



Heritage Foundation
Newfoundland & Labrador

#002

Folk Cures and PRACTICAL MAGIC



ORAL HISTORY ROADSHOW SERIES

Folk Cures *and* PRACTICAL MAGIC

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Oral History Roadshow Series #002



Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador
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INTRODUCTION

Spaniard's Bay, like most small Newfoundland and Labrador communities, contains a wealth of 'hand-me-down' stories, recollections and anecdotes including its share of superstition, secrets and sorcery that has stood the test of time. As an added component to our Heritage mandate, it was decided to pursue an Oral History/Collective Memory project that would bring seniors and all interested residents together to share in a common goal.

Since generations of ancestors had very limited medical knowledge and little or no access to doctors or hospitals, people relied on family and community elders for remedies and home-made cures to deal with common ailments such as sore throats, stomach upset and headaches. Charms and spells were considered acceptable (and welcome) methods to "put away" warts, predict the number of children a woman might have (and their sex), or rid your eye of a nasty sty. This book is a result of conversations and interviews with various residents that focus mainly on 'old time' medicinal applications, beliefs and cures.

While it is essential to research, record and preserve our intangible culture before memories fade and sources are lost, it is in the telling and re-telling, recollection and reminiscence, easy conversation and laughter that we realize, recognize and cherish the irreplaceable gift of our ancestors and how important it is that we take steps to keep it safe for future generations. It is my fervent hope that this collection of stories is the first volume of many that will be our Spaniard's Bay Oral History Archives.

INTRODUCTION



Aerial photo of the Oral History Roadshow event in the Wesley Gosse Memorial Museum in Spaniard's Bay, 2017. Photo by Terra Barrett.

Sincere appreciation and thanks to Dale Jarvis for your inspiration, advice and assistance and to the Town of Spaniard's Bay and to Heritage Society members for continued support in this venture and all things Heritage. Thanks to the Society's own summer student Thomas Lane, as well as Terra Barrett,

INTRODUCTION

and Andrea McGuire with the Heritage Foundation who researched and recorded these stories.

Most of all, this book would not happen without the generous participation of those whose words give voice to our past. Thank you!

DIANNE CARR

Spaniard's Bay Heritage Society



L to R: Thomas Lane, Kelsey Parsons, Dianne Carr, Abigail Smith, and Dale Jarvis in front of the Wesley Gosse Heritage Museum. 2017. Photo by Terra Barrett.



MAGIC

HEALING POWERS



Nails. Courtesy of Pixabay.

But they said they would pass [their power] on, some people would, and others wouldn't tell what they did. But it's almost like a miracle, you know. –***Patricia Rodgers***

I don't remember a whole lot of things. There were definitely people who were known to be able to do certain things. Now my grandmother who was from Winterton, Trinity Bay she lived to be 88 and she had many, many stories to tell. As we were growing up she told us lots of different things about her childhood and about different superstitions that people had in the community. Mostly to do, because it was a fishing community, mostly to do with people being lost at sea, and people having apparitions, the old hag – the nightmares, those kind of things. But she loved to read tea leaves. She did do that quite a bit and whenever we had tea leaves we would say, “Nanny, nanny, can you read our tea?”

HEALING POWERS

We would tip the cup and she would look at our leaves and then she would pronounce. Oh well, you're going to, for example, you'll get married, you'll have a long life, you're going to have X number of children. These kinds of things. None of which I remember. But I remember that it was fun to do. —*Dianne Carr*

I would say I was probably ten or eleven years old, and visiting my mom's family in Norman's Cove. They lived in what they called, "out the lane" that was going out towards the wharf. All my mom's family lived there, grew up there. That was my Aunt Lizzie and Uncle Ern. That was their house that we used to stay at, mom and I. They had a daughter my age, Barb, and a son, Clee, who lives in St. John's, Cleophus Newhook, and two daughters: one who lives in Winterton, Florrie, who's an artist; and their other daughter Bessie, who lives in Placentia. We always hung out together. We would help with turning and making the hay, which was, you know, drudgery and a chore for them, but it was fun for me. We'd like to go out into the barn, and there was a loft in the barn. When they made the hay, and they put it in the barn, then us as kids—we probably weren't supposed to do it—we would go and get up on the loft and jump down in the piles of hay, which would be almost up to the roof of the barn. This evening, I remember it being after supper or something, we were out there, and some more of my cousins who live out there in the lane, and we'd jump off—and I jumped, and probably jumped too high, and hit my head, put my hand up, as you would, and when I put my hand up and took it down it was red, it was bleeding. So of course we all ran screaming and crying into the house. First thing they did was call for Uncle Clee. He was called Old Uncle Clee, because there were two or three of them in the family. He was,

HEALING POWERS

as I said, the principal of the school, the minister, he performed all of the things that you had to do in the community, and that was the first thing, to go and get him. He came up, and he looked at it, and I can still remember it now. He said, “Go and get the nail.” So I think it must have been [cousin] Clee, had to go and get the nail out of the loft, and then he said, “Put it in the kerosene oil can.” I don’t think anyone, including me, questioned why, but I wonder today, what was the purpose of the nail, putting it in the kerosene oil? Now, I don’t think any more of my cousins will remember that other than me, but I guess it must have had a big impact on me. Then he cut the hair around the cut, you know, cleaned it with something—I don’t know what it was—and I think he put something like myrrh or something on it. Myrrh was the sticky stuff off the trees. That would kind of seal it up. It was like stitching. That’s all. [It] healed, I never had any infection, I never had anything after that—but I could still feel this little spot on my head for years. The hair grew back. But it was funny—and I never ever asked why it was a nail in the lamp. Because kerosene oil came in a can, and we had to put it down there. Unless it was so nobody else would hurt themselves on it, it might have been something as simple as that, but it was very profound for me at the time. —*Judy Symonds*

There were a few people who were known for different magical things like that. There was an older lady, and I did not know her—I know her descendents, of course—but she was well known throughout the community. There was one doctor for the whole of Harbour Grace, Upper Island Cove, Bryant’s Cove, Bishop’s Cove, all those communities, only the one doctor, and he lived in Harbour Grace. That was the only medical access you would

HEALING POWERS

have. But there was this lady, and she was magical, apparently, with a lot of things. So if anybody had any problems, they would go and see her. –**Ralph Barrett**

One of the things that I did have experience with was the old hag. My husband was bothered with that so when he would experience that he said he could feel someone sitting on his chest. He was having dreams but he would moan a lot and it became quite evident that he was experiencing that sort of nightmare and so I would have to make sure I shook him awake and got him completely awake. Not to just leave him there. He said it was a terrible feeling to feel that presence with him. It happened quite a lot early in our marriage. It took quite a lot to rouse him. My son when he was quite young, when he was just walking, two, three



Dianne Carr. 2017. Photo by Terra Barrett.

