

Coastside Chronicles

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Respiratory ailments have always been with us, and several native plants were used by Indigenous people to combat them.

Connections: Early Medical Practices and Medicinal Plants on the Coastside

—Patricia Strohle

The evolution of medicines and medical practices dates back thousands of years. Historians have documented the use of herbal medicines in India as far back as 3300 BC and the use of saffron in Greece in 1500 BC. Along the way, medical practitioners invented and experimented with all kinds of methods and tools to diagnose and treat every kind of malady or disease.

In this issue of the Chronicles, we explore the medical practices, patent medicines, and native plants that have been used for medicinal purposes here on our San Mateo County Coastside. If you are curious and want a further glimpse into related artifacts and native plants, please visit the Coastside History Museum in downtown Half Moon Bay.

The Promise and Peril of Medicine at the Turn of the 19th Century

—Marc Strohle

If you woke up with a fever and sore throat in today’s world, you would likely go to your doctor, get a prescription, and fill it at a local pharmacy. But what would the residents of Spanishtown, later Half Moon Bay, have done back in the late 1800s?

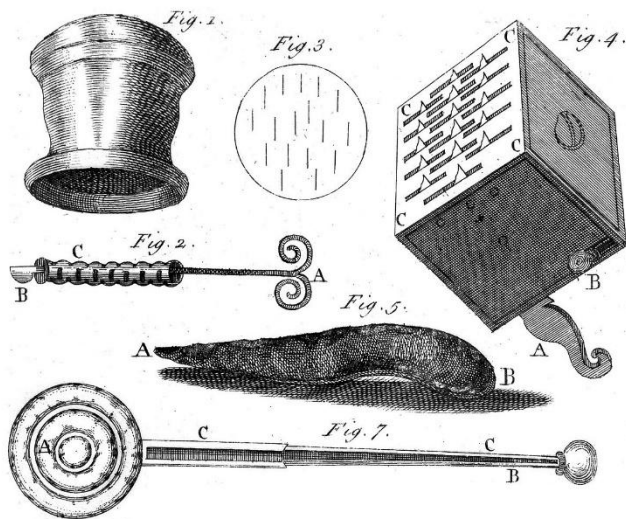
Miracle drugs were still in the distant future and medical practices were unsophisticated, even deadly. If you were lucky to have access to a doctor, they might

have prescribed a mustard plaster on your chest (ground mustard and warm water) or perhaps a tincture made with mercury, such as calomel, if you had gastrointestinal issues.

Often the treatment actually was worse than the disease.

Life for coastal residents in the late 1800s and early 1900s was difficult, even for healthy people. If you suffered from any of the common diseases and afflictions such as pneumonia, diarrhea, influenza, tuberculosis, yellow fever, or scarlet fever, or sustained cuts, wounds, or broken bones, life quickly became precarious as well-trained medical practitioners were few and far between and medical practices were primitive.

A 2000 publication of the American Chemical Society titled *The Pharmaceutical Century: Ten Decades of Drug Discovery*, notes that medical practices from the colonial era onward were based on the ancient Greek concept of the four humors: black and yellow bile, phlegm, and blood. Practices such as bloodletting and purging were used, and medicines were concocted based on folk lore and dubious theories. Often the treatment actually was worse than the disease.



Bloodletting tools - Source Wikimedia

Herbs, animal parts, and toxic substances such as mercury were often mixed with alcohol or water to make tinctures, poultices, or other treatments. Bloodletting involved the removal of up to 12 ounces of the patient’s blood, often several times during a

treatment. As its use gradually declined it was ironically replaced by blood *transfusions* by the 1920s.

In a post for the *Melnick Medical Museum* by Cassie Nespor, she notes that “Medical practice during most of the 19th century was carried out in private homes or occasionally in a private doctor’s office,” and “Doctors were expected to treat everything from toothaches to stomach aches, fevers, and sick livestock.”

Some Coastsiders used the services of a curandera or healer who treated patients in a traditional way, using plants, herbs, ancestral and spiritual practices.

Doctors who practiced on the San Mateo County coast would have traveled by coach or horseback to a patient’s home where examinations included observation of the patient’s condition, use of a stethoscope (invented in 1816) to listen to the chest, lungs, and heart, and possibly an examination of blood or urine. Frighteningly, surgery might also be performed in a patient’s home, but since anesthesia wasn’t widely available it would have been limited in scope by the patient’s pain tolerance. With few antiseptics available, infection was a persistent risk.

An obituary for Dr. H. H. Warburton in the February 10th, 1903, issue of the *San Francisco Call* states that he was one of, if not the first, doctors to serve the Bay Area. The story reflects the life of an early rural doctor noting that he resigned his commission as surgeon at Half Moon Bay in 1847.

