

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

Carroll's Yesteryears
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Zollickoffer and his medicine
by Joe Getty

The early newspapers of Carroll County contain many fascinating references to the medical heritage of this region. The Historical Society is fortunate to have in its research library nearly complete collections of Carroll County's nineteenth century newspapers. This collection was used extensively in compiling the research for our forthcoming book "Carroll County Physicians of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries."

Dr. Theodore E. Woodward, M.D., a Carroll County native who is the son and grandson of two Westminster physicians, has researched and written the book manuscript. One focus of the book is biographies of the academically trained physicians in each of Carroll County's communities. This provides an illuminating study of local history that documents many facets of Carroll County's heritage.

One of the local physicians, Dr. William Zollickoffer, became a national leader for his work in medicine. He practiced in Uniontown and Westminster and he was the author of "A Materia Medica of the United States" which was published in 1819 when he was 26 years old. This publication was the standard textbook for many years in American medical schools.

From local newspaper advertisements, we also know of Dr. Zollickoffer's work in inventing and producing medicines. The advertisement for "Dr. Zollickoffer's Vegetable Purgative and Alterative Pills" from an 1830s Westminster newspaper provides considerable insights into the local medical practices of that time:

DR. ZOLICKOFFER'S VEGETABLE PURGATIVE AND ALTERATIVE PILLS

THE rapidly increasing demand for the above Pills, is the strongest possible evidence of the benefit the public have derived from their introduction. In using them, no restrictions in diet or drink is necessary; and there is no danger of taking cold from exposure. They are a far better family medicine, than any remedy heretofore known. They may be had wholesale and retail of John F. Reese in Westminster; and of the most of the Apothecaries and Storekeepers throughout the State, & elsewhere.

THERE IS, perhaps no Vegetable remedy in the known world, that possesses advantages equal to Doctor Zollickoffer's VEGETABLE PURGATIVE AND ALTERATIVE PILLS. This discovery, is the result of upwards of twenty years devotion to the study of Medical Botany, and an examination of the virtues of the native vegetable productions of the United States. During this period, he has made several important improvements, in this department, all of which he has communicated to the Medical Public, (excepting the

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composition of his Pills). These Pills, although they contain no mercury, nor any other mineral substance, act with singular promptness in correcting functional derangement of the Liver, as well as changing by their peculiar properties all secretions, from an unhealthy to a healthy condition. This circumstance, conjoined with their carrying off bilious acid and citated secretions and accumulations from the bowels, by their purgative powers, give them an extra value – most remedies which operate on the bowels, leave them in a relaxed and weakened condition. These Pills impart tone, while they are operating, and therefore, leave the whole intestinal canal in a braced and strengthened state, hence, it is not necessary, in most instances, to be particular in drinking water during the operation as is the case with other opening medicines. They do not impair the appetite, produce sickness, or griping in five cases in a hundred. They may be taken so as to produce, either a mild, or active purgative effect by observing the directions accompanying each Box.

Dr. Zollickoffer's Vegetable Purgative and Alterative Pills, are not recommended as most of the Quack Medicines to cure all the diseases, with which mortal man is afflicted. This species of imposition conceives would ultimately bring them into disrepute, and finally destroy their incalculable usefulness, in the maladies in which they have heretofore, under his own observation proved highly beneficial. They will be found highly advantageous in simple cases of Bilious Fever, Fever & Ague, all kinds of Cholera, (whether bilious, spasmodic, flatulent or wind Cholera), the first stages of Diarrhea, and Dysentery, Costiveness, (whether transient or habitual), Loss of Appetite, Worms, Sick Headache, Pain in the head, Giddiness, Piles, Liver complaint, Jaundice, Hives, Measles, Chicken Pox, Scarlet Fever, Female Obstructions; and in afflictions in which, either a mild, or active purgative is calculated to do good. They will be found likewise, to be an excellent Antibilious and Family Domestic Medicine; and if taken according to the Directions for preserving Health, in the great majority of instances, to save those who use them from the attacks of diseases which may be about commencing their action in their systems. Each Box contains 20 pills, price 25 cents.

The advertisement ends with testimonials from prominent men in the community including the Rev. Daniel Feete, Pastor of the German Reformed Church, Taneytown, Francis Scott Key, the Rev. Esra Keller, Pastor of the Lutheran Church, Taneytown, Samuel Naill, Thomas Gurley, Sheriff of Frederick County, John W. Dorsey, M.D., Joseph W. Biggs, M.D., Upton Scott, James L. Billinglea, M.D., John Swope, M.D., and William Willis, M.D.

The Historical Society of Carroll County will sponsor a "Medical Heritage of Carroll County" dinner on Thursday, April 4. Dr. Theodore Woodward will present a program about Carroll County doctors and the experiences of researching his book. For information, call the Historical Society at 848-6494.

Photo credit: Courtesy of Historical Society of Carroll County

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Photo caption: Dr. William Zollickoffer. Local doctor in early 1800s.