HEALING POWERS

years old he seemed to be sleep walking quite a bit but his eyes were open. He would come out to me looking for mommy and I couldn't convince him I was mommy. My mother-in-law said you have to say his full name so I would say to him, rather loudly, "Peter Brian Russell, wake up Peter Brian Russell!" That would work and then he would wake up, and go back to bed and go to sleep. But he would be walking to me—eyes wide open but not recognizing me at all and just looking for mommy. I'm not sure if that was something of the same sort of nature—it wasn't the idea of having someone on your chest but of being not fully aware and being bothered by that. *—Jeanette Russell*

There were some magical things—home remedy stuff—that they would use for cures. I remember one instance that just came into my mind then, one particular family—and they were fishermen. Not like the fishermen now, because this was back 70 years ago or more. By the water's edge, there was a fishing stage that they would have to take care of their fish and salt it, salt away the herring in barrels and stuff. Many times during the winter somebody might have a sore throat, usually somebody in the family. What they would do was go over to the fishing stage to get a salt herring, and shake the salt off of it, They'd get a piece of clean cloth and wrap up the salt herring, and tie that around their neck for a sore throat. It must have been nice and smelly. [laughs] *—Ralph Barrett*

We had a woods behind our house. Our area wasn't very developed down off Park Avenue and there was a little circle in that area and I was young but I used to go down there and I was told it was a fairy circle so when I was about seven or eight our cat had been hit, Tinkerbelle, had been hit by a bb gun. I can remember Mom and

HEALING POWERS

Dad standing over the cat and they were talking about having to go get it put down which was very unusual then to even go to a vet. I believed that if my cat went to the fairy circle, I believed the fairies would take my cat and bring him into the circle and the cat would be okay. So I remember coming home that day and Tinkerbell wasn't there and my mom telling me that she saw Tinkerbell go down in the woods and she saw the fairies come out and take Tinkerbell with them. So I was okay. I thought Tinkerbell had gone to a better situation. So yeah there was a fairy circle there but when I was about eleven or twelve they bulldozed it down and put up Jubilee Square or Circle. —*Deborah Noel*

My grandmother, who was Miriam Bursey Churley, she was born a Bursey in Lance Cove, which I think was in Brownsdale. She married my grandfather Elias Churley from Old Perlican. She had a charm, which was passed on to her from some older male relative. I think it was words, but she had to put her hands on wherever the problem was. She used it to get rid of warts, and soothe toothaches. I don't know if it did anything else, because as I said, I didn't pay a whole lot of attention, never having had need of it. Maybe it worked for earaches too, I don't know. But when she died, I gather she passed the charm on to my brother, who lives in Winnipeg. I forgot to ask him whether she actually did—because we've never talked—he's never mentioned it. But she said that she would pass it on to him, because it had to go male-female-male, that kind of thing. —*Edna Roberts*

MAY SNOW

There was always the talk that May snow was good for the eyes and back then we didn't seem to have as much May snow it seemed like. Or freckles! Good for washing freckles. I did try it even though I didn't have sore eyes at the time but I thought, "Well we've got May snow so I've got to try this." Having not had sore eyes I did not have sore eyes after I applied it! But it was a known thing. My grandmother used to always have those sorts of things to tell us about. I didn't have many freckles so I don't know if that would've worked for freckles but it is worth trying I suppose. **–Jeanette Russell**



Edna Roberts. 2017. Photo by Andrea McGuire.

The May snow was someone from O'Regan's in the Codroy Valley. We used to go over there fishing, and [she] had a fishing camp where we used to stay. She would actually go out in May and get snow. I don't know if she kept it as water in her fridge, or snow in the freezer, but I remember my husband had something wrong with his eyes one time, and she said, "Come up and I'll rub them with May snow." She did, but I didn't see that either. I don't know if it worked. **–Edna Roberts**

REMOVING FRECKLES

Oh how I hated my freckles when I was about seven or eight! Go out in the morning when the dew was on the grass go and wash your face in that and it'll take your freckles away. Didn't work but it gave you something to occupy your time while you were out on holidays for a week. It didn't make any difference. *—Eyvonne Harris*



Freckles. Courtesy of Pixabay.

SEVENTH SON

That has a mysterious character. Seventh son of a seventh son, they sort of had powers. –**Ralph Barrett**

They used to say that [if you placed a worm on] a seventh son of a seventh son the worm would die. Whether there was any truth to it or not I don't know. –**Nathan Barrett**

We just heard that said. I didn't know anybody who was the seventh son of a seventh son but that person was supposed to have healing abilities. So it was just a matter of it being known. Not that I knew anybody. –**Jeanette Russell**

One of mom's cousins—a little boy—was a seventh son of a seventh son. I can remember seeing people being brought to him, and his mother laying his little hand, you know, and saying whatever he had to say. As a child, at ten or eleven years old, I knew that there was something special about this little boy. I can't remember his name or anything. I was told he was special, because he was a seventh son of a seventh son. That was in Norman's Cove. So he was a little boy at the time and people were being brought to them. I mean, it's just so interesting that this little boy would be told he had this power. –**Judy Symonds**

TOOTHACHE CURES

Cloves for a toothache. Oil of clove and they would put it around the tooth. I think people still do it now. **–Deborah Noel**

I remember for a toothache people would blow cigarette smoke into your mouth. Sore ear was probably just warm water in a compress and maybe olive oil, mom might've put oil. I doubt it was olive oil; I don't think anyone had even heard of olive oil then. **–Deborah Noel**

What would we do for a toothache? We'd put a hot cloth on our face, I know that. But I can't remember rubbing anything inside on my gums or anything, it was probably something they did. But I can't remember anything about that. You'd probably get a hot water bottle or something like that. **–Patricia Rodgers**

My nan. She had a great cure for anything. If you had a toothache go eat a biscuit. It worked. It had to be those round molasses, Purity molasses cookies. No that's what nan used to tell me. I was only about seven or eight and they were wicked, wicked toothaches and that's what she would say and I would go in and she would have her package in her little cupboard and I would take one and munch away because they are right soft. No toothache! **–Eyvonne Harris**

So, pains in your face mom would heat a plate in the oven and you could put that to your face. Or you would have a hot water bottle. But I can remember using a warm plate too. Somehow I don't know why that would be more effective but maybe it was easier to hold to your faces. **–Jeanette Russell**

TOOTHACHE CURES



Cloves. Courtesy of Pixabay.

Another medicine or cure was—I used to have a lot of toothaches because I loved eating candy, especially at night, and not brushing my teeth afterwards, which was a bad thing in my family, because [my mother] was a dental nurse, you see. Anyway, a clove—the whole clove was put on the tooth that was aching, and then you would keep it there in your mouth as best as possible. That would help to relieve the ache until you went to the dentist. It must have worked well, because it took the pain away—because she wasn't about to give us any aspirin, I don't even know if aspirin was invented or at least if it was, we never had it. —**Sally Peddle**

TOOTHACHE CHARMS

If you had a toothache or anything you would go to some old person and they would charm it. –**Nathan Barrett**

Yes I knew about [charmners] but my gosh I don't know their names now but I know they used to go to some people and sure enough they would take away the warts and heal toothaches. Some that were seventh sons they would be the ones. –**Clarice Adams**

There was also a prayer for a toothache. Now, I don't know the prayer—I can't remember. There was a lady here who used to say a prayer for your toothache. I can't remember who she was. I never went to her, by the way, but I used to hear people saying, "If you go to such a lady," and I can't remember her name, "she'll say a prayer, and your toothache will get better." –**Dot O'Brien**

There was an old fellow who lived down the road from us, called Uncle Billy Hutchings. He used to charm your tooth if you got a toothache. We would go down when we were young fellows and he would charge you 25 cents, and 25 cents was a lot of money then when I was growing up. We could get a bar, bag of chips, and a bottle of drink out of a quarter. So we would go down and Uncle Billy would have the rum, he would have a bottle of rum, and he would take this rum and rub it over your tooth. I don't know what he would say but he would say something when rubbing it over your tooth and in two days it would go away. Now after a while the toothache would come back again because there's not much sense, the rum only deadened the tooth. He wanted to get our quarter! –**Edward Crane**

TOOTHACHE CHARMS



Dot O'Brien. 2017. Photo by Andrea McGuire.

