



A Tribute to Herbalism in Pioneer Utah

Herbalism in Utah

“Utah is known as the epicenter of the natural supplement industry. It is, by some reports, the second biggest industry in the state. Many of these products are sold by multilevel marketing companies. Although these companies must, by law, tell you that there is no evidence of efficacy in cancer, much of the marketing is performed by their vast network of sales people. Many of these sales people are ostensibly customers who dabble in sales, with the goal of sharing these supplements, vitamins, or essential oils with friends and perhaps making a buck or two along the way.”

— From “Utah Roots...and Herbs” by Timothy L. Cannon *Journal of Clinical Oncology*
 (<http://jco.ascopubs.org/content/33/26/2920.u1l>)



Mormonism Founder Joseph Smith

- The Mormon founder Joseph Smith believed in Thomson's system of herbal medicine and distrusted orthodox medicine
- He had a very bad experience with doctors operating on his leg when he was young
- Also, his older brother Alvin had been killed by a dose of calomel



- Edna Loretta Anderson Foote records that Joseph Smith blessed her grandfather and told him he was a natural born doctor.
 - “My grandfather, Wiley Payne Allred, was blessed by the Prophet Joseph Smith who told him ‘You are a natural born doctor and will be able to put your hand on people and tell them where their pain is. (I have seen him do it). And you will know the herbs of the field.’”
- This same resource states that Joseph gave her grandfather an herb book written by Samuel Thomson and told him to study it.



Mormon Scriptures and Herbalism

- “And whosoever among you are sick, and have not faith to be healed, but believe, shall be nourished with all tenderness, with herbs and mild food...” (D&C 42:43)
- “And there were some who died with fevers, which at some seasons of the year were very frequent in the land—but not so much so with fevers because of the excellent qualities of the many plants and roots which God had prepared to remove the cause of diseases, to which men were subject by the nature of the climate.” (Alma 46:40)
- “...all wholesome herbs God hath ordained for the constitution, nature and use of man—every herb in the season thereof, and every fruit in the season thereof; all of these to be used with prudence and thanksgiving.” (D&C 89:)

Smith’s Teachings

- “I preached to a large congregation at the stand, on the science and practice of medicine, desiring to persuade the saints to trust in God when sick, and not in an arm of flesh, and live by faith and not by medicine, or poison; and when they were sick, and had called for the Elders to pray for them, and they were not healed, to use herbs and mild food.” (History of the Church 4:414)
- “It was according to the revelation that the sick should be nursed with herbs and mild food, and not by the hand of an enemy.” (Alma A. Burton, Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith)

More of Smith's Teachings

- “Went to visit my father, found him very low, administered some mild herbs, agreeable to the commandment. May God grant to restore him immediately to health for Christ the Redeemer’s sake. Amen.” (History of the Church 7:228)
- “I continued to grow worse and worse until my sufferings were excruciating, and although in the midst of it all I felt to rejoice in the salvation of Israel’s God, yet I found it expedient to call to my assistance those means which a kind Providence had provided for the restoration of the sick, in connection with the ordinances; and Dr. Levi Richards, at my request, administered to me herbs and mild food, and nursed me with all tenderness and attention; and my Heavenly Father blessed his administrations to the easing and comforting of my system...” (History of the Church 2:493)

The Story of Amanda Smith

- The Haun’s Mill Massacre occurred in 1838 when an angry mob attacked Mormons at Haun’s Mill. Seventeen Mormons died in the attack. Amanda Smith’s husband and another son was killed, while another son’s hip had been shot away by a rifle fired at point blank range. This is her account:

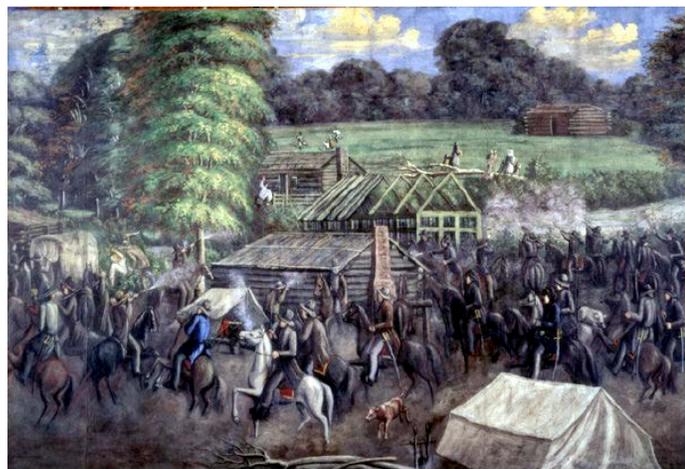


Photo from Wikipedia (C. C. A. Christensen [Public domain])

“The entire hip joint of my wounded boy had been shot away. Flesh, hip bone, joint and all had been plowed out from the muzzle of the gun which the ruffian placed to the child’s hip through the logs of the shop and deliberately fired. We laid little Alma on a bed in our tent and I examined the wound. It was a ghastly sight. I knew not what to do. It was night now. There were none left from the Terrible scene, throughout that long, dark night, but about half a dozen bereaved and lamenting women, and children....

“The women were sobbing, in greatest anguish of spirit; the children were crying loudly with fear and grief at the loss of fathers and brothers; the dogs howled over their dead masters and the cattle were terrified with the sent of the blood of the murdered. Yet was I there, all that long, dreadful night, with my dead and my wounded, and none but God as our physician and help.

“Oh my Heavenly Father,” I cried, “what shall I do? Thou seest my poor wounded boy and knowest my inexperience. Oh Heavenly Father direct me what to do!” And the I was directed as by a voice speaking to me. The ashes of our fire was still smoldering. We had been burning the bark of the shag-bark hickory. I was directed to take those ashes and make a lye and put a cloth saturated with it right into the wound. It hurt, but little Alma was too near dead to heed it much. Again and again I saturated the cloth and put it into the hole from which the hip-joint had been plowed, and each time mashed flesh and splinters of bone came away with the cloth; and the wound became as white as chicken’s flesh.

Having done as directed I again prayed to the Lord and was again instructed as distinctly as though a physician had been standing by speaking to me. Near by was a slipper-elm tree. From this I was told to make a slippery-elm poultice and fill the wound with it. My eldest boy was sent to get the slipper-elm from the roots, the poultice was made, and the wound, which took fully a quarter of a yard of linen to cover, so large was it, was properly dressed. I removed the wounded boy to a house, some distance off the next day, and dressed the hip ; the Lord directing me as before. I was reminded that in my husband's trunk there was a bottle of balsam. This I poured into the wound, greatly soothing Alma's pain.

'Alma my child,' I said, 'you believe that the Lord made your hip?'

'Yes, mother.'

'Well, the Lord can make something there in the place of your hip, don't you believe he can, Alma?'

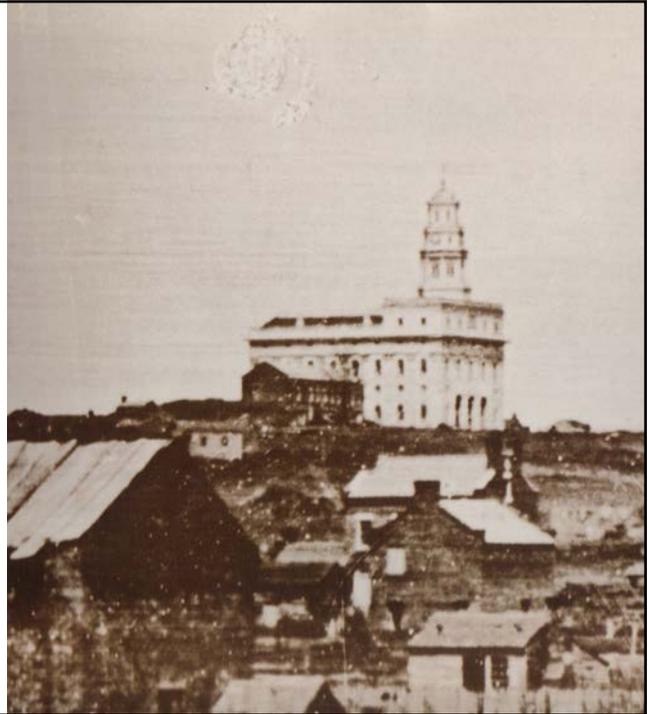
'Do you think that the Lord can, mother?' inquired the child, in his simplicity.

