

The exhibit of the Sisters of Notre Dame was highly commended and at the close of the Fair, which lasted six months, a diploma and medal were awarded to fifteen of our houses in Massachusetts, Lowell's parish and day schools being among the favored ones. See XIII., Columbus, Susan Spatella, and

Annals from the Archives

Receipts and Remedies of Long Ago (and perhaps not so long ago)

*Horseford's Acid for a nervous headache,
also [as] a hot foot bath. . .
For Indigestion, eat plenty of ripe tomatoes.
Joints when swollen, if wrapped in cloths wrung out
with ice water, the pain will instantly cease.
Also [for swollen joints] eat plenty of celery
and turnips. . . Pieces of cotton dipped in Carron Oil
will [heal burns] . . .
Ammonia and olive oil for a stiff neck. . .*

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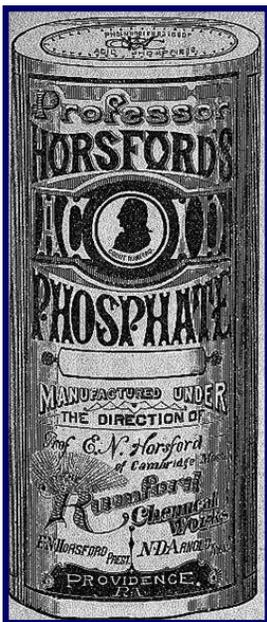
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From the Remedy Book, undated
Boston/Ipswich Archives
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Advertisement for
Horseford's Acid

—Until the mid-20th century, physicians were mostly male, but it was usually the women who took care of the physical needs of those in their household. While the Sisters of Notre Dame might not have been acknowledged as a traditional family, like any family, they relied on one of their own to minister to their needs. These needs were tended to by both the Mistress of Health and the Infirmarian.

In 1893, one of the articles found in the Rule for the Mistress of Health instructed her “to [notice if] anything may be beneficial to the Sisters’ health, or injurious. . .” She was charged with paying heed to the small things, like any mother might, to insure the health of all those in the house. Assisting her in this work was the Infirmarian. It was the Infirmarian who did the work of nursing those who were unwell. The Rule for the Infirmarian also listed 16 responsibilities, among them to keep a book “wherein to copy receipts which are found useful for the relief of corporal pains.”

Such a Receipt or Remedy Book is part of the Archives’ collection. Much of the advice found might seem outdated, but most of the suggestions made sense. Horseford’s Acid, recommended as a remedy for headaches or, oddly enough, a footbath, was a mixture of phosphates of lime, magnesia, potash and iron. It was once prescribed by doctors for everything from headaches to indigestion to exhaustion. Since magnesia was one of its ingredients, its use for indigestion makes sense. And though it wasn’t advertised to soothe aching feet, Epsom salts (magnesium sulfate) resemble it enough that it would probably do wonders.

Other advice found in the tiny 16 page booklet advised one to eat tomatoes for indigestion—the acidic nature of the tomatoes possibly enhancing the digestion process. The suggestion to apply cold compresses to swollen joints is one we still follow today. While we might not think of celery as a super food or as something that could aid swollen joints, it has high amounts of minerals that assist in dilating blood vessels, which might aid in reducing swelling. And turnips were once used by doctors as an anti-inflammatory and was thought to also help reduce swelling.

One of the remedies commonly used to treat burns from 1882 to the early 20th century and now frowned upon was Carron Oil. The oil was a combination of linseed oil and limewater. While it is no longer used for those who have been scalded, linseed oil, which is also known as flaxseed oil, can help prevent scarring. Combining it with lime water [calcium carbonate and calcium oxide stirred into water] was said to soothe pain, no doubt, the reason for its being recommended for those who had been scalded.

And ammonia and olive oil for stiff necks? The ammonia mentioned isn’t the noxious liquid that can cause poisoning but carbonate ammonia, better known as baker’s ammonia in the 19th century. It was commonly used as a leavening agent. Understandably, it’s no longer a recommended treatment today.

Suggestions from the Remedy Book

Colds

Turpin Hydrate
Splendid for all colds

Turpin Hydrate is an expectorant, once common in the treatment of chest congestion.

This remedy is still used by some for the treatment of boils

Boils - Apply flaxseed-meal poultices, as hot as can be borne, until the boil breaks and core comes away.

Night Sweats

- 1 - A cup of Sage Tea 3x a day.
- 2 - A large vessel of cold water placed under bed.

Sage tea is still an herbal remedy used today

Advice for menstrual cramps. The bark of the Viburnum shrub was once prescribed as an anti-spasmodic and is still commonly used as an herbal treatment.

- 3 - Monthly - Viburnum
- 2 teaspoonfuls in a glass of hot water.
- 4 - Black-berry cordial

Sore Throat.

- 1 - A cloth wrung out of cold water and wound around the throat.
- 2 - $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoonful of pure vaseline taken every 2 hrs.
3. Potash Tablets.
- 4 - Sister's Liniment - 10 drop on a teaspoonful of sugar every night is excellent. (See Liniments for Receipt.)

Potash Tablets were prescribed from the 1860s to the early 20th century