I only know one old fellow. He lived down to the gullies. Uncle George Mercer. He could cure your tooth. If you had a toothache you would go down to George. I went down one time when I had a toothache, now I had an aunt married to his son, and I went down and she said, he was in his garden it was in the fall of the year, and she said, "Now, when you go over don't say Mr. and don't thank him," she said. "Alright I won't." I said, "George, cure my tooth." He kept on digging potatoes. He never said anything. She said, "Go to the house." So I go home and sit down and mom was there a nice while and my son I say, I had some toothache. He came over and

TOOTHACHE CHARMS

he said, “Kneel down.” So I kneeled down and blessed myself. He put his hand in whatever he had in there and whatever he said, I don’t know what he said. Then he said, “Get up,” and he said to his daughter in law, “Mary, give him a cup of tea.” I had a cup of tea and the toothache was gone then –*Mike Whalen*

There was another incident where there was this gentleman, and he had a magical thing for toothache. Because dentists were more scarce than doctors, and I mean, there was only one doctor for the whole area. But there was no dentist. But if you had a toothache, you’d have to go and see this particular man. He was just a labourer like everybody else. But prior to going, your mother would have to make a little bag, probably about two inches square, with a string—and the string had to be long enough to go around your neck. When you went to see this man, this gentleman, and you’d tell him that you had toothache, you had to tell him where—so, “Open your mouth, and put your finger on that tooth,” and he’d put his finger on that tooth, and he’d get a little scrap of paper and a pencil, and he’d scribble some kind of little symbols on that piece of paper, and fold it and put it in that little bag that you had on your neck. “It’s against the law, you’re not supposed to look at that.” Oh, that was very secret, you’re not allowed to look at that. If you did, I mean, that was—everything was wiped clear, you know, that wouldn’t do any good. The power in that piece of paper would be destroyed, so you weren’t allowed to look at it. You put that in this little bag on your neck, and you had to wear that until the toothache was gone. When the toothache was gone—it might take a week, or two weeks—then you could take it off. –*Ralph Barrett*

WART CURES

There was a lady here—one thing that they did was tie knots—every wart you had, they'd tie a knot on a string, and bury the string. When the string rotted, the warts would go. —***Sarah Griffiths Ennis***

One of the other remedies for getting rid of warts was to get an old maid, if she had a ring on her finger, to get her to rub that on the wart and that was supposed to make the wart go away as well. —***Peter Lane***

There were lots of cures. One of the cures was that you rub fat pork on the wart and give it to a dog to lick off and that was supposed to cure the warts. We used to count how many warts we had and they would get us to go out in the garden get a stick with that many branches or twigs on it and you would bury that in the ground and that would cure the warts. —***Ruby Rees***

Well when I was growing up everybody got warts. How they got them I don't know. Probably it was a hygiene issue but pretty well all kids had warts. We were told you got them from handling frogs or worms or something like that so I guess it was bacteria or stuff on those type of animals and insects. But everybody had warts. There were all kinds of folk ways you supposedly could get rid of them but the one that I am aware of most is that you cut a potato in half. You would rub the wart and take that part out in a garden and bury it behind a tree and three or four days later your wart was supposed to disappear. Not really sure if it worked that well or not. —***Peter Lane***

WART CURES



Branch with snail. Courtesy of Pixabay.

WART CHARMS

Well Mrs. Roberts, the woman next door, she used to take away warts. She wouldn't tell anyone the secret because if she told everyone the secret it wouldn't work. **–Ruby Rees**

I took my son over and it was this elderly lady I suppose she was seventy some, and she would catch hold of the child's hand and convince him that the warts would go away, that it was nothing serious that it was probably out playing, and all that stuff. His warts didn't go away. She lives over in Coley's Point. Boland. Marian Boland. That's what she used to do. She used to have a lot of customers and maybe it worked because they say that warts are caused by a nervous condition on some people but my son his warts were [under his fingertips] so I was thinking that he was probably out digging and it got there, right?

[My daughter] Mandy had cradle cap so the doctor gave me this bottle of stuff and it worked like a charm. So I said well maybe if it worked for that because her head was really bad so I took it and put it on [my son's] warts for five or six days. Cradle cap is like eczema. Same thing as eczema. But the stuff that I used on her hair I used on his warts and they went away. **–Evyonne Harris**

My aunt used to cure warts. You had to go get a snail, get a nail, nail the snail onto the tree, and when the snail was rotted, your wart was gone. But she also had a prayer—a wart prayer that she said over your warts. She never said it out loud. After she said the prayer over your warts, she'd tell you to go find a snail—I don't know how you'd find one in the winter. And nail it to the tree. She said, "When the snail is rotted, your warts will be gone." I tried it once, and my wart went. **–Dot O'Brien**

WART CHARMS



Kim Granter. 2017. Photo by Terra Barrett.

WART CHARMS

That's my only cure, aside from all the regular stuff that people talk about, like rubbing rings on stuff. However, Loretta did tell me something that might be interesting. I think she got it from a lady from Bell Island, whose father had died while she was in the womb. She was conceived, but not born yet. This woman told—I think when Loretta saw her, she had a wart. She said, “If you rub a part of my clothing without my knowing it—if you rub that wart on part of my clothing without my knowing it, the wart will disappear.” That was because she was a daughter who had been born, but had never seen her father. Her father had died while she was in the womb. I didn't think to ask if it worked for males, too, but I assume it would. Now that one I hadn't heard before. She could only heal unknowingly. If she knew that you had done it, then it didn't work. Sounds pretty good, hey? If it doesn't work, she can always say, “Well, I knew you did that.” —**Edna Roberts**

My grandmother, Patience Crane, that's my father's mom she would put the warts away. I had a big wart on my hand one time. “Come in,” she said, “I'll take that wart away.” She told me to go out and get a snail, the big snail you get when it rains. It's under the rocks. So I went out and got the snail and I came in and she said “Snail, take the wart, wart, go away. When this snail dies the wart will go away.” When she read what she had to say she rubbed the snail over the wart she told me to take that snail and put it in a bottle and put the cover on it. [With the snail] in a jar go up in the garden and bury it but don't tell anybody where you buried it or it won't work. Don't tell anybody where you buried the snail. So that's what I did. I took the snail went up in the garden and buried him. [After] a few days you could see the wart disappearing. The snail died, see? With the stopper on the snail

WART CHARMS

had to perish. The wart went away and I never told anybody up until this day and I'm seventy two years old and I was only about maybe thirteen years old then.

Do you remember what she said when she rubbed the snail over the wart?

Wart, wart go away. Snail, snail take it away. That's what she said a few times and rubbed the snail over the wart. Then I had to take that and bury it and when the snail died the wart disappeared and that's what happened to it and I never had a wart after. -**Edward Crane**

When I was little I had warts on my hands. Dozens of them and I think Mom tried compound W and different things that the doctor gave her and they never went away. My friend Kathy Robson up the street, her aunt, I think, was married into this family. I didn't realize it at the time but he was the man who put away my warts. He knew my dad from work, he must have said something about putting away warts and when Dad said that I had a lot of warts on my hand he said, "Go home and count them and make sure you count them all because if you don't count them all they won't all go away. I will put them away for her." So he came home and I counted the warts and dad went back to work and told this man and then they didn't go away and a few months later he asked dad and he said, no I still had all the warts. So he came to the house and he stood in the back porch and I went to the back door and I showed him my hands and he never touched my hand and I had to count all the warts and I actually missed one on my right hand and it stayed there for years but within a

WART CHARMS

few weeks all the others were gone. I have no explanation, they just disappeared except the one that I missed. It was probably there for five or ten years after that. It just eventually went away on its own. I showed him the front of my hands and the back of my hands and he said, "Okay. You can forget about them now and they will go away." Then they did. *—Kim Granter*

I don't remember my friends having warts the same but my hands were covered. I had them all over my hands and I remember on this knuckle on my right hand I had a very large, seedy one and at the time I was taking piano lessons as all my family members were and sitting at the piano in the evening practicing they were very visible. Of course going to my piano teacher I was very self conscious about that. Initially, I know my dad had gone to the drug store and gotten something to put on them and nothing seemed to work. We tried some other cures and I'm not sure if these are from the doctor but one of them involved full strength vinegar and applying that. There was something that seemed like a stick, like a matchstick or something, there may have been some sulfur or something involved. None of that seemed to work and I was getting pretty upset by this. I don't remember who but somebody, probably an older member of the community, somebody told me, "Why don't you see Aunt Ermine and ask her to put them away." She just lived down the hill and a couple of doors over and so I thought, "Well what is the etiquette for having your warts put away what do you have to do?" "Well you have to count them and then you have to go and ask her, "Will you put my warts away?". But you're not to say thank you." So it took me a while. I don't remember the exact number but I think it was about 142 by the time I counted every little one that was starting to grow and the