'Yes, my son,' I replied, 'he has showed it all to me in a vision.'

Then I laid him comfortably on his face, and said: 'Now you lay like that, and don't move, and the Lord will make you another hip.' So Alma laid on his face for five weeks, until he was entirely recovered—a flexible gristle having grown in place of the missing joint and socket, which remains to this day a marvel to physicians. ... It is now nearly forty years ago, but Alma has never been the least crippled during his life, and he has traveled quite a long period of the time as a missionary of the gospel and [is] a living miracle of the power of God.

Prior to the Exodus West

- “A Missouri minister, on visit to Nauvoo from St. Louis, made the observations that he could find no trace whatsoever of any medical doctors in Nauvoo, as “the Mormon leader wouldn’t allow them there.”
- Joseph Smith actually called and ordained both men and women to be healers using faith and herbs.



Instructions to the Mormon Battalion

- “We have the opportunity of sending to Fort Leavenworth this morning by Dr. Reed a package of twenty-five letters, which we improve, with this word and counsel to you all: If you are sick, live by faith, and let the surgeon’s medicine alone, using only such herbs and mild food as are at your disposal. If you give heed to this counsel, you will prosper...”
— Brigham Young



Mormon Battalion Monument in Salt Lake City

Brigham Young's Teachings

“Would you want doctors? Yes, to set bones. We should want a good surgeon for that, or to cut off a limb. Do you want doctors? For not much of anything else, let me tell you, only the traditions of the people lead them to think so, and here it is a growing evil in our midst. It will be so in a little time that not a woman in all Israel will dare to have a baby unless she can have a doctor by her...”

“Let the sick do without eating; take a little something to cleanse the stomach, blood, bowels, and wait patiently, and let Nature have time to gain advantage over the disease.”



Midwifery in Utah

- Both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young ordained women to be midwives, who played a critical role in childbirth among early Utah settlers
- Midwives often acted as doctors, treating illness with herbs
- Mormon women were also sent east to study at medical colleges and bring this knowledge back to Utah
- Even today there is a very strong practice of midwifery in Utah and most Utah midwives use herbs during pregnancy, labor and afterwards to aid mother and baby
- Photo: Mormon midwife Patty Sessions from https://www.facebook.com/LDSbirthworkers/photos_stream



Brigham Young on Doctoring

- “Now let me tell you about doctoring, because I am acquainted with it, and know just exactly what constitutes a good doctor in physic. It is that man or woman who, by revelation, or we may call it intuitive inspiration, is capable of administering medicine to assist the human system when it is besieged by the enemy called Disease; but if they have not that manifestation, they had better let the sick person alone...I say that unless a man or woman who administers medicine to assist the system to overcome disease, understands, and has that intuitive knowledge, by the Spirit, that such an article is good for that individual at that very time, they had better let him alone.”

