

PUBLIC HEALTH MATTERS

A NEWSLETTER OF THE
PUBLIC HEALTH MUSEUM



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THE MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH CELEBRATES 150 YEARS!

Happy 150th Anniversary to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health!

On May 8th, the Public Health Museum hosted a small celebration in honor of this tremendous milestone and welcomed two very important officials for the occasion — Mary Lou Sudders, Secretary of Health & Human Services for the Commonwealth and Monica Bharel, MD, MPH, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Also in attendance were PHM founding board members, current board members, museum volunteers, Tewksbury Hospital representatives, DPH officials, and a representative from the National Library of Medicine. After speeches were made by President Katherine Domoto, Secretary Sudders, and Commissioner Bharel, attendees were treated to a light lunch and an hour of socializing.



Mary Lou Sudders (left) and Monica Bharel (right) celebrate MDPH 150-year anniversary at the Public Health Museum.

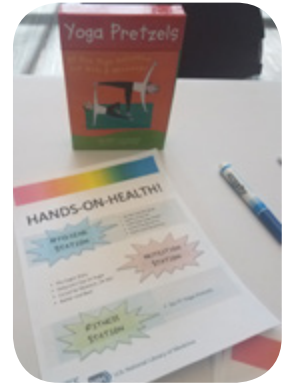
PH MUSEUM CELEBRATES PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK

HANDS-ON-HEALTH!

To kick off Public Health Week, the Public Health Museum brought their message of healthy living habits to the Tewksbury Library. Elementary-age children and their families were treated to stories, demonstrations, hands-on activities, and movement, all tied together by themes of hygiene, nutrition, and exercise. Children learned what germs are, how they spread, and how to stop them from spreading. They were shown healthy food choices and how to best eliminate excess sugars. And lastly, they were able to bend and stretch while performing 'Pretzel Yoga'. Volunteers in attendance included Tonya Urquizo, Nancy Bissell, Sandra Price, Mary Ferguson, and Liz Robinson. And of course, Administrative Assistant Sarah Black coordinated the event and led the yoga sessions.

A special thanks to the National Library of Medicine for sponsoring this event!

Liz Robinson, volunteer



'FEEBLE' STONES: GRAVES OF THE DISABLED AND MENTALLY ILL IN MASSACHUSETTS

On Wednesday, April 4th, the Public Health Museum co-sponsored a lecture with the Tewksbury Public Library for Public Health Week entitled, "Feeble' Stones: Graves of the Disabled and Mentally Ill in Massachusetts." The presenter, Ashlynn Rickord, MTS, discussed the history of the treatment of the mentally ill and disabled populations in Massachusetts, then explored, through photographs, their final resting places. The presentation focused on the cemeteries of two state institutions, the Walter E. Fernald State School and the Tewksbury State Hospital.

Ashlynn Rickord, volunteer & board member

TOBACCO CONTROL: PAST SUCCESS & FUTURE CHALLENGES

The third local public health forum in celebration of Public Health Week was held at the Public Health Museum on Friday, April 5th. This year, the topic was tobacco control. The forum coincided with the presentation of historic tobacco industry posters touting the "benefits" of smoking which were donated to the museum by Dr. David Green, a pulmonologist in Concord, Massachusetts. An expert panel of discussants covered the history of tobacco control efforts in Massachusetts and provided perspectives on current issues related to newer tobacco-based products, namely e-cigarettes, flavored e-cigarettes, and vaping among youth. The panel included:



- Patti Henley, Director of the Massachusetts Tobacco Cessation and Prevention Program
- Gwen Stewart, Executive Director of Tobacco Free Mass.
- Cheryl Sbarra, Senior Legal Counsel at the Massachusetts Association of Health Boards
- Timothy McDonald, Director of Public Health for the Town of Needham

The speakers were able to demonstrate the parallels in Big Tobacco propaganda of the mid-twentieth century with current advertising campaigns for nicotine delivery systems. Outbreak alumnus Emily Dowd augmented the session with a display of antismoking posters. After getting an informative overview of tobacco control efforts in Massachusetts, the attendees had the opportunity to visit the museum and view the extraordinary poster collection.