WART CHARMS

big ones and pondered and perplexed over whether I should call this big one one or was it more than one or whatever. So anyway I was very timid and I went in her house and said, “Aunt Ermine will you put my warts away?” and she didn’t ask me how many, she just turned around and looked at me and said, “Yes.” I said, “Thank you.” and went through the door and then when I got outside I realized I said thank you and they are not going to go away. But it was miraculous. They were visibly disappearing from my hands. I remember it being perhaps a week but it might have been just slightly longer than that but it was certainly no longer than that and everything had disappeared. My skin was perfectly clear and that was it. I haven’t been bothered with them since. It was pretty neat and there were other people who had other ways of doing it. My grandmother, who visited often and who lived with us later on in her life, I remember her saying one time that another way to do it was to rub salt pork over the warts and give it to a dog to eat. A friend of mine said that the cure that she knew of was rubbing half a potato and then burying that and then as it rotted then the warts would go away. I do remember my grandmother mentioning that some people used to mark chalk marks on the back of the stove—so that would have been a wood stove—as the chalk burned away they would go away. So it was a matter of a small period of time and if you had a charmer then that would happen. My grandmother could charm warts but she said, “No, I can’t do that for you.” I guess being related had something to do with it but she never did pass on the secret of how to do it. **–Jeanette Russell**



MEDICINE

MIDWIVES

Oh yes! I remember the midwife coming with my younger sister and that was rather traumatic for me. We were told that Mrs. Hussey, who was the midwife that would have come and was well known in the community, I think she was from Tilton, brought babies in her black bag. That's how babies arrived in all our communities. We didn't have a stork we had Mrs. Hussey. She came to my mom when my younger sister was born. But that was it. Not under a cabbage leaf, not being brought by the stork, but Mrs. Hussey brought babies in her black bag. So she brought me a baby sister. **–Jeanette Russell**

I never went to the hospital. I had a midwife, she came from Tilton. Emily Sheppard's mother, that's who born my two children. **–Joyce Chipman**

The midwives were usually aunts and passed down through like that. My mom had a midwife when she had my brother years ago, when she was in Coley's Point. Mom was only sixteen and she had a midwife. That was just somebody in the family. It could've been an aunt or a distant cousin would come there the day or two days before. **–Eyvonne Harris**

My brother Raymond had a woman here in Spaniard's Bay because he was born right there in that house. That was Aunt Mary Sheppard. Down in Island Cove, I was born down there and my sister was born down there, we had a woman who lived next door to my grandparents and she was a Crane. **–Jennie Sheppard**

I know one was Mrs. Ella Hussey and another one was Aunt Sis Gosse.

MIDWIVES

Did your family ever employ one of these?

Oh yes. My mother, all of her children were born home by midwife. Everybody did, you know. Unless there was trouble. They would all come to the house. –**Clarice Adams**

Midwives - when I was growing up there was two. Aunt Maggie Lundrigan and Aunt Sue Sharpe. They were the two midwives when I was growing up. Aunt Sue Sharpe that's who was the midwife when I was born. –**Edward Crane**

I remember when my brother was born—he was the last baby that Mom had. He was only probably three pounds. Now you imagine in them days, having a three pound baby. In the house and not out in the Janeway, with a machine to put him in. I remember, the first person that went—he walked down to the priest's house, and asked the priest to come up. You know, and he came up, and he baptized him on the table in case he would die. Then this woman, she was a war bride. Her name was Morag O'Brien. I think she received the Order of Canada there, in her later years. She came up and she got a box, and she lined the box with wad—cotton, all around—and she put the baby in it, and she put him behind the stove. Like we had an old-fashioned stove, and there was space behind and that's where she put him. And he survived. –**Dot O'Brien**

Four children in our family had midwives and my youngest sister was born in Carbonear hospital which had just newly opened I think that year previous. That was the common thing in those days. I was born in '49 so certainly prior to that and even into the

MIDWIVES

'50s, early '50s. I would say by the mid '50s it would be rare unless you were in an isolated area. There was a Mrs. Hussey from Tilton, and I know my paternal grandmother. She died just before or just after I was born so I don't think she had anything to do with my birth but she was definitely there when my brother was born and that was in 1947. My dad's sister who lived in Tilton, I can't be sure if she was a midwife, but I know she was called on by a lot of people and her name was Annie Barrett. She married a Barrett, she was a Vokey prior to that. I think there was a Mrs. Anthony also but I can't be sure. I don't really remember a whole lot. I do, I mean I was old enough to remember my three younger sisters being born, and I remember being in the house. The third one, the last one of course was born in the hospital, but the other two we would be told to wait downstairs and mom is having the baby. I don't recall it being a big, dramatic type of moment. —*Dianne Carr*

Were there ever any midwives around?

Yes. Well, we were all born with midwives, I mean mom never went to the hospital to have either one of us. But I can remember as a little girl, seeing this lady—I knew her, she lived down the street—Mrs. Janes. Once in awhile I'd see her walk up the road, and after awhile she'd come down. Then the next day I'd find out wherever she was going, they had a baby. You know? Of course, I didn't ask any questions. This went on for a few years. I was connecting her with the baby, not realizing she was a midwife. Then as I got older I caught on. Now my sister's four years younger than me, but at that time when the baby was about to be born, my grandmother or my aunt or someone would come and

MIDWIVES



Medical bag.

MIDWIVES



Courtesy of Pixabay.

MIDWIVES

take me to their place until the baby was born. I didn't stay in the house at all. Then I had a brother after that, he was eleven years in difference, and the same thing happened. They didn't keep me in the house, they just went. At that time, you didn't talk too much about babies or how they were born or where they came from, you know, you noticed if somebody got big, but our parents didn't really sit down and explain things to us. A lot of it we had to figure out on our own, you know. I put having the baby with Mrs. Janes, you know what I mean? Then when she'd come, and somebody'd say, "Come on with me now, for a little while," and I'd go on, and when I'd come back there'd be a baby in the house.

Did you have some theories about Mrs. Janes?

Oh then—as far as I was concerned in the beginning, when we were really small, we used to think Mrs. Janes brought the baby there. You must remember, our parents didn't wear tight clothes, you know. They had these smock-type things, you would hardly notice them.

So you didn't know that you were going to have a new sibling?

No. But when my brother was born I was catching on, I was a bit older, and I understood then, you know what I mean? Now, we weren't taught in school or anything like that. Somebody would tell me that Mom was going to have a baby, and I understood it then—that when they took me, I knew when I came home there was going to be a baby there. I guess they didn't want you [around] if there was any confusion or anything in the house. —**Patricia Rodgers**

MIDWIVES

A midwife didn't just come for the birth, she would've helped after the birth as well. I wasn't aware of before the birth but they didn't just attend the birth, they would've helped out at the house as well. –*Jeanette Russell*

They would come to the house a week prior to due time and they would help with the housework and the cleaning and all this stuff. Then when the baby was going to be ready to come that's what they would do. They would make sure that the afterbirth and everything was cleaned up. Then they would stay another week or so to make sure. Back then when they fed the child all they had, well if it wasn't breast feeding, they had these clothes they used to have made up and sewed like a funnel with a very thin little tight top on it and this is where would put it would be a mixture of bread if they had sugar they would use sugar, be just a mixture of bread and milk and that's what they would let the child suck on. –*Eyvonne Harris*

My grandmother was a midwife for years and that's my mother's mother. They said at one time she was a midwife for years and years. I imagine it was probably a midwife or my grandmother came out when we were born but I don't know. But my grandmother in Tilton was a midwife for years and years.