The article goes on to say “When Dr. Warburton first came to the Pacific Coast there were only three physicians in California, and he often went as far south as San Luis Obispo. He rode a horse on professional visits all over Contra Costa, San Mateo, and Alameda counties before they were counties, receiving his pay in cattle and horses.” Doctors in rural areas during that time were often paid “in kind” with services, produce or other goods as cash was short for most patients.



Doctor and carriage - Source Equine Heritage Institute
<https://www.equineheritageinstitute.com/blog/horses-and-carriages-in-the-cities>

Interestingly, there were alternatives to traditional doctors and medicine. Some Coastsiders used the services of a curandera or healer who treated patients in a traditional way, using plants, herbs, ancestral and spiritual practices. Maria Guadalupe Briones provided such services at Rancho Miramontes (known also as Rancho San Benito) where she lived with her husband, Juan José Candelario Miramontes. In *Seventy-five Years in California, A History of Events and Life in California* the author, Heath Davis stated in 1889 that “It was this woman who cured me of a malady and saved me from death years since. I was afflicted with the neuralgia in the head from my youth, and I had been on the point of death, but Doña Guadalupe’s simple remedy relieved me of suffering probably to the end of my time.”

Some Coastsiders used the services of a curandera or healer who treated patients in a traditional way, using plants, herbs, ancestral and spiritual practices.

In the latter part of the 19th century, medicine changed significantly as the Civil War was a major instigator for change. Civil War doctors worked in an era before the germ theory of disease was established, and before sterile practices were used. Antisepsis was not yet known, and medicines were lacking in effectiveness.

Despite that, major discoveries were made including the use of quinine for malaria, successful treatment of gangrene, ambulances to transport wounded, specialty hospitals and quarantining, as well as safe use of anesthetics, rudimentary neurosurgery, and even an early form of plastic surgery.

The inception of the industrial revolution inspired further innovation. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) National Library of Medicine has published a timeline of medical developments, and the latter half of the century includes the development of the syringe in 1853, Louis Pasteur’s identification of germs as the cause of diseases (1857), Joseph Lister’s use of antiseptic surgical methods (1867), and the development of vaccines for cholera, anthrax, rabies, typhoid fever, tetanus, diphtheria, and bubonic plague (1879-1897). And last but not least was development of aspirin by Felix Hoffman in 1899.



Union Army surgical kit from 1864 – Source Wikimedia

In that same era, hospitals began to emerge as places for medical treatment and surgery, where the odds for success were much higher.

While hospitals were being established in San Francisco by mid-century, San Mateo County was a bit later, and its first establishment was the San Mateo Poor Farm, which served the unlikely combination of sick people unable to care for themselves, and poor people labeled as vagrants.

Andy Howse, in his essay, *How Did We Take Care of the Poor Then? San Mateo County "Poor Farm" History 1876-1907* notes that the facility was "San Mateo County's first hospital and was important in protecting public health during the epidemics of tuberculosis, bubonic plague, and after the 1906 earthquake, and influenza in 1918."



San Mateo Poor House and Farm - Source: <https://www.facebook.com/SanMateoCountyPoorFarmCemetery/>

Ultimately, Poor Farms became unfashionable, and due to high operating costs had to close. A county hospital replaced the San Mateo Poor House in 1923.

In 1907 Elizabeth Mills Reed spearheaded the establishment of a temporary dispensary with three nurses. It was expanded to six beds in 1908 and eventually grew to the complex of Mills-Peninsula medical centers we know today.

So, as you head to your doctor's office with whatever malady affects you, remember what those early Coastside dwellers would have experienced and thank your lucky stars for the myriad advances that created our modern medical system.

Although, on second thought, it would be nice to revive the quaint practice of doctors making house calls!

Good for What Ails You: 19th Century Patent Medicines

—Jo Fry

What if there was a medicine so powerful and effective that it could cure your all of your illnesses, no matter what they were?

Imagine living a life without pain, no more headaches, constipation, menstrual cramps, stomach issues? What if even fatal diseases, like tuberculosis, could disappear. Would you believe it? Would you *take* it? In the 19th century, such panacea existed. Touted in newspapers with testimonials from reputable citizens, millions of Americans took the cures. Unfortunately, this often ended with disastrous results.

Known at the time as Patent Medicines, we refer now to them as "quack cures," as their mysterious ingredients ranged from ineffective but harmless herbs to addictive drugs, to toxic substances. Several bottles

in the collection of the Coastside History Museum in Half Moon Bay, as well as a few pieces in my personal, locally found collection, attest to the fact that these so-called cures were present along our coast. This fact spurred my interest in the subject.

I wanted to understand how they arose, were so popular when they were so deadly, and how they could be allowed to be sold for so long. So, I started at the beginning.