Al DeMaria, board member

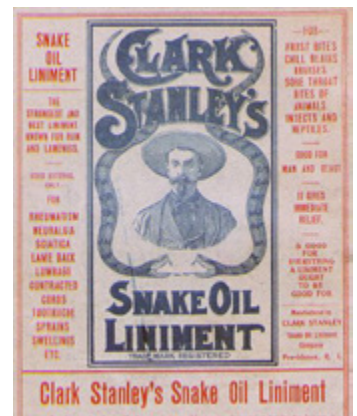
SNAKE OIL AND THE HISTORY OF PATENT MEDICINES

The “Rattlesnake King” was effectively put out of business in 1916 when a shipment of ‘Stanley’s Snake Oil Liniment’ was seized by the federal government and determined to be improperly labeled. This was the beginning of the end for a long, painful, but also fascinating period in American history when “elixirs” could cure anything, and commercial advertising exploded.

Clark Stanley (aka The Rattlesnake King) was a colorful character. As the story goes, Stanley grew up in central Texas and worked as a cowboy in the 1870s. He then spent two years with a Hopi Indian medicine man in Walpi, Arizona. During this time Stanley claimed to have learned the “secrets of snake oil”. From there, Stanley became the classic American entrepreneur, aggressively marketing Stanley’s Snake Oil as a cure for everything from rheumatism to bunions to partial paralysis. Of course, the problem was that Stanley’s liniment did not contain snake oil and was completely ineffective!

It would be easy to assume that Clark Stanley was the exception—an unethical showman who preyed on the uneducated masses eager to find cures for the medical issues of the time. Instead, quite the opposite was true. Stanley was simply the last in a long line of hucksters that marketed “cures” that were ineffective for the ailments they claimed to address. The term “patent medicine” is used to refer to remedies that were heavily marketed and very popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many were sold as home remedies at a time when there was virtually no regulation. In almost all cases, these concoctions claimed fantastic results with little evidence. At least 1,500 patent medicines were recorded by 1858. Popular cures of the times included:

- Lydia E. Pinkham’ Vegetable Compound – a treatment for “woman’s problems”
- Mrs. Winslow’s Soothing Syrup – “the mother’s friend”
- Dr. Haynes Arabian Balsam
- Sloan’s Linament
- Warner’s Safe Kidney & Liver Cure
- Jamaica Ginger



Most of these treatments contained harmful ingredients such as cocaine, morphine, heroin, cannabis, and most commonly, alcohol. The one thing they virtually all had in common was that they simply did not work. They were a scam, a ruse, an elaborate and dishonest scheme to separate unsuspecting customers from their money with complete disregard for the (considerable) risk to their customer’s health.

How could this happen? How could an entire industry develop based on these fraudulent cures, and more importantly, why did so many customers line up to buy them? An obvious answer is that there were no government regulations in place to force companies to list ingredients or ensure effectiveness. This would not be completely wrong; the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906 was the first regulation to require accurate labeling but it was not until 1916 that this regulation was fully enforced. Once the Rattlesnake King’s shipment was seized and he was issued a modest fine, the end of the patent medicine industry was inevitable. However, the simple absence of regulation ignores glaring gaps in our understanding of how this industry developed and flourished for centuries. The important question is, how could the general public believe the fantastic claims? Where were the medical experts? Why was there no outcry from doctors and medical scientists about these ineffective and dangerous remedies?

There are no simple answers, but there are interesting clues that help us bridge the gap between the lack of effectiveness of these treatments, and their amazing popularity. One clear factor was the effectiveness of the marketing. In the days before radio and television, folks relied on newspapers, live interaction, and other printed materials. And while patent medicine companies may have been unethical with their products, their marketing was ingenious.

In Part 2: Snake Oil Marketing & Travelling Medicine Shows..., we will explore how innovative marketing strategies of the nineteenth century helped push patent medicines into the every-day lives of Americans, as well as the lasting impact of these techniques - even into present day.

by Paul Berian, volunteer

PH MUSEUM HOSTS PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP

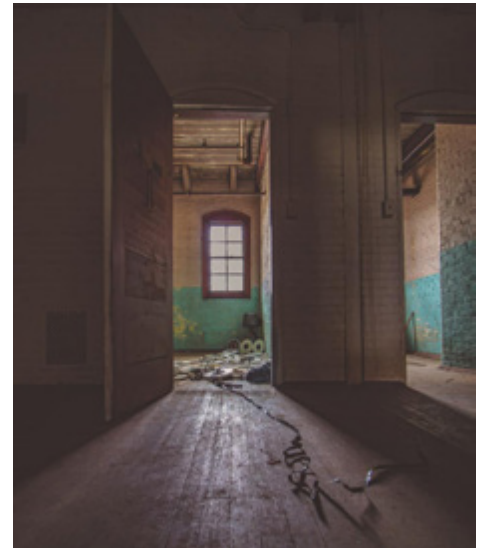


The first half of 2019 was certainly a busy time for the Public Health Museum! Aside from our traditional programming, the PHM partnered with two Massachusetts-based photographers (Mike Minicucci & David Manch) to host a photography workshop on the grounds of Tewksbury Hospital. Participants came from all over the Northeast, including Philadelphia, New Jersey, and upstate New York. They left having captured striking images from the museum and the hospital's abandoned buildings.