Did she get paid for her work?

Not that I'm aware of. –*Berdina Gosse*

They'd take the baby, and they'd put this belly band on, right around the baby, right tight. Then they'd take a blanket and put it

MIDWIVES

underneath the baby. They'd pull the foot part up, and they'd pull each side over as tight as they could, and put a couple of pins in it so the baby couldn't move its feet or anything. They'd leave it like that for a week or two before they'd take it out, and then they'd take the belly band off and that. I don't know why they did that, I don't know. They must have had some reason.

Do you remember if the midwife received any payment or any bartering or anything?

I really don't know, but if she did, it was very little, because nobody had much to give her. Now, I would say it would be something from their cellar, or vegetables, or if they had some sheep or some goats to kill, or something like that, they'd give it to her. In later years, she probably did. She probably did get a bit of money, you know what I mean, but it wouldn't be very much, I tell you. But yup, she delivered a lot of babies. A lot. And I never heard of any of them passing away at the time, you know? Probably they wouldn't tell us or something like that, you know. **-Patricia Rodgers**

DOCTORS

If people wanted to go to a doctor anywhere most of the time they would have to walk to Harbour Grace or Bay Roberts. Mainly Harbour Grace to Doctor Cron. –**Clarice Adams**

I think we had one doctor and that was Doctor Axon. He's dead for years gone by but that's who we had to go to. One doctor. We had one doctor. It's not like it is now. I can remember we used to have to pay to go see the doctor. It wasn't too many that went to the doctor then because you used to have to go and pay the doctor. –**Pearl Drover**

Doctor Cron in Harbour Grace he came on horse and sleigh in the winter. Travelled that way in the early days. Later he got a car but he belonged to Harbour Grace. He was a character he was, a real character. He was a good doctor. He did a lot of work in his day I tell you. If you wanted a doctor and we didn't have telephones then you would put out a white flag on the fence and when he was going along if he saw the white flag anywhere he would stop and go it and see who was sick. –**Ruby Rees**

Dad said that when he had his tonsils out the doctor would come to the house. They would [go to] each little community. The children were compelled to get [their] tonsils out. I don't know what they used to use as a deadener but dad said they used to put it on a feather and put it down their throat. Then they would hold them down on the table and reach in and snip their tonsils out. Everyone who got the deadener was on the same feather. –**Eyvonne Harris**

I can remember in the 60s the big thing was to get your tonsils out and I can remember six of us being in the Janeway and it was such a thing to get your tonsils out because then you got to have

DOCTORS

Coke and ice cream. That's what I remember, them bringing in the cases of Coke the night before and the excitement, "We're going to get our tonsils out tomorrow and we're going to get Coke! We're going to go under anesthetic and we might probably die but we're going to get Coke." That's all we could think about. There were cases of Coke because they would give you Coke after to make your throat feel better hence creating an entire generation of type two diabetes. —*Deborah Noel*



Ralph Barrett. 2017. Photo by
Andrea McGuire.

There was a case where this family—the lady of the house was having problems with varicose veins, and they used to bleed. She was always bothered with that. One particular time, the doctor who lived in Harbour Grace was up to the community, because somebody had called him. So when the Mercer family heard that, the husband went over to that house and asked if the doctor would come over and see his wife. And he did. When he checked her over, he said to her husband, "What you should do is get some spider webs." You'd go into the old barns, and everybody had a barn, and up in the beams there's lots of spider webs, like wool. "Just get some of those webs, and put it on her legs and then put a bandage around, and that'll help to prevent the bleeding." That got around, you know, because when he used

DOCTORS

up, over a period of time, what was in his own barn, then he went in somebody else's barn. Hence he got known as John Spider.

–Ralph Barrett

There were two doctors and they lived side by side. There was Dr. Drover and Dr. Avery. Dr. Avery seemed to be the kinder one so if we got the opportunity to visit him that seemed to be a better thing. I was never a big fan of going to the doctor because I always seemed to have either medicine that I didn't care for or having to have a needle. That's when he would actually come to the house. Dr. Drover was gruffer, and I guess he wasn't going to put up with my nonsense. They were in Bay Roberts and they would come for a visit when necessary. The needle that I had, I guess, was some sort of antibiotic. Mom used to say I started screaming when he came around the point, which would've been where the Legion is today, and of course that would've been almost a mile away but visible from our house. I was looking through the window for him but when his car came around the point I would start screaming at that point and didn't stop till it was over. Was not a big fan of needles. **–Jeanette Russell**



HOME REMEDIES

HOME REMEDIES



Patricia Rodgers. Photo by Andrea McGuire. 2017.

My Grandmother, Mary Jane Gosse, had a ‘cure’ for migraine headaches. I’m familiar with it having been her patient several times. The treatment was this. A dark green cabbage leaf was soaked in strong vinegar, place on your forehead and carefully tied on with a sock, nothing else, and kept there until the headache was gone. My guess is that the stinging of the strong vinegar hurt more and the headache was soon forgotten.

–Wesley Gosse, Stories and Stuff Spaniards Bay, page 31

HOME REMEDIES

The only way to cure frostbite is to rub cold water on it. Not warm water—cold water. —**Edward Crane**

I had fevers a lot and mom just used cold water, and cold cloths. Anything to bring down the fever. —**Deborah Noel**

We used to use buttercups put them underneath your chin to see if you liked butter. —**Shelia White**

They would pop out their own teeth. I know that because Dad told me that Pop took out his jaw tooth when he had a bad tooth. —**Eyvonne Harris**

For heartburn they used to take some sort of solution. My father would as he used to have heartburn. I don't know what it was but we weren't allowed to touch it anyway. It was liquid and it fizzes a little bit whatever it was and made little bubbles come up. —**Jennie Sheppard**

I know often when we were sick—I don't know if this was a trick—but we would often get tea with bread in it or toast and they would mix it up I know when my dad was sick mom used to make him pap. They used to call it, pap. Or it could be cookies and tea. But tea I think was a remedy for anything. —**Deborah Noel**

[My nan] would put packing up in your nose. You would take a bit of

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Evening Telegram (St. John's, N.L.), 1900-10-05 Page 37.

HOME REMEDIES

sack cloth and dip it in either hot or cold water. I think she used cold water but I'm not sure. Just make it up into a little ball and put that up in your nose and put your head back. Eventually [the nosebleed] would stop and if it didn't stop then you definitely had something more wrong with you. **–Eyvonne Harris**

If we had a headache I remember mom putting on the vinegar and brown paper. They would take the piece of brown paper and they would spot it with vinegar and then put it on your head and then you would have to lay flat on the daybed in the kitchen and you would lay flat on that till you would say, "Oh my headache is getting better." Sometimes of course you would say it to get that off your head as well. I think it did [work]! Really I think it did. **–Jennie Sheppard**

Tonic—wormwood. My grandmother had a patch of wormwood up in her garden, and every fall she used to make a tonic from it. She used to put it in bottles. If you got down in the winter time, she would give you this wormwood, it was called. Like if your appetite got low, or if you know how sometimes you're feeling blue? She'd give you this as a pick-me-up. Kind of a pick-me-up. A tonic. **–Dot O'Brien**

[Nan] used to do some weird things that woman. Anytime anything was hurt she would bandage you up so that you couldn't move it. Probably it was the same thing as a cast. If you hurt your shoulder or your elbow. I remember I had my elbow hurt and she would just wrap it and wrap it and wrap it and then you would keep it like that for three days. If you sprain your wrist or something like that you just go and get one of those bandages and put it on and three days after it's irritating but it is usually fine. **–Eyvonne Harris**