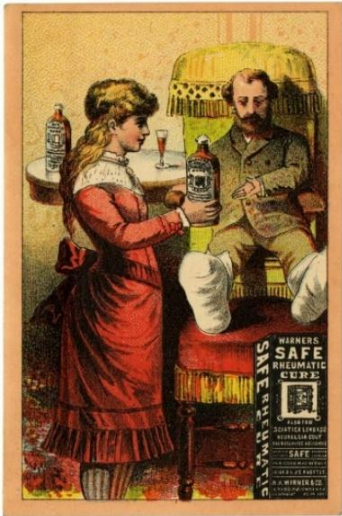


Letters of Patent

Prior to the Industrial Revolution, most people lived in rural areas. Illnesses were often treated at home or by a local physician. Many had access to gardens with herbs and had knowledge of their uses. As populations began to congregate in cities, this began to change.

The name Patent Medicine came from England, derived from letters of patent which were granted by the Crown as early as the late 17th century. These letters enabled makers of medicinal remedies, whose demand was expanding, exclusive rights to their recipes. The letters allowed them to be kept hidden and secret, free from competitors.

As time went by, the blanket-term patent medicine came to be applied to any over-the-counter cure. These medicines were exported to the American colonies, and the term moved across the Atlantic.



In the decades leading up to the Civil War, the variety of medicines proliferated, leading to their “Golden Age” in the late 19th century.

At this time, there was zero regulation on the manufacture of food and drugs. Without government regulation makers were free to place anything in their product.

There was no requirement to have any labeling on goods, and no governance of the marketing and claims that could be made about them. These drugs had no patents, as this would have required them to disclose their ingredients. It was truly the wild west.

Industrialization, Mad Men, and Medicine Shows

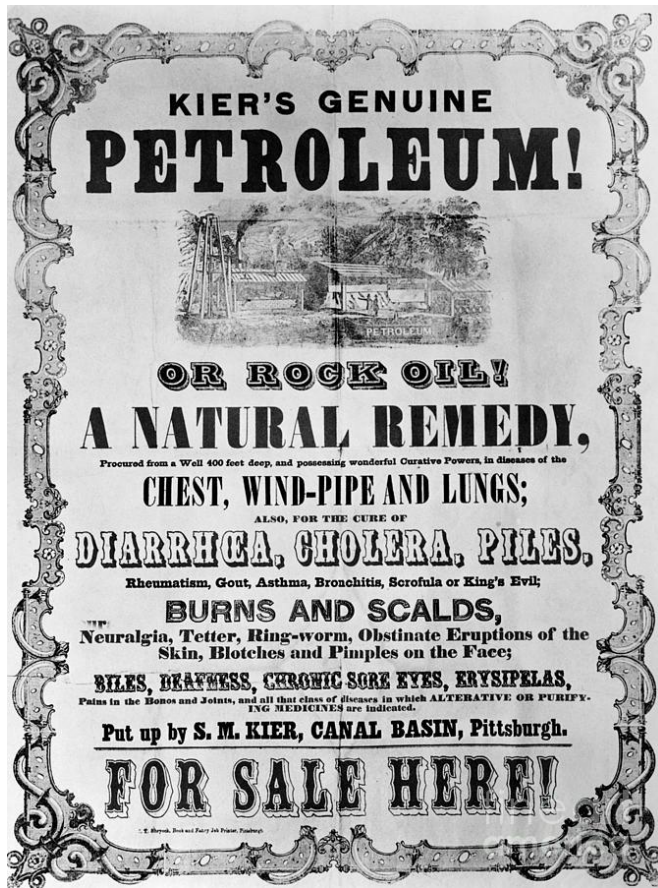
After the war, the country expanded westward. Industrialization and manufacturing boomed. Communication exploded with the invention of the telegraph. As railroads spanned the country, newspapers, magazines, and correspondence could be sent via mail from the East to the expanse of the entire country. For patent medicine manufacturers, this was a boon to their ability to reach new customers, and they took advantage of it.

Colorful trading cards were sent with solicitations through the mail. They could ship promotional trinkets along with free samples. Some medicines developed popular magazines that were 30-40 pages long.

These contained household hints as well as, of course, health advice. Catchy and colorful advertising boasted of exotic ingredients, coupled with expert testimonials that backed up wild claims of effectiveness. Inexpensive, they promised easy health in a bottle, and Americans were eager to imbibe.



This one does it ALL!



As patent medicine companies prospered, their advertising budgets grew. One claimed to spend \$8,000 in a year, which is close to \$250,000 today (1880 to 2025 the value of a dollar is 31 times higher).

