Minnesota Digital Library
Staff-Curated Online Exhibitions
for DPLA

Carla Urban
Greta Bahnemann
September 30, 2015
Public Library Partnerships Project: Background
Library History Projects
Minnesota Inspiration
Minnesota Inspiration
3-D Objects
Exhibitions

- A History of US Public Libraries
- Activism in the US
- America during the 1918 Influenza Pandemic
- [Image]
Quack Cures and Self-Remedies: Patent Medicine

Throughout the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, Americans were inundated with myriad medicinal treatments collectively known as patent medicine. At a time when doctors and medical clinics were less common, especially in rural areas, patent medicines promised relief from pain and chronic conditions when few other options existed. The term “patent medicine” referred to ingredients that had been granted a government patent; but ironically many purveyors of patent medicine did not register their concoctions with the government. As a result, many competitors offered similar formulas and freely imitated each other’s products.

The story of patent medicine is multi-layered. It is about the phenomenon of Americans self-medicating with opiates, alcohol, and herbal supplements, as well as women’s health and healthcare options. It follows the evolution of advertising in America and the rise of chromolithography printing techniques and newspaper advertisements. Finally, patent medicine reveals dubious scientific knowledge during a time when germ theory was in its infancy.
Quack Cures and Self-Remedies: Patent Medicine

Patent Medicine Story:

• Self-medicating with opiates, alcohol, and herbal supplements
• Women’s Health and Healthcare options
• Patent Medicine and Advertising:
  – Evolution of advertising in America
  – Rise of chromolithography printing techniques
  – Newspaper advertisements
  – Racial Stereotypes in advertising
• Role of American Drugstores
• Evidence of dubious scientific knowledge
Exhibit Themes:

1. Patent Medicine 1860-1920
2. Women’s Health and Household Hints
3. Advertising Methods
4. Animals in Advertising
5. Racial Stereotypes in Advertising
6. Drugstores
7. Made in Minnesota: Patent Medicine on the Prairie
Exhibit Organization:

Exhibit Themes

- Block of exhibit text for each topic
- Up to 4 images associated with each theme
- All images are captioned with credits

North Star Lung and Throat Balsam advertisement. Courtesy of the Hennepin County Library via Minnesota Digital Library.
Use of Quotes from Primary Sources:

“Only a woman can understand a woman’s ills.”
-Lydia Pinkham

“Before the baby came, I was very dizzy and had blind spells. One of the neighbors told me to take your medicine. Since taking it, I am not so nervous and dizzy and I can do my work.”
-Mrs. C. Burton, Chesapeake Beach, Maryland (from “Come into the Kitchen” by Lydia Pinkham)

"When we hear of so many school girls and girls in stores and offices who are so often unfit to perform regular duties because of some derangement peculiar to their sex, may it not be that their mothers have been careless and through neglect failed to get for these daughters the one great remedy for such troubles, Lydia E. Pinkham’s Vegetable Compound?"
-Lydia Pinkham Medical Company, 1920

"The dull days, the restless nights, the disturbances of digestion, the condition known as "out of sorts," are the evidences that health has slowed us down."
-Mark's Household Book of Valuable Information
Content Sources:

Minnesota Digital Library Partners:
• Blue Earth County Historical Society
• East Polk Heritage Center
• Hennepin County Library
• Minnesota Historical Society
• U. of MN Duluth, Northeast Minnesota Historical Center Collections
• Winona County Historical Society

DPLA Partners:
• Boston Public Library via Digital Commonwealth
• Denton Public Library via The Portal to Texas History
• Duke University Libraries via North Carolina Digital Heritage Center
• Georgia State University Libraries Special Collections via Digital Library of Georgia
• Linda Hall Library via Missouri Hub
• University of North Carolina at Greensboro via North Carolina Digital Heritage Center
• UNT Archives via The Portal to Texas History
• Brigham Young University via Mountain West Digital Library
Made in Minnesota

Patent Medicine on the Prairie:

- Watkins Company, Winona, Minnesota
  Partner: Winona County Historical Society

- Marks Medicine Company, Fosston, Minnesota
  Partner: East Polk Heritage Center
Urban Parks in the United States

In 1853, the City of New York set aside hundreds of acres of swampland in the middle of Manhattan, with the idea that this uninhabitable space could serve a practical, public purpose. Today, we know that area as Central Park, one of the most widely visited and celebrated public spaces in the country. The then-unknown park designer who won the bid to design Central Park, Frederick Law Olmsted, would go on to inspire and revolutionize urban park design in the United States. The work of Olmsted and other early parks pioneers, building on older concepts like town squares, would spur the growth of urban parks large and small nationwide.

Benefiting from new innovations in design, these parks serve as community centers and defining features of cities and towns across the country. Urban parks have continually adapted to meet the needs of the publics they serve, evolving, for example, from places to simply enjoy nature into recreation sites that offer activities and equipment. More than just sites for leisure, they also play a broader role in supporting community engagement by providing places for civic participation, enhancing quality of life and property values, and offering safe, healthy, and convenient recreation options.

Credits
This exhibition was created as part of the DPLA’s Public Library Partnerships Project by collaborators from the Minnesota Digital Library. Exhibition Coordinator: Carla Urban.

Citation
Exhibit Organization – Themes:

Exhibit Themes:

1. Frederick Law Olmsted and Central Park
2. Types of Parks
   - Town Squares
   - City & Cultural Parks
   - Neighborhood Parks
   - Pocket Parks
3. Park Design
   - Naturalistic, or...
   - ...Natural?
   - Passive, or...
   - ...Active?
4. Park Features and Facilities
   - Paths & Plantings
   - Structures
   - Recreation Facilities
   - Playgrounds
5. Parks at the Heart of Their Communities
   - Civic Space
   - Community Space
   - Parks as Memorials
Minnesota Park Contributions

- Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
- Washington County Parks Division
- Hennepin County Library
- Duluth Public Library
- Stillwater Public Library
- Winona Historical Society
- Nobles County Historical Society
- New Prague Area Historical Society
- Carleton College
- University of Minnesota, Duluth
- Minnesota Historical Society
- Iron Range Research Center
- Watonwan County Historical Society
- Nicollet County Historical Society
- Blue Earth County Historical Society
Exhibit Workflow Issues:

• Iterative process
• Permissions
• Editorial Process
• Diversity
• External deadlines
Thank You!

Questions? Contact Us:

Carla Urban Dewey
e-mail: dewey002@umn.edu

Greta Bahnemann
e-mail: bahne002@umn.edu