HOME REMEDIES

Now this is a different one. If you had an earache—this is way, way back now, first when I was a really little girl, because I had forgotten about it—they would take a little bit of wadding, we'd call it, out of the aspirin bottles—I don't even know if we could buy it, so if you had any wadding, you held onto it. For an earache, you'd take a little bit of wadding, and they'd get you to pee on it. Then they'd stick that in your ear. Now we didn't know if the peeing on it warmed the wadding, or what it did. Not everybody did it, but my grandmother did it with us. It seemed after a while to stop it. Now, I don't know. Maybe we just told her, because we didn't want to do it. It was kind of gross. But she just said, "Now, just a little small drop," and she said, "It makes it nice and warm." Now, maybe she was only telling us that, I don't know where that came from. There were a couple of families around—when we'd get talking, we'd say, "Did you ever pee on the, you know," and someone said, "Yes, and I hated that," you know, but as we got a little bit older she stopped it, because she knew we weren't going to do it anyway, I suppose. But that's way, way, way back. —*Patricia Rodgers*

Way back when there was no such thing as going to a store to buy rubber clothes or anything like that. Women would have a sack of flour—100 pound cloth bags—or sugar, same thing. Once they emptied the bag, then the bag would be washed and hung out to dry. They always had a source of cod liver oil at the fishing stage, in a barrel. They'd go to the fishing stage and get a bucketful of cod liver oil. Once the cloth was dry on the line, they would take it in, cut out the pattern for a jacket, and they'd cut out the pattern for a pair of pants, for the fisherman. When that was all sewed together, then the bucket of cod liver oil would be put on the stove

HOME REMEDIES



Vinegar. Courtesy of Pixabay.

and brought up to a simmer or low boil, then the jacket would be submerged into the bucket of oil. Then it would be taken outdoors, taken out of the bucket, and hung on the clothesline. Same thing with the pants. When it was totally dried, then the jacket and the pants were totally waterproof. That was oil clothes, that was what it was called. But the edge of the sleeve would sometimes cause a little bit of soreness around the wrist, by the edge of the sleeve. That was called waterpups. It would get infected sometimes, a little bit of a lump, so they had to wear a chain on their wrist, and the chain rubbing back and forth would rub the tops off the little sore, and it would then get better. **–Ralph Barrett**

SORE THROAT

I grew up with rheumatic fever which is caused by the strep virus so I have memories of having a sore throat for years. I remember being fed a lot of eggnog and custards but I don't actually remember anything being given to me. **–Deborah Noel**

If you had a sore throat you would put a teaspoon of salt into about half a glass of lukewarm water and you gargle your throat about three or four times a day like that. That seemed to be pretty effective because it took all the old gunk out of your throat. It did help to clear your throat up. **–Peter Lane**

My nan would steep the dandelion tops. She would steep those and she would put molasses, sweet molasses. When she made the poultice she would have had to use the dark molasses. That would be for if you had a sore throat or something like that. I remember she used to go out and snip them. I don't know what else she used to do it with. **–Eyvonne Harris**

I remember my mother in law saying that they used kerosene and molasses. Many people made it into a candy—they would boil it up and that was supposed to be good for coughs and sore throats. A friend of mine his mother would make up a concoction of kerosene and molasses and put in a bottle of aspirin and make it into a candy. They swore by that. She lived in Rocky Harbour down on the Northern Peninsula and apparently she was well known for that concoction and people liked it too, so I would think there was probably more molasses than kerosene. **–Jeanette Russell**

For gargling I know we would use salt water. I often had sore throats. As a matter of fact as a child I had strep throat and so I

SORE THROAT

would need to have visits from the doctor. I dreaded to have a needle. But one of the cures that my mom always had on hand for me was to steep out blackcurrant jam. Until recently, and I am talking within the past year or so, I would never not have a jar of blackcurrant jar in the fridge. Not for jam purposes to eat, but to always have on hand for sore throats. It was good and it was one of the few things that was agreeable to take because of the jam and the high sugar content. It would be steeped out like tea and you would sip the hot liquid and that was be very soothing. I believe there is actually some real health benefit to that. I think there is actually something in the blackcurrant that does actually work to sooth sore throats; it is not just a folk tale. Like many folk cures it does have a basis.

–*Jeanette Russell*



Dandelion tops. Courtesy of Pixabay.

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Bayer Aspirin. Western Star
(Corner Brook, N.L.),
1928-03-07 Page 4.

COLD AND FLU

For colds and stuff for sore throats sometimes you would boil up a little bit of molasses with sugar and mix that up with a warm cup of tea with a bit of orange or lemon or something like that in it and drink that. –**Peter Lane**

I remember in my house, that if you had a cold on your chest, mom would always rub Vicks, heat Vicks in a saucer, tea cup saucer, on the stove, lay it on the stove, and the Vicks would melt, and when it was still warm, you'd rub it on your chest and around your neck. –**Judy Symonds**

I know one remedy they used to use was called 'senna' because my mother used to make it for me and it was the most terrible thing ever you drank in your life. [Laughter] Oh I tell you. It was terrible. All I know is she steeped it like tea. It was something like a tea. Where it came from—I don't know. –**Clarice Adams**

Whenever we had trouble breathing, [my mother] would boil hot water and put in some mint or eucalyptus leaves or some such. We would take a towel and put it around the bowl, and we would breathe in the fumes. This would help to clear the sinuses and clear out our nose. –**Sally Peddle**

I remember we got cod liver oil every day every one of us kids every day. That was for colds and stuff like that. Mom would use the real cod liver oil and not the capsules. We would all have to stand up and take a spoonful of it and she would squirt a quarter of an orange in our mouth. But my grandfather used to drink cod liver oil, just drink it from the bottle. –**Deborah Noel**

COLD AND FLU



Vicks Vaporub. Western Star (Corner Brook, N.L.), 1949-02-04 Page 20.



Mustard seeds. Courtesy of Pixabay.

Another cure that I remember specifically, because my brother had the croup—what they called croup in the ‘40s and ‘50s. He would have a mustard plaster put on his chest to try and stop the coughing. The mustard plaster, I believe, was made with flour in an old flannel shirt. The flour was cooked, and then mum put in the mustard—either mustard seed, or prepared mustard, and mixed it up, and the heat, I guess, from the warmed flour must have been kept on the chest to help him. —*Sally Peddle*

STOMACH ISSUES

Fruit sauce was a wonderful thing [for stomach sickness]. Alka Seltzer they would probably call it now. **–Ruby Rees**

They used to give them castor oil every night. My father and them they used to get a spoonful of castor oil. That was probably for their stomachs. To regulate their bowels. **–Evyonne Harris**

If you had an upset stomach, it was baking soda and warm water. Just a little, about half a teaspoon of baking soda and warm water, maybe about an inch at the bottom of the glass, well mixed, and it would either make you sick to your stomach, or you'd bring up gas from your stomach, and then you'd be better. So it worked either way. **–Sally Peddle**

I know my grandmother went a lot by ginger and so does my mom. Just mix maybe a teaspoon of ginger with boiling water, add a bit of brown sugar or something to it and that would settle your stomach down. Also black currant jam was a common one. Same thing, just put maybe a tablespoon of black currant jam, fill it up with hot water and sip on it. That would certainly help. I'm sure as kids growing up we would have had aspirin because that's been around for a long, long time. I don't think we had Tylenol or any of those things but for sure aspirin was available. So you would be given aspirin if you had a headache or a fever or something of that sort. **–Dianne Carr**

I don't remember having too many problems [with a bad stomach] but my grandmother did and one of the things that she would love to have would be a cup of ginger. So we would use the ground ginger spice, and sugar, and boiling water and she would

STOMACH ISSUES



Juniper. Courtesy of Pixabay.



Ginger root. Courtesy of Pixabay.

STOMACH ISSUES



Black currant. Courtesy of Pixabay.