Medicine shows were touring acts whose purpose was to tout patent medicines and their “miracle cures.” Typically lasting a few hours they entertained with dancers, comedians, magic, music, trick shooters, sword swallows, mind-readers, ventriloquists and lecturers. The lecturers would hawk the wares, with giveaways of free bottles of cures and prizes, some as valuable as a gold watch! These shows were popular, bringing excitement and spectacle to small towns.

Inexpensive, they promised easy health in a bottle, and Americans were eager to imbibe.

What's Inside

Although some medicines were herbal mixtures, they were claimed to heal conditions that they could not. Many had far more nefarious components in their concoctions.

Powders that claimed to cure catarrh (now known as post-nasal drip) contained cocaine. They were so popular that drug stores in New York reported lunch time surges of workers who would come in to purchase the “cure.”

Kopp's Baby Friend was made in York, PA. It claimed to cure colic, sour stomach, and poor digestion. Marketed for use with infants and young children, it contained as much as 8.5% alcohol, along with morphine.

From a proprietor in San Jose comes a letter sent to Collier's Magazine about a patent medicine called Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup, another cure which was designed for children. He wrote that he has “a good customer with five children, all under ten years of age, who bought a bottle of Winslow's Soothing Syrup after the birth of her last child. She now buys a bottle every third day.” Why? “Because the baby has become habituated to the drug.”

The museum has a bottle of a product called Citrate of Magnesia. This is a laxative which is still sold today, but high or daily doses are toxic to the body and can have serious side effects which can result in death.



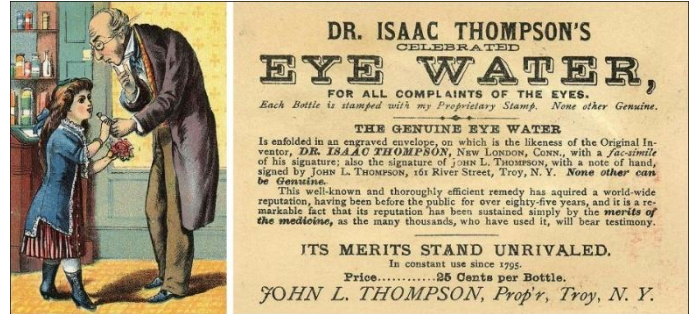


This cheery blue bottle in the museum's collection held Bromo Seltzer. The recommended dose, a heaping teaspoon, would have contained 10 grams of acetanilide. Introduced in 1886 as a fever-reducing drug and aspirin alternative, acetanilide was claimed to treat menstrual cramps, headache, and rheumatism (arthritis). Water soluble, it can be toxic, causing anemia, blood disorders, and even cancer. Bromo Seltzer was

manufactured for many years, with the formula later being changed. Later in its history it was even touted as a hangover cure.

Tuja Occidentalis, also known as the Northern White Cedar, is a tree native to central and eastern Canada and the United States.

The extract oil of the plant can be used for the relief of eczema and psoriasis and can be purchased today. This bottle, which still has its original paper label, also touts it as a cure for warts, cancer, and syphilitic lesions, as well as incontinence.



Doctor Isaac Thompson's Eye Water was produced in Connecticut as far back as 1795. It was made as a treatment for a variety of eye ailments and sold until 1939. It was comprised of zinc sulfate, saffron, camphor, and rose water, but for over 100 years it also contained highly addictive opium.

From 1875 to 1895 the product was advertised via a series of 32 colorful trading cards. This bottle was found near the location of the Amesport Pier and dates to the 1880s. It could have come to our coast via steamship.



Here is an example of one of the 32 trading cards for Thompson's Eye Water.



Pisos Cure for Consumption (tuberculosis) was first marketed towards the end of the Civil War in 1864. It was created by a trio of men described as “a marketer, a medic, and a moneybags.” Arguably the most notorious of the quack cure nostrums (aka false cures) because it played upon the fears of the sick, a vulnerable part of the population, Pisos provided a false hope.

Tuberculosis in the 19th century was a misunderstood, painful wasting disease that was ultimately fatal, often wiping out whole families. It is an infectious disease, caused by bacteria which infects the lungs. The bacteria can be spread through the air by coughs, making it easily contagious. Although now curable, it is in modern times still with us, killing 1.25 million people in 2023. As I write this, there is an outbreak in Kansas that is thought to be caused by the bacteria showing up in raw milk.

Pisos advertised widely, using newspapers, trading cards, mini booklets and almanacs. It was touted as being safe for children, even though some ads used Victorian sex appeal to sell.



The medicine changed formulas throughout the years, but “old analysis gives as the contents of Pisos’s Cure for Consumption alcohol, chloroform, opium, and cannabis indica.”