Caring for Children

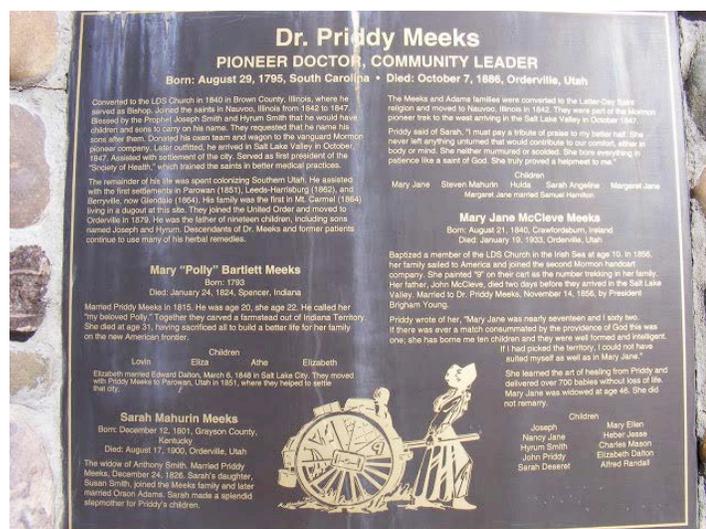
- Learn to take proper care of your children. If any of them are sick the cry now, instead of “Go and fetch the Elders to lay hands on my child!” is, “Run for a doctor.” Why do you not live so as to rebuke disease? It is your privilege to do so without sending for the Elders. You should go to work to study and see what you can do for the recovery of your children. If a child is taken sick with fever give it something to stay that fever or relieve the stomach and bowels, so that mortification may not set it. Treat the child with prudence and care, with faith and patience, and be careful in not overcharging it with medicine. If you take too much medicine into the system, it is worse than too much food...
- And it is the duty of every father and mother to live so that they may have the mind and will of the Lord concerning their duties to their families. ...for it is God’s mind and will that they should know just what to do for them when they are sick. Instead of calling for a doctor you should administer to them by the laying on of hands and anointing with oil, and give them mild food, and herbs...

More Brigham Young

- “Doctors, by their study of the science of anatomy, and by their experience, by feeling the pulse, and from other circumstances may be able to judge of many things, but they do not know the exact state of the stomach. And again, the operations of disease are alike on no two persons on the face of the earth, any more than the operations of the spirit of God are alike on any two persons. There is as much variation in these respects as there is in the physiognomy of the human family; hence, when disease seizes our systems, we do not know what to do, and death often overcomes us, and we bury our friends.”

Priddy Meeks

- “It is stated that Joseph Smith said that Thomson was as much inspired to bring [forth] his principle of practice according to the dignity and importance of it, as he was to introduce the Gospel. Then we should look on [these] principles as an appendix to the gospel—as a temporal salvation. It was introduced nearly contemporary with the Gospel, even the Word of Wisdom and Thomsonianism [run] together and [strengthen] each other, instead of coming in collision with each other.”
- From the Journal of Priddy Meeks
- Note: Priddy Meeks journal helped inspire John Christopher and the Utah herb movement



The “Father of American Herbology”

- “Samuel Thomson has probably contributed more to the science of herbology than any other individual in the history of the United States.”
—Stan Malstrom, ND
- Without any formal medical training, Samuel Thomson devised a system of healing in the early 1800s that swept frontier America like a storm
- It crossed the oceans to kindle a new botanical movement in England and other parts of Europe.
- It is estimated that by 1840 three to five million Americans had adopted the Thomsonian method of treating illness.
- The influence of Thomson can be seen in the works of Jethro Kloss, John Christopher and other herbalists who started the modern herbal movement



Thomson’s #1: Lobelia

Th'Emetic number ONE's [lobelia] design'd
A gen'ral med'cine for mankind,
Of every country, clime, or place,
Wide as the circle of our race.

In every case, and state, and stage,
Whatever malady may rage;
For male or female, young or old,
Nor can its value half be told.

To use this med'cine do not cease,
Till you are helped of your disease;
For NATURE'S FRIEND, this sure will be,
When you are taken sick at sea.



Priddy Meeks on Lobelia

“I don’t know what [high praise] I could place on Lobelia to be competent with its virtues...for Lobelia will act on the system in complete conformity with the laws of health...it will permeate the whole system till it finds where the obstruction is seated, and there it will spend its influence and powers by relaxing the parts obstructed...always accompany the Lobelia with Cayenne pepper [Capsicum], which is the purest and best stimulant that is known in the compass of medicine...[They] will act on the whole system like an increased flow of water turned [into] a muddy spring of water—it will soon run clear. And, although Lobelia is set at naught and persecuted the way it is... it is ordained of God to be used in wisdom.”