STOMACH ISSUES

sip that. Now as a child I always thought that that was a pleasant drink for her rather than having a cup of tea and I can remember making it for her. Apparently I was able to get the ratio of ginger to sugar down pretty well. But I'm sure now that it was probably a stomach upset and I know she took milk of magnesia which she told us was for a bad stomach but I think actually it's a laxative. I'm not sure about that but she took a lot of milk of magnesia and ginger. —*Jeanette Russell*

[My father] would go in when he was cutting his wood—juniper grew up in there—so he would bring the juniper out. He'd get a brown paper bag, and put the juniper down in it, and close it off and you'd hang it up somewhere so it would dry it out. Then they used it the same as you would tea leaves. You'd steep it in the tea. If you had a pain, or an ache, or an upset stomach, that's what you had, juniper. I kind of liked it. From what I remember—you had a tea strainer, we always had a tea strainer—and you'd put so many leaves in it, and then as you put it in you could see how strong it was, so then you could take it away and put more water in or whatever. They used to put a little bit of sugar sometimes, but that would cure you if you had an upset stomach or pain in your stomach. —*Patricia Rodgers*

ALCOHOL

They'd give you a little sip of brandy or whiskey if you had an upset stomach, you know, that kind of thing. That was quite common. And probably the reason why I like whiskey today. [laughs] –**Judy Symonds**

When I was a teenager and suffering from menstruation cramps we were sometimes given a hot toddy, even then as a young child and that did help somewhat. So that was kind of special. A little bit of whisky, sugar, and a lot of hot water. –**Jeanette Russell**

Sometimes if you had a colicky baby my grandmother always used to say you put a teaspoon of whisky and mix it up with a little bit of sugar and feed that to the baby and it would help the baby settle down a little bit. A colicky baby is a baby that cries constantly no matter what you do. You try to comfort it or soothe it or whatever it still keeps on crying. It can be pretty stressful, especially on a young mother sometimes that she's not getting enough sleep and then you have a baby that is crying 24/7. –**Peter Lane**

I remember my nan, and she told me her mother, they always made their wine, usually blueberry. Even the children before they would go to bed in the nighttime, you could have a hot toddy. When I used to stay with her I would have a hot toddy every night and pass out, cold junk. It probably relaxed your nerves. –**Eyvonne Harris**

Well, you know, [alcohol] was given to children. It would be just a little bit on a teaspoon, you know, or a small spoon, a little coffee spoon, that kind of thing, I can remember. It might have

ALCOHOL



Judy Symonds holding her gin soaked raisins. 2017. Photo by Andrea McGuire.

been mixed with a little bit of jam. Because when they would give kids say aspirin, years ago, nobody would swallow an aspirin, and kids were given usually half an aspirin. So they'd mash it up on the spoon, and they'd mix a bit of jam or something with it, and then it was more palatable to take. It disguised it, right. **—Judy Symonds**

I know you take the raisins with the gin. Could you tell me about that?

I went to something here at the theatre, on my own, and I was sitting next to somebody I didn't know, a woman. We got talking,

ALCOHOL

and I had said to her—and probably rubbing my knee—I said I had a bad knee, and she said, “You got arthritis?” I said, “Yeah.” She said, “Gin and raisins is the answer. I’ve been taking it for ten years.” So I said, “What do you do?” On the other side of me was another woman. She said, “Yeah, I take them too!” I did look it up, and didn’t do anything, and



Gin soaked raisins. 2017. Photo by Andrea McGuire.

then probably six or eight months ago, I was talking to a cousin of mine who lives up in Bay Roberts. I was telling her that I had some trouble with my knee, arthritis. She said, “Did you ever try the gin and raisins?” I said, “No, but somebody told me about it.” “Well,” she said, “it works for me.” I still didn’t do anything until now, my knee is getting worse. I looked up the recipe just to make sure. It’s not much of a recipe. It just said to take whatever amount of raisins that you wanted, in a container, and cover them with gin. My cousin said it should be Gillray’s Gin, or something, like the more expensive gin as opposed to the cheaper gin, and I only found out that some of the cheaper gins are flavoured with juniper extract, whereas the more expensive gins are made straight from juniper. But I just took whatever gin I had there that I would drink with a tonic, you just let them soak until the raisins soak up all the gin. Some people take them two or three times of the day, but most people that I know take them in the

ALCOHOL

morning or when they're going to bed in the night, right. It said to take nine. That's it. My cousin said it worked for her right away, but I've only taken it a couple of times.

Does everybody take nine?

Yup. Anyone who does it says, "Don't take anymore." So if you slip and take ten, I don't know what happens. [laughter] I take them out, I count out the nine, and I got a little small dish, and I just put them in that so I'll remember to take them. I've got to make sure I tell my kids this, in case somebody asks them down the road, "Well my mother ate raisins soaked in gin." [laughs]

—Judy Symonds



Black and White Scotch Whisky. Western Star
(Corner Brook, N.L.), 1949-02-04 Page 17.

HANGOVERS

Hangovers? An egg and milk mix that together that would be a good dose of it and then have another beer in top of it when you get up in the morning. That's about all I know. I always used to hear, "Have another beer." I mean if you got drunk last night the last thing you want to face is another beer. –*Eyvonne Harris*

I can remember my mother got drunk once in her life and the next morning when she had a hangover it was my sister's wedding the day after and I can remember my father giving me some money to go to the store to buy my mom a pop and I can remember coming back with it thinking my mother sinned, because I was in my really religious phase, and she gets rewarded! I remember thinking should I morally let my mother have this? Or should I drink it? –*Deborah Noel*



Baking soda. Courtesy of Pixabay.



Butter. Courtesy of Pixabay.

BURNS & ITCHES

There was a lot of stinging nettles when we were growing up, and would they ever itch. Oh, I hated it when I fell in the stinging nettles. My parents used to get some baking soda and put a little drop of water in it, and just rub that over where—because they used to come out in little bubbles—rub the baking soda over it, and that would stop the sting. But boy, would they ever sting. I'd fall in them once a week, I'm sure I would. —**Patricia Rodgers**

There was a lady here called Mrs. Sis Walsh—she's long dead now—but she used to make a salve for boils, for burns, for sores. Everybody went to her. It was called “Mrs. Sis Walsh's Salve.” Everybody went—not only the people from Cape Broyle, they came from other communities for it, too. I have no idea what she put in it. I can barely remember her. She was an older woman when we were teenagers. But when she died, her son kept making it—he was a bachelor and he was a very good friend of Dad's. He kept making the salve, but I have no idea what she put in it. But was that ever popular. —**Dot O'Brien**

If there was a burn, if somebody burned their hand or something on fire or the stove, the common thing was to put butter on it which was certainly as we know now not the good thing to do. Or lard of some type and then bandage it up. Baking soda was and still is a great thing to use for many, many things. So baking soda baths if somebody had a rash or chicken pox or anything that was itching, if you had a sunburn, baking soda was always a go to for those kinds of things. —**Dianne Carr**

Rub it with butter. My father-in-law had a forge, he was a wheelwright so I'm sure there were burns quite a bit and sparks

BURNS & ITCHES

or whatever so putting butter on was a very common practice for burns. I don't know what they would have done for sunburn. I don't think we burned as easily back in the day. It seemed like you would be out there all day and you would be trying to get tanned so you would be coating yourself with oils hoping that you would be turning brown but that never worked for it. It was always burn, peel, be white again and maybe burn again if you decided to stay outside. *—Jeanette Russell*

POULTICE



Nathan and Margaret Barrett. 2017. Photo by Terra Barrett.

