADORE**



**AGNES SOREL**

This gorgeous blond is working for you . . . and me! She's telling the women readers of Liberty that your store is "headquarters" for Agnes Sorel—the new exclusive Nyal Beauty Treatment line. Agnes Sorel advertisements are running every week in Liberty during May. In June . . . it's PAR. I'll be in to see you on or about

Hold fast the loveliness of your youth with these six Agnes Sorel beauty-renewing preparations. For application directions and facts on preparation of the right care to give the skin. From France, the land of elegant women, comes this complete treatment. Make it yours for beauty's sake.

Agnes Sorel Skin Lotion  
Agnes Sorel Face Powder  
Agnes Sorel Facial Antiseptic  
Agnes Sorel Cream  
Agnes Sorel Cleansing Cream  
Agnes Sorel Foundation Cream  
Agnes Sorel Shampoo  
Agnes Sorel Hairdressing Cream

NYAL

**Postcard Product Offerings to Nyal Retailers**





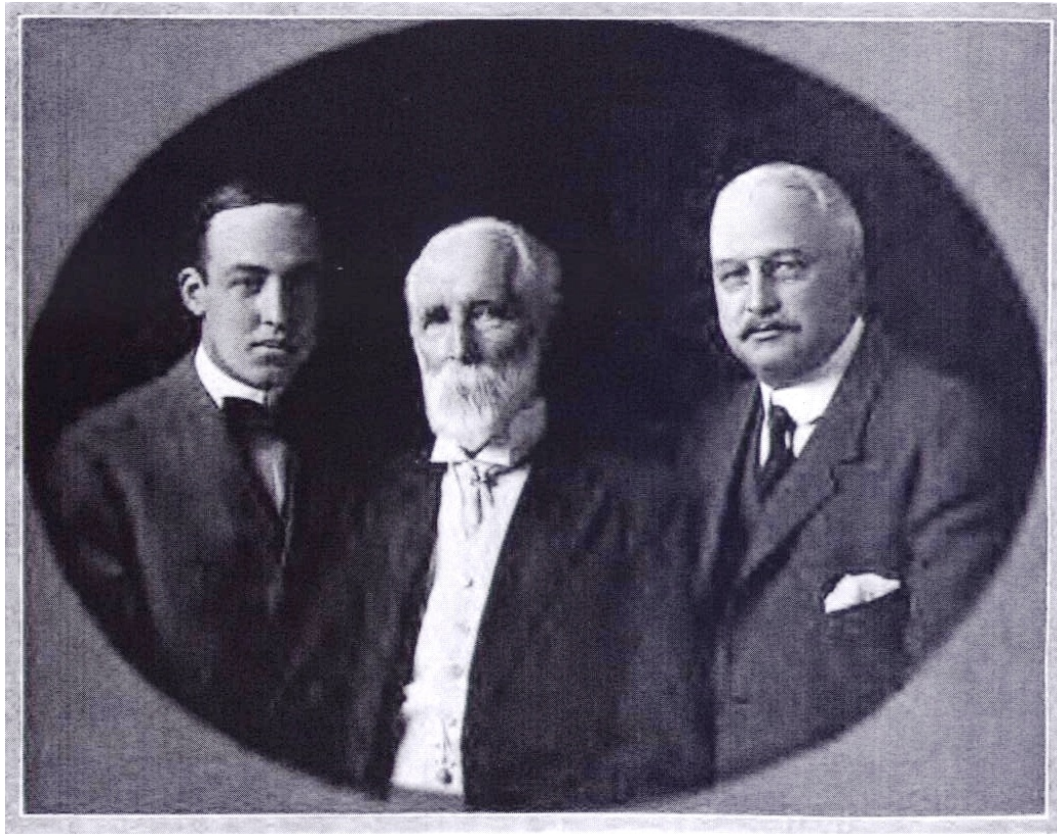


1940s Era Postcard of Nyal Drug Store in Carolina Beach, NC

Curiously - possibly because it had been burned by its association with United Drug Co. during the Drug, Inc. era and/or having found that servicing a retail empire was different than manufacturing goods for others to sell - Sterling did not own Nyal Co. for very long. Very early in 1947, it re-sold Nyal to the Heyden Chemical Co.,



itself a company created, as Sterling Drug's Bayer Aspirin operations had been, to hold German assets seized by the United States government during World War I. As with Rexall drug stores, there are still a handful of drug stores operating today that still identify as Nyal drug stores, but both the Rexall and Nyal names are identified much more closely with the Twentieth Century than the present era.



FREDERICK SWEET STEARNS

FREDERICK STEARNS

FREDERICK KIMBALL STEARNS



**Stearns Factory Building 1910c & Modern View**



**Modern View of Frederick K. Stearns House**

As well as being leaders in Detroit society, arts and philanthropy, the Stearns family left a lasting mark upon the architecture of Detroit. The Stearns factory building was converted to condominiums in 1989 and Frederick K.'s Detroit house has recently been entirely refurbished and is now maintained as an "historic inn."

1. In the 1901 compilation of the Stearns family history, *Genealogy and Memoirs of Isaac Stearns and his Descendants*, published in 1901 by Mrs. Avis Stearns Van Wagenen, Secretary-Treasurer of the New York State Association of Stearns Families to expand upon and supplant an earlier 1855 family history compilation, Frederick Stearns was listed as #1597, an off-spring of the sixth generation of his family, and profiled as #3266, a member of the seventh generation

© Malcolm A. Goldstein 2023