John Christopher on Lobelia

“Lobelia is one of the greatest herbs ever given to the world... Lobelia is a general corrector of the whole system, as it is easily diffused and able to influence the entire body... Over years of practice, lobelia has been administered many times, and there have been numerous miraculous healings. Time after time, lobelia has helped the very young to the very old, with only positive results. As for lobelia being a poison: this is one of the most ridiculous falsehood ever foisted on the public by orthodox allopaths.

“Lobelia is a selective herb. When a fetus is dead, or in an extremely weakened condition, lobelia will cause it to abort. However, if the fetus is well and healthy, and the mother is weak, it will cause the mother to heal and strengthen, enabling her to carry the child until the proper time of delivery. Lobelia accurately and intelligently selects which way it is to go. It is truly a ‘thinking’ herb.”



Thomson's #2 and #3

Let number TWO [capsicum or cayenne] be used as bold,
To clear the stomach of the cold;
Next steep the coffee, number THREE [herbal composition],
And keep as warm as you can be.

A hot stone at the feet now keep,
As well as inward warmth [capsicum] repeat,
The fountain 'bove the stream keep clear,
And perspiration will appear.

When sweat enough, as you suppose,
In spirit wash, and change your clothes;
Again to bed, both clean and white,
And sleep in comfort all the night.



Herbal Composition Recipe

- **Ingredients:**
 - 4 parts bayberry root bark
 - 2 parts hemlock spruce bark or white pine bark (yerba santa?)
 - 1 part ginger
 - 1/2 part clove
 - 1/2 part capsicum (cayenne)
- Blend the above and make into a hot tea.
- Sip regularly when feeling ill until one feels better

Medicines of Henry Hughes, natural doctor who helped with the early settlement of Mendon, Utah in 1859.

- Asafetida: A small amount of asafetida tied in a cloth bag and hung around a child's neck kept communicable diseases away. Asafetida could also be rolled into pills and given for to relieve nervousness and spasms or convulsions.
- Beets: Juice from red beets was drunk as a cure for kidney stones.
- Carrots: A poultice of carrots was applied to boils to draw out the infection.
- Catnip: Tea made from catnip was given to babies with colic or colds.
- Clover Blossoms: Tea made from clover blossoms enriched the blood.
- Composition Tea: This mixture of herbs was applicable for almost all ailments.
- Dogwood or Boxwood: Tea made from the bark of these bushes (dogwood and boxwood) was drunk as a tonic and stimulant.
- Elm Bark: Combined with yeast, crushed elm bark was used as an antiseptic and a poultice for ulcers, especially when there was danger of gangrene.
- Ginger: A half teaspoonful of ginger in warm water was given to relieve colds or stomach pains.

More Remedies

- Gravel Root: Tea made from gravel root was a remedy for kidney ailments.
- Hops: This herb was mixed with whiskey and stuffed into a small, cloth bag, which was then placed under a patient's pillow to induce sleep.
- Horehound: Tea made from horehound was drunk to relieve the symptoms of a cold.
- Lobelia: This was used to induce vomiting. When lobelia is mixed with egg, vinegar, and sugar, the concoction could be given to a child as an expectorant.
- Marshmallow Weed: A poultice made of this weed was heated before applying it to skin infections. A tea steeped from marshmallow weed was drunk for urinary complaints.
- Mustard: One or two teaspoons of powdered mustard mixed in a glass of warm water was used as an emetic in case of poisoning.
- Onions: Chopped onions placed in a sick room prevented smallpox or other contagious disease from spreading to other members of the household.
- Peach Tree Leaves: Tea made of these leaves was used as a sedative, thus controlling nausea and vomiting.
- Peppermint: Peppermint tea was given to babies with colic or colds.