Bread poultice was used for everything. If you had a splinter or anything they would wrap your finger up into it over night.
–**Nathan Barrett**

Growing up, I was susceptible to styes. I can remember my mom using her wedding ring and crossing the stye—I don't know how many times, and I don't know if that did anything—and also putting a poultice—you used poultices for a lot of things. –**Judy Symonds**

POULTICE

I do remember poultice for a burn. It's funny I asked my mom about that and she doesn't remember [what it was made of]. She said something like warm bread and that. But I remember burning my hand on the stove and having the marks of the stove and mom using bread and some other stuff I think. Dried mustard, maybe? Wrapping it around my hand and I don't have any marks. I don't even remember any pain. —*Deborah Noel*

Festering—as far as I know, it would get infected, it would be red—you know ... basically, it got infected, and mom would know that it wasn't healing over or, you know, knitting together, so you'd put a poultice on it and it would draw out the infection. You probably only had to do that once or twice. You'd put it on and they didn't cover it with gauze and stuff like that, it was usually flannelette, that was a wonderful thing. I can see mom now: they would tie it around, and then they would tear it—so it would tear down, and then they'd use these two shorter strings to tie. —*Judy Symonds*

I [had] a friend whose mother was into folk remedies and when we were in university together she had a problem under her arm. She was talking to her mom and her mom said, "Now you know you have to put a bread poultice on that." She said, "Mom these are old folk remedies. I'm sure the doctor can find something for this." So off she went to the doctor in town and she went in to see him and he looked at her and he said, "Do you know how to make a bread poultice?" [Laughter] So that is what she used and it was effective. I can't ever remember having one myself but I do know my mother in law, she did that a lot. That was a common thing for her. —*Jeanette Russell*

POULTICE

Well that's the problem you tell the doctors about the home remedies you used then and they would laugh at you. I'll give you for instance one time here when Doctor O'Byrne was out in this clinic and I was after cutting my toenails and my big toenail I cut it in until it went to the quick and it got infected. It wasn't getting any better so I decided to see Doctor O'Byrne. When I went out he gave me some pills to take but they didn't do any good. So I decided to make a bread poultice, put sugar in it and do up my toe and let it stay on overnight. So that's what I did. The next morning when I got up and took the poultice off my toe it was after breaking and all the inflammation came out. A couple of days after that he told me to come back in two or three days if it was no better so when I went back I had my toe cured. I did it myself. "So Mrs. Drover," he said, "how did you do that?" I said, "I made a bread poultice and put it on my toe before I went to bed." He said, "What's that? I haven't heard tell of that." "Doctor," I said, "this old remedy we used years gone by when anybody had a cut or anyone had an infection we couldn't afford to run to a doctor." He couldn't get over that. **-Pearl Drover**

They put molasses into it too. My dad used to make it. Dad made it for Mom when she had her leg infected. That's what they used to use. Boil a bit of bread, mix it up with molasses and put that on and it would draw it out. If you had an infection it would draw it out. **-Eyvonne Harris**

They used to use a lot of things. Like when you were talking about the mustard. That's what nan used to put on. I was over to her place once and I had my ribs hurt and I don't know why she

POULTICE

packed me in with mustard and bread and wrapped me up in a big old half a sheet. **–Eyvonne Harris**

Well I took a piece of white bread, plain white bread, and I boiled the kettle and I boiled the bread in a dish and when boiled to get the yeast and that out of it I strained it. I squeezed the water out of it. Then I put a bit of sugar in it. I put it in a cloth and I stuck it on my toe. It worked, cured my toe! Doctor O’Byrne couldn’t get over what a bread poultice could do on your skin. He was dumbfounded. **–Pearl Drover**

That would’ve just been white bread, broken up and put into a bowl with boiling water and it had to be applied hot. So you



White bread. Courtesy of Pixabay.

POULTICE

would get it to a consistency where I guess you could get a ball made out of it so it would be very hot and maybe because of the malleability of the bread you could put it wherever it needed to go and the heat would draw out the substance of a boil or whatever was there that was causing the infection or whatever. So that would be the use of bread poultice. –*Jeanette Russell*

Well poultices were, I guess people made up poultices in different ways and some people had, just used like a flour and water almost like a paste and they may have added other things to it I wouldn't really begin to think what they – some people used to call them mustard plasters and I think those were like actually mustard, probably they used, I suppose they could have used vinegar I suppose to some extent that would be stinging, so I can almost see that happening maybe to draw out the infection. –*Dianne Carr*

As far as I can remember, it was bread and water or milk—some liquid—not alcohol, one thing they didn't put alcohol in. It was just a paste—and I don't think there was any other herb or anything, that was all. As that dried, it drew out any infection, or if there was any pus or anything, that drew it out. If you had a cut, you'd clean it and put some iodine on it, and if it festered up, which was the term—they'd put a poultice on it, and that would draw out the bad stuff. –*Judy Symonds*

How long would you leave it on for?

It would depend, you know. Sometimes it would dry out a little bit and it would become uncomfortable. Sometimes you'd have

POULTICE

it on for hours, and sometimes they'd put it on before you went to bed. They'd look at it, and they'd see how bad it was, or if it needed anything, so that depended on how long we had to keep it on. I hated it. **–Patricia Rodgers**

My grandmother—I remember one time. I was at a birthday party, and I spilled a cup of boiling hot tea right here on my leg. I had on some kind of pants, and I had to get that off. I went down to my grandmother. I was crying with the pain. My grandmother had a barrel of lime out in the stable. It was used to do the lathes. It was called whitewash. They used to do the lathes with it every summer, and their houses. It would peel off during the winter, so it had to be redone every spring. Your house, or your lathes—your fence. And she said to me, “Honey, I’ll tell you what you’ll do now to cure that.” She said, “You go out now and get the water,”—because the lime used to settle to the bottom, and the water was on top. She said, “You go out and get some of that lime water that’s on top of the lime barrel out there.” Everybody had a lime barrel in them days. I went out and got it and brought it in. And she made a poultice. Piece of cloth, and she soaked it in the lime water. She laid it on my leg. It was a really big burn. And when she laid it on my leg, I thought I was going to die. Oh, what a pain. When the pain went away, that was it. It never pained after, and it healed up. I couldn’t believe it. A terrific pain when she put it on, but it worked. **–Dot O’Brien**

CUTS

FRANKUM -- It's the solidified, pale pink dried up tree sap that accumulated usually on the tree knots and where the branches have been cut. It was a brittle and extremely hard substance, glassy in appearance. This was a special 'chewing' gum and had a flavour of the wood it came from with a mixture of wintergreen. The first half hour or so was pure jaw labour. After that the texture changed somewhat and you could chew the frankum endlessly. It had its own special quality too -- it kept your teeth squeaky clean. --*Wesley Gosse, Stories and Stuff (II), Spaniard's Bay NL, page 31.*

I've heard of people getting sap off a tree. Myrrh. If there was a cut, you'd put tree sap on the incision. It would act like glue. Mostly I would think it would be [from] fir [trees]. --*Ralph Barrett*

They used to use cobwebs if you had a cut. Mom told me she had her finger cut and nan went out and got all the cobwebs out of the corners to put on it and apparently that would hold it together. --*Eyvonne Harris*

Some people used to use fat pork. Scald the fat pork and put it on their cuts. That's like if you had warts on your hands you could use fat pork and put it on your hands. Fat pork boiled out with butter would cure the works. I've heard a lot of people tell that. --*Pearl Drover*

A lot of times some of the older people would sew it on their own. Sew it together with whatever they used to use. They also used to chew tobacco to put on it so it wouldn't bleed more until they got to a doctor. There wasn't many hospitals then. You would hardly

CUTS

get to a hospital because you had to go to St. John's then. Not like it is today. The Carbonear hospital wasn't there. –**Clarice Adams**

Turpentine, of course. That cured everything. I mean if you got a cut—if we cut ourselves when we were young, Dad went right to the tree. Broke the blister, and got the turpentine.

Do you know what kind of tree?

It wasn't spruce—var, I guess