



Robert H. Carter III. (1847-1908) was the first African American to practice pharmacy in Massachusetts after graduating from the Commonwealth in 1886, was born in New Bedford on Jan. 12, 1847. He was the second of three children of Sarah (Taylor) Carter and Robert H. Carter Sr, free slaves from Virginia who eventually moved to New Bedford, MA to improve their lives in 1846. Robert H. Carter later married Parthenia M. Harris, a 20-year-old hairdresser from Norfolk, VA in July of 1869 and eventually had six children.

Robert H. Carter was one of the 10 African Americans to enroll at New Bedford High School. He was also employed by New Bedford pharmacist William P. S. Cadwell as a drugstore delivery boy. While shoveling snow one winter afternoon in front of Cadwell's Drugstore, he found a wallet containing \$400 which was considered a large sum of money in those days. Instead of keeping the cash and remaining silent about the money, he turned the wallet over to his employer. His boss knew the wallet's owner, George Howland Jr., the first president of the New Bedford Five Cents Savings Bank and returned it to him.

In appreciation for his honesty, Mr. Cadwell rewarded him with a two-year apprenticeship in his pharmacy and paid him \$4.00 a week for the last 12 months. Robert H. Carter worked very hard and studied textbook on the compounding of medicines and mastered his trade by the age of 20. He was later employed by E. H. Chisholm as a pharmacist in 1873 after working for Mr. Cadwell.

Robert H. Carter opened his first drugstore in 1876 and later declared to give his "personal attention to the compounding of physicians' prescriptions." He assured potential customers, "All medicines dispensed can be relied upon, both for quality and the accuracy with which they are prepared." Carter added, "With close application to my business and a careful interest to the wants of my customers, I shall strive to gain for my store a first-class reputation. A share of the public patronage is respectfully solicited." He maintained a notebook or "formulary" with about 119 of his handwritten entries for compounding medicines, potions, insect and animal poisons, and various household substances. He went on to own several drugstores in different locations.

After 3 years of experience in pharmacy practice, he went on to obtain board certification in 1885 after the Massachusetts Board of Registry in Pharmacy was established without the requirement of taking an examination. Consequently, the board certified him as a registered pharmacist on Jan. 5, 1886, making him, the first African American certified pharmacist in Massachusetts. According to the 1880 U.S. Census, there were only 18,697 African Americans in Massachusetts.

Carter was a founding member of the Massachusetts Pharmaceutical Association, as well as a member of the Boston Druggist Association and Booker T. Washington's National Negro Business League. He died from tuberculosis on Jan. 13, 1908 and was buried at Oak Grove Cemetery in New Bedford.

Sources: <https://www.blackfacts.com/fact/first-black-pharmacist>

References:

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http://www.whalingcity.net/picture_robert_carter_III_pharmacist.html