After the Civil War, veterans returning home came with addictions to the opiates they were given for pain, so opium and morphine were looked down upon. Pisos

adapted and so changed the formula. In fact, this nostrum changed formulas up to five times in its 100-year history, often just keeping ahead of public sentiment and the law. Ultimately, it was marketed as a cure for coughs, with the addictive ingredients removed. The bottle in our museum is one of the older iterations, proudly declaring its use as a consumption cure.



Warner’s Safe Kidney and Liver Cure was created in Rochester New York in 1879 and was sold through 1900. Hulbert Harrington Warner was a wealthy New York safe manufacturer, who was looking for another business opportunity to make more money.

Seeing the popularity of patent medicines, he purchased a formula from a local doctor and turned it into a million-dollar business, selling his quack cure throughout the US as well as internationally. Proud of his original business, he created a distinctive bottle for his medicine, placing the image of a safe on the front in reference to Warner's original business enterprise.

This image also alluded the to the supposed safety of the cure, which promised relief from “Bright’s Disease, Stone in Kidney & Bladder, Inflammation of Kidneys, Bladder & Liver, Catarrh of Bladder, Jaundice, Dropsy, Malaria, Female Weakness, Pain in Back, Convulsions, Rheumatism, Impotency, Heart Disease, Melancholia & Other Disorders caused by Derangement of the Kidneys & Liver.” (Description from an old paper label). Later it was also advertised as curing rheumatism. Although I could not find a list of ingredients, it likely cured nothing on this list.

It (Pisos Cure) was created by a trio of men described as “a marketer, a medic, and a moneybags.”

The bottle in the museum measures 9.5” tall and is a gorgeous shade of amber glass. It was donated in 2023 by a man who was a coastal bottle digger in the 1960s and found this near Pilarcitos Creek.



Why

Why did so many of these medicines contain opiates? The answer is simple: money. Because they are addictive, a person taking the medicine will need more and more to receive the benefit. The chloroform in Pisos, for example, worked to temporarily stop a cough while the morphine provided “a deceitful cheerfulness.” A good patent medicine, in the words of one of the sellers in the late 19th/early 20th century, was that it was a “repeater,” something that would generate a steady stream of income because people needed to have it.

As this was an industry without any regulation or oversight, almost anyone could participate. While some formulas were created by pharmacists, others were made by folks who had no knowledge of medicine at all but were just in it for the quick and easy dollar.

The Snake Oil Salesman

“Snake Oil” is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as a “quack remedy or panacea.” The term has morphed to describe anyone who peddles false product or information and is very negative. However, the origin of snake oil medicine was that it was a true cure.

For the crime of “misbranding... falsely and fraudulently representing it as a remedy for pain” Stanley was fined \$20.

Between 1849 – 1882 180,000 Chinese immigrants came to this country to work on the railroads and in the gold fields. They brought with them elements of their

culture, including medicines such as snake oil. This oil was made from the Chinese Water Snake and was used as a topical rub to treat inflammation. It was an effective relief for arthritis and sore joints after a long day of work, being rich in Omega-3 acids. Immigrants shared their knowledge with Americans that they encountered, and word of the cure soon spread

As this was the heyday of patent medicines, it was not too long until unscrupulous people tried to make a knock-off version. As water snakes are not found in the American West, rattlesnakes would have to do. The king of this fake oil was a man named Clark Stanley and his “Snake Oil Ointment.” Curiously, this ointment was found to not even contain snake!

In 1917 federal regulators seized a shipment and discovered that the ingredients were mineral oil, beef fat, red pepper and turpentine. For the crime of “misbranding... falsely and fraudulently representing it as a remedy for pain” Stanley was fined \$20. From here on, the term became synonymous with fraud.

This Doesn’t Go Unnoticed: “The veritable goblin-realm of fakery”

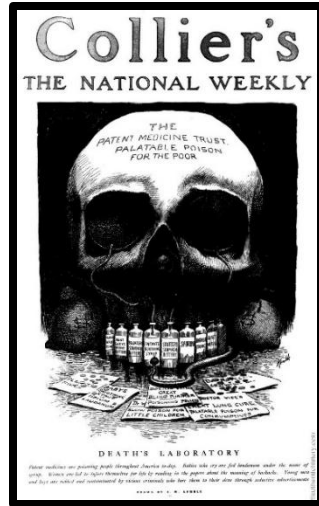
Free samples of medicine were sent via mail and distributed at ferries and railway terminals, so they were ample and easily available. It was reported that a prized collie accidentally devoured three samples of a “headache powder” in Altoona, PA. The poor dog was dead within an hour.

A man wrote to Collier’s Magazine to report about his 19-year-old daughter, who was a shell of her former self after a few years of taking a “female remedy.”