This event brought new visitors to the museum, donations, and most importantly, photographs of spaces that will only deteriorate further with time. A portfolio of images is currently being compiled and will be donated to the museum.

By Sarah Black, administrative assistant



CELEBRATING WOMEN IN PUBLIC HEALTH

Happy anniversary to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health! In honor of this celebration, we shall look at a brief history of women in public health here in Massachusetts: Susan Dimock and Marie Zakrzewska.

Susan Dimock—a pioneer for woman in American medicine—was born in Washington, North Carolina on April 24, 1846; her family had emigrated from England to Dorchester and Barnstable Massachusetts in 1637. Susan graduated as a doctor in 1871 at the University of Zurich after a rejection from Harvard. She was then appointed to the resident physician of the New England Hospital for Women and Children in 1872 by hospital founder, Marie Zakrzewska.



Susan Dimock

Marie Zakrzewska—born in Poland on September 6, 1829—opened the New England Hospital for Women and Children on July 1, 1862. Zakrzewska retired in 1890 and had spent her later years as an abolitionist. Marie Zakrzewska died on May 12, 1902, of a heart attack at her home in Jamaica Plain. Her home is now a site on the Boston Women's Heritage Trail.



Marie Zakrzewska

On May 7, 1875, Susan Dimock died in a shipwreck after the SS Schiller was wrecked off the Isles of Scilly. Susan was 28 years old. She is buried in Forest Hills Cemetery in Boston. In 1969, The New England Hospital for Women and Children was renamed to The Dimock Community Health Center, in honor of Susan Dimock.

Kevin Bowers, volunteer

PH MUSEUM ON THE ROAD



The Northeast Association of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Disease and the Northeast Branch of the American Society of Microbiology held their 4th Annual Meeting in Portsmouth, NH on April 8-9, 2019. It was well attended with participants attending workshops in Intestinal Parasites of Public

Health Importance, Antibiotics –Back to the Basics, and Epidemics With-in the Opioid Epidemic: The Infectious Disease Consequences. There were also a number of general sessions including topics such as Fecal Transplant for *C. difficile* colitis and Global TB Updates. Linda Perry and Holly Bodman were happy to meet old acquaintances and introduce new ones to the museum through a Museum exhibit table.

Patent medicines
Unusual artifacts
Blood pressure cuff
Learning
Iron lung
Contagious disease
Hospital
Educate
Asylum
Lung disease
Tuberculosis
Happy visitors!

THE PUBLIC HEALTH MUSEUM IN MASSACHUSETTS

Our Mission

The Public Health Museum is a non-profit educational and cultural museum. The Museum strives to preserve records and artifacts from our nation's public health history; educate the public about the achievements and contributions of public health; and inspire people to build upon the past and continue to advance the future of public health. Our Museum provides a space to explore public health artifacts, inspire future public health professionals, and foster community involvement.

Our History

Incorporated in 1990 and open to the public since 1994, the Museum has the distinction of being the first of its kind in the nation. Massachusetts has a rich history of leadership and notable firsts in the birth of our nation. In the field of public health, Massachusetts was the first to record vital statistics; the first to implement a sustained board of health; and the first to implement a communicable disease surveillance system, among many others.

MUSEUM HOURS

Summer hours: Wednesdays 4 to 8 PM,
Thursdays and first Saturday of the month
10 AM to 2 PM
OR by appointment

WALKING TOURS

Seasonal (May through October, weather permitting), advanced registration required. Third Wednesday at 6 PM and first Saturday at 10 AM OR by appointment

ADMISSION

\$5.00 per person for museum
\$10.00 per person for walking tour

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to others who may be interested in the Public Health Museum.

To subscribe to this newsletter, please reply with SUBSCRIBE to Newsletter in the subject line. To unsubscribe, please reply with UNSUBSCRIBE in the subject line.

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