Still, More Remedies

- Rabbit Brush or Tea Weed: A tea made of this herb was drunk to relieve the pain of rheumatism.
- Sage: Tea made from this herb (sage) was used to relieve an upset stomach. It could also be mashed in a tea- spoonful of olive oil and swallowed as a cure for intestinal worms.
- Sagebrush: With a bit of whisky added as a preservative, tea made of wild sagebrush was drunk as a tonic. Made into hot packs, it was applied to bruises and abrasions.
- Tansy: Tea made of this plant (tansy) was drunk by women with irregular menstruation.
- Vervine: Teas made from this herb was used to cause the patient to perspire.
- Wormwood: The wormwood was steeped in a large amount of water, then simmered for an extended period of time. A small amount of brandy was added to a cup of this tea before giving it to the patient as a treatment for mountain fever.
- Yarrow: Tea made from the yarrow plant was a remedy for colds.
 - From: Henry Hughes, The Hughes Apothecary, Herbs as Medicine, unpublished manuscript. (http://www.mendonutah.net/history/pioneer_medicine.htm)

Daniel Mowery in The Scientific Validation of Herbal Medicine

“At one time in the West, herbs were the subject of intensive scientific investigation. One can find numerous published studies on the effects of herbs on animal and human physiology. As late as the mid 20th century, important herbal research was being undertaken in Europe. Concomitant with herbal research in this century in the West was the development of powerful synthetic medicines that had the power to virtually wipe out many terrible diseases. As cure after cure was found, great excitement spread through the medical research establishment. Young scientists, especially, were vulnerable to the lure of exotic new lines of study. Unlike the old vanguard, who recognized the value of the new, but attempted to preserve the fundamental value of botanical medicines and continued to pursue research in them, the young students could not resist the excitement of modern drug research. The old vanguard died off (or is dying off). Many of the following generation, who had studied medicinal plants under the tutelage of their masters, left those pursuits at the earliest opportunity in order to join the rush to the exciting sea of synthetic medicines... The movement away from the natural and toward the synthetic was not a conscious rejection of medical botany. I don't believe anybody realized how completely the older positions were being abandoned. Nobody in mainstream medical science intended for it to happen that way.”

From Herbal Remedies: God's Medicine? By N. Lee Smith (a Salt Lake Doctor) in Dialog Journal

- In a recent study on cancer for the state of Utah, Kay Gillespie found that of those using quack methods (unproven herbs, prisms, pendulums, etc.), the bulk were LDS (as was also the case in some parts of neighboring states) whose motives were based, often strongly, on religious tenets. Seminars conducted for these practitioners "began with a Mormon rationale based on the Word of Wisdom and quoted church leaders as a beginning foundation for the importance of the work to be done in the seminar."
- One of their number, jailed for violation of state health laws restricting use of methods he regarded as a "God-given gift," wrote:
 - The law of God is over the law that man makes to forbid him to obey these commandments. I cannot disobey my God . . . this man-made evil law of practicing medicine defies the law of God . . . this law violates my religious convictions, my constitutional right to religious belief, and also violates the same who wishes my counsel and help.

What a dreary place this was when first the
Mormons found it

The Indians here refused to live, and the
coyote's walked around it,
They said the land it was no good, and the
water was no better,
And the mere idea of living here made
faithful Mormons mutter.

Mesquite, soap root, prickly pears and
briars,
In those days avoid St. George was
everyone's desire.

The sun it is so scorching hot, it makes the
waters sizzle,
And the reason why it is so hot is just
because it is sir
The wind with fury here doth blow, that
when we plant or sow sir

We place one foot upon the seeds and hold
them 'til they grow sir

Mesquite, soap root, prickly pears and
briars,
St. George alone it is the place where
everyone perspires.

Where once the grass in single blades grew
a mile apart in distance
It kept the crickets on the hop to pick up
their substance

Now green palm trees and shade trees
grow to throughout our favorite city
And vines and fruit trees grace the lots,
with flowers fair and pretty
Palm trees, fig trees, and air condition-ires
St. George it is in these days the place
where everyone retires.