Children died as a result of ingesting poisonous remedies. Citizen’s Groups started to put pressure on local governments. However, when local legislation tried to take action, it was squashed. As we still see today, the money talks. Patent Medicine companies put pressure on the newspapers that they advertised in, forcing contracts that allowed them to pull their lucrative revenue in times of investigation, and

pressuring them to write pieces that spoke against legislation. “Please look at your contract with me and take note that if this law passes you and I must stop doing business, and my contract cease.” (Extract from a speech delivered before the Proprietary Association of America by Frank J. Cheney.)

In 1905-1906, Collier’s Magazine published a series of investigative articles titled “The Great American Fraud” by Samuel Hopkins Adams. He spoke out about “drugs that make people victims.” He tried to track down the writers of the letters of testimony and found deceased names or people who were “not found” in postal records.



He found incidents of bribery to get testimonials from public figures. He also found a sub-industry engaged in letter selling; correspondence to doctors or medicine companies from sick people were able to be purchased by other companies, so they could market to the sick. These were sold for .05 a letter and were screened often by young women who found titillation in the “spicy bits” of the letters, according to Adams. He wrote about the dangers of the ingredients and their effect, about the money that the companies made.

For this article I read all the Collier’s expose and found it well researched and surprisingly modern. It had a powerful impact as well, effectively ending the reign of the patent medicines.

The Aftermath

The Pure Food and Drug Act was the first federal act of regulation on the drug industry and was signed by President Theodore Roosevelt on June 30, 1906. The law required drugs to have a list of ingredients printed on labels and prohibited fake, outlandish claims. The law required listing if alcohol, morphine, heroin,

eucaine (a synthetic form of cocaine), chloroform, cannabis indica, chloralhydrate, acetanilide was in the cure. By 1937 cannabis was no longer allowed in medicines, and a complete list of ingredients was required by 1938. As people understood the poisonous aspect of the now-visible drugs, the patent medicine industry revenue was reduced, and many either went out of business or changed their formulas. Some medicines changed ingredients and were still available until the middle of the 20th century. Many are long forgotten, only to come to life when an old bottle is unearthed.

While we think that we are much more sophisticated now, with information available about everything at our fingertips, people still fall for snake oil salesmen. People still want the easy cure; you only need look at the recent popularity of weight loss drugs to understand that we really are no different from those who came before us. It can be hoped that by learning of the illnesses of the past we can be more wary about what we ingest in the future.

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Nature's Pharmacy

—Ellen Chiri

For millennia the Indigenous people of the fertile marine terrace we call the Coastside tended the land, using many of the techniques we use today. They sowed seeds, transplanted, weeded, thinned, pruned, and harvested.

Their land-management skills encouraged the growth of plants with desirable characteristics for myriad uses including for food, constructing homes and watercraft, weaving baskets, making dyes, making arrows—and for use as medicines.

Headache? The arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*) contains salicylic acid, the original source for aspirin. Indigenous people used decoctions of this plant's leaves, bark, or flowers to reduce pain and fever, as we use aspirin today. Tea made from stems and roots of California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*) treated headaches and stomach aches. Chia (*Salvia columbariae*) seeds were mixed with water was used to reduce fever.

Respiratory ailments have always been with us, and several native plants were used by Indigenous people to combat them. A decoction of California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*) leaves and stems was applied externally to relieve colds, cough, and asthma; tea from the plant treated bronchitis.

California buckwheat tea made from stems and roots was taken for colds and coughs. Gumplant (*Grindelia*) tea relieved respiratory illnesses by easing bronchial passages and clearing mucus.

California sagebrush was also used as a poultice, and California buckwheat was made into a wash for wounds.



Gumplant – *Grindelia*. Photo by Ellen Chiri

Nature's vast pharmacopoeia included remedies for treating skin problems such as wounds and rashes. In addition to being a vital food, chia was used as a poultice—ground chia seeds were placed inside a cloth and applied to wounds. California sagebrush was also used as a poultice, and California buckwheat was made into a wash for wounds.

Yarrow leaves (*Achillea millefolium*) were applied to wounds to reduce inflammation and pain, and to control bleeding. Gumplant (*Grindelia*) flower buds' sticky substance was made into a wash for topical skin problems, notably for poison oak. Today's poison-oak relief product Technu includes *Grindelia* in its formulation.



Yarrow—*Achillea millefolium*.
Photo by Ellen Chiri

Indigenous people used many plants for general health and well-being. They chewed the roots of beach strawberry (*Fragaria chiloensis*) to clean teeth. They crushed soap plant roots (*Chlorogalum pomeridianum*) to mix with water for ... soap! Plants containing vitamin C helped people stay healthy—California rose hips (*Rosa californica*), for example, make a nice zingy tea.

With their high vitamin C content, manzanita berries (*Arctostaphylos*) were a literal lifesaver for the 1769 Spanish expedition of Gaspar de Portolá. Scurvy, a disease caused by vitamin C deficiency, was a serious problem for the soldiers of the expedition as they traveled up from Baja California.



Manzanita berries look like tiny apples. Photo © 2010 Calscape

When they reached what we know today as Waddell Creek some were so ill that the priests administered last rites. Padre Juan Crespí, the expedition’s diarist, noted that they ate some “little apples”—manzanita berries—and were feeling better by the next day.

When the expedition reached Quiroste village near what we know as Año Nuevo, Crespí reported that the people “...brought us large shares of big dark-colored tamales they make from their grass-seeds...”

Collections Corner

— Bill Scholtz, Collections Manager

The Collections Team has been working with HMB high school students for many years. Initially there was only one student at a time. But the word that history can be fun is getting out!

This year we have seven students coming in once a week when other after school activities permit. So far this school year they have logged close to 100 student hours. They enjoy digging through our archives and finding really cool stuff such as yearbooks from the 1930s. The work that the students have done over the last few years

The nutrition helped the sick soldiers recover further and the expedition continued northward, eventually becoming the first Europeans to see San Francisco Bay.

Over the years, explorers and settlers brought foreign plants and plant seeds to the coast. Without the biological controls of their lands of origin, introduced plants began supplanting the native flora that Indigenous peoples depended on, changing their entire way of life.

Many non-native plants are relatively recent arrivals that have become invasive and problematic. Ice plant (*Carpobrotus edulis*), for example, creates a dense mat that deters not only native plants but also native birds and animals. The neon-yellow oxalis (*Oxalis pes-caprae*) spreading across coastal hills and fields, commonly called sour grass because of its oxalic acid content, is crowding out native plants and preventing new natives from gaining a foothold.

Want to see some happy native plants? Visit the History Association’s new native plant garden! Located at 505 Johnston Street in Half Moon Bay, the garden flourishes between the old jail and the Coastside History Museum. The plants showcased in the native plant garden help restore the Coastside’s natural habitat balance, protecting pollinators and nurturing wildlife—and providing beauty!

has been extremely helpful and has made research much easier.

Thank you for helping us preserve Coastside history! We are not just collecting objects—we are collecting the stories behind the objects.

What are we looking for? Old phonebooks are very helpful to us. Our earliest is from 1917 and we have only a few leading up to the mid-1980s. Do you have any old phonebooks you would like to donate? If so, contact us at HMBHAcollections@gmail.com.

Half Moon Bay Hosts a Barbecue for People from All Over the Nation

— Bill Scholtz

In August of 1911, the Fraternal Order of Eagles (F.O.E.) held their national convention in San Francisco as a way of showing support following the 1906 earthquake.

On August 26th, the Saturday after the convention, the Half Moon Bay lodge of F.O.E. invited the delegates and families to Half Moon Bay for a barbecue. Over 2,000 people showed up. A lodge in the F.O.E. is called an aerie, which means a large nest for birds of prey such as eagles. The Half Moon Bay aerie met in the Odd Fellows Hall.

Between 8:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m., special trains with extra cars on the Ocean Shore Railroad left San Francisco for Half Moon Bay. The town was all decorated for the event with red, white, and blue ribbons and eagles. There was a banner across Kelly Avenue which read, "Welcome Eagles." A parade came up Kelly Avenue with a marching band, the HMB aerie, and other HMB groups.

But the highlight of the day was the Spanish barbecue consisting of Roasted Oxen and Lamb, and Spanish Beans, along with bread, pickles, and Californian wines supplied by the California Wine Association.



The barbecue - It is not clear exactly where it was held.

There was more than one and a half tons of beef and seven whole lambs. The barbecue pits were upwind of the guests, filling the air with the roasting meats. Seating was informal with long tables and the meal lasted more than an hour and dozens of servers dressed in white handed out the food.

After lunch there was dancing in a nearby pavilion to music supplied by a local band.



Enterpriser Saloon. It was on the corner of Kelly Avenue and Purissima Street in what is now the Miller Dutra Coastside Funeral Home.

Some of the guests made their way to the ocean where they were greeted by a friendly whale. According to the *San Francisco Call*:

"Many of the visitors wandered down to the water's edge and had their first view and touch of the broad Pacific. An obliging whale, rare in these waters, swam close in shore and wagged his tail in greeting, while the Eagles cried 'Yea, yea,' and sought by flattery to cajole the monster into closer intimacy. Hundreds crowded the beach during the unofficial exercises in the deep. The whale was also seen from one of the early trains returning to San Francisco."



Parade up Kelly Avenue taken from the 2nd floor of the Enterpriser Saloon. Notice the high school finished months before the photo was taken, in the distance on the left.

If you do not believe that Half Moon Bay could welcome and serve over 2,000 guests, just take a look at the panoramic photograph behind the counter in the Half Moon Bay Bakery.

The Fraternal Order of Eagles was formed in Seattle in 1898 for the purpose of philanthropy. The organization still exists and claims credit for establishing Mother's Day. Today the organization funds research on diabetes among other things. The Half Moon Bay aerie was established around 1907 and seems to have been disbanded shortly after 1919.

One of Half Moon Bay's Finest Hours was Almost Lost to History

— Bill Scholtz

There are many photographs of the Fraternal Order of Eagles barbecue, but the subject was lost. Many of the photos used in this article have been published in books with incorrect interpretations. The picture of the Enterprise Saloon is often attributed to a 4th of July celebration. One book refers to the photo of the parade up Kelly Avenue as an 1892 4th of July parade on Main Street. Another book has the date right but does not know the purpose of the parade.



This photo in front of the Odd Fellows Hall was likely taken on the day of the barbecue. Notice the F.O.E. 1797 on the front of the building. 1797 was the aerie number.

It was not until I was trying to find out what the smudge in the upper right of the Enterprise Saloon photo was that the true meaning was discovered. I found a similar photo at the San Mateo County Historical Association that included some of Kelly Avenue in it that showed a banner saying “Welcome Eagles” on it. I searched newspapers of the time for the phrase “Welcome

Eagles” and found it often when the Fraternal Order of Eagles came to town. Then, searching for “Fraternal Order of Eagles” and “Half Moon Bay” I found the barbecue in local and San Francisco newspapers. I remembered that several of our other photos had 8/26/1911 written on the back.

Now, all these pictures that were thought to be unrelated are reconnected.



Bank of Half Moon Bay at the corner of Main and Mill Streets in the Debenedetti Building.

This is why we are putting together the most complete collection of Coastside-related photographs that we can. If you have any old Coastside photos, please let us know at HMBHAcollections@gmail.com. We can scan your photos. You keep the originals and we can give you high-resolution scans that you can share with your family and friends.

President's Message

—Juliette Applewhite, President

There is nothing more fun than seeing firsthand the joy of discovery. It is why many of us are drawn to spend time researching and telling the stories of our Coastside. We are especially excited to have seven HMB High School students working with Bill Scholtz on our research and archives project.

Our recent membership and renewal drive has been very successful. We are excited to now offer Members Only hours at the museum. And we are preparing for Coastside Gives in May.

Do not miss our Spring program! Whiskey on the Beaches! Come Hear Stories of Prohibition

Carmen Blair will present a program on Prohibition on **Thursday, March 13, at the Half Moon Bay Library**, 620 Correas Street. Doors open at 5:30 p.m., and the program starts at 6:00 p.m. sharp.

In the 1930s, mobster Sam Termini called San Mateo County the most corrupt county in the state. With rumrunners landing Canadian whiskey on isolated beaches, moonshiners operating in homes, and a multitude of speakeasies in every Peninsula community, the county earned a reputation as one of the "wettest" in the state during Prohibition.

Carmen will share local Prohibition stories she discovered while researching for the San Mateo County History Museum's temporary exhibit *Broads, Bootleggers and Bookies* in 2011.

Carmen Blair joined the staff of the San Mateo County Historical Association in 1998 and has been the Deputy Director since 2007. Among her responsibilities, she is involved with school programs, public programs for adults and children, exhibit design and publications. She received her B.A. in History from Gustavus Adolphus College and her M.A. in Museum Studies from San Francisco State University.

As always, we welcome volunteers who are interested in being museum docents and writers for the Coastside Chronicles. For more info, email us at Volunteer4History@gmail.com. We also welcome donations of local artifacts, including written anecdotes (tales of the past!) to enhance the appreciation of our history and vibrant community.

Help Preserve Coastside History

The Half Moon Bay History Association is dedicated to bringing together all members of the community, to preserve and share the history of the San Mateo County Coastside, from Montara to Año Nuevo. Our history is the lives and works of all the cultures that made the Coastside what it is today, from the times of the earliest Ohlone villages, to the Spanish and Mexican periods, through the early American period, to modern times.



Let Us Hear from You

Stop by the museum at 505 Johnston Street, Half Moon Bay, CA.

Click [here](#) for our YouTube videos.

Follow us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/HMBHistory/>.

Visit <https://www.halfmoonbayhistory.org/>. Send email to info@halfmoonbayhistory.org.

Send mail to Half Moon Bay History Association, PO Box 248, Half Moon Bay, CA 94019-0248 or call (650) 479-1935.

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