IN THERE A DOCTOR IN THE AREA?

By the middle of the 19th century the patent medicine craze was in full bloom. The inadequacy of medical training and the lack of confidence in that training led many to self-prescribe for their ailments.

As more people were able to read they were more aware of the symptoms which Dr. Sage's Catarrh Remedy would cure. The hypochondriac of today is not new. The local physician usually had little time to spend catering to those who convinced themselves they were ill. These patients provided fertile ground for the proprietors of Townsend's Sarsaparilla, Dr. Adam's Hart Cure, Dr. John Hooper's Female Pills, etc. As the pioneer moved west these curarellies were fetched along. Why call on Dr. Bingham when Roadway's Ready Relief was in the cupboard? Sour stomach, foul breath, indigestion, colic, dyspepsia, all, and more, were guaranteed to be cured by Dr. M. A. Simon's Liver Medicine.

Altho' the female settlers often worked beside the male in the clearing of land for a home and crops (as victims of hot flashes, prolapsed uterus, irregular and painful menstruation, ulceration of the womb, headaches, etc.) that gender was usually considered to be delicate. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound which included 10% alcohol which made it "Pleasant to the taste", was strongly recommended as efficacious and as a good help in pregnancy and relieving pain during labor." (It is now strongly recommended that pregnant women eliminate all alcohol to help assure a baby's good health.) "Dry" states often said as much of the compound to men, as to women, to ward off chills, snake bite and stomach trouble.

Hadma Dean's French Female Pills could be taken for "Suppressed Menstruation". Married women who were pregnant were warned that a miscarriage would probably result if the French pills were taken. (Was this another means of birth control?) Of course the many perils to which settlers of both genders were subject - dyspepsia, tuberculosis, typhoid, 'general weakness' and other ailments related to their environment cause anyone to turn to laudanum, alcoholic tonics, morphine, opium and cocaine.

Last the impression is given that the female was the only vulnerable sufferer, we hasten to add that men apparently experienced poor bowel, debility, kidney and liver complaints, exhausted nervous vitality, mental depression, trembling, sleeplessness and constipation to note a few symptoms. With an alcohol content high enough to keep it from freezing, Paline's Celery Compound usually relieved all these symptoms and more. A multitude of miracle workers appeared for those who felt the necessity for one. The male who suffered 'lost manhood' and its accompanying complications, or the lady who wished to become 'more of a pleasure to her husband' were early dupes for the huckster with elixirs, pads, elastic belts, packs, salts and glandular extracts from various animals. One doubts if the public has changed. It seems only the means of advertising has been refined and supplemented to make use of modern commercial capabilities.

(By Marianna Bair. To be continued.)

GENERAL MEETING

The first meeting of the Brighton Area Historical Society for 1991 will be held on January 8 at the Miller School Intergenerational Learning Center on Spencer Road. A potluck will be held at 6:30. The meeting will begin at 7:30.

The program will feature Dave Naveenburg, a Brighton native of many years. He will be speaking on artifacts of Brighton.

Please come and enjoy the program and company. Bring a friend.