

IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE AREA? (Cont.)

In the late 1850s the Grand River Trail between Detroit and Lansing was improved from a narrow pathway barely wide enough for a team, to a plank surfaced road on which a buggy, wagon or stagecoach could travel. Before 1900 the state was involved with "modernizing" the Plank Road with the addition of gravel to replace rotting logs. This allowed the residents of the area the services of doctors who had their practice in Detroit and visited Brighton on a somewhat regular basis.

From the Brighton Argus of January 16, 1899....

A SUCCESSFUL PRACTITIONER

The people of Livingston County have become quite familiar with the name of Dr. W. C. Walker, of Detroit, who makes regular professional visits to Brighton at the Western Hotel (corner of Main and S. First. Bair) and whose success is so well known. The Doctor says nearly all chronic diseases are curable if properly understood and treated. It should be remembered that Dr. Walker has given special study to the cause and cure of all such troubles. Those suffering from any obstinate or longstanding disease should consult him without delay. Hereafter the doctor will visit Brighton at the Western Hotel every fourth Friday. Next date is Friday, January 20. Remember the date. Office hours from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Consultation free.

And what were some of those "obstinate" diseases? The "ague" (or 'ager' as spoken locally), a malarial type of fever was one. Often thought to be caused by 'malarial gases' set free by the plowing of the land, residents were encouraged to plant trees near their homes as the gases were believed to adhere to the leaves. An early rhyme goes "Don't go to Michigan, that land of ills; the word means ague, fever and chills."

Also diptheria, typhoid fever, measles, tetnus, scarlet fever, T.B. - the causes of which were still largely unknown. As a result the cures recommended were abundant in number. For coughs, asthma, bronchitis, whooping cough, croup - everyone had a 'sure' remedy. Female (and male) complaints were advertised to be relieved by the galvanic belt which works 'directly on the nerves'.

How the good Dr. Walker got on in Brighton is not known to this writer. (If someone has information please call.) It is probable he had his own elixirs, extracts and combinations of herbs, roots and drugs, including alcohol, opium and morphine. (By Marieanna Bair. To be continued. Anyone with information regarding the subject matter of these articles is urged to contact her. 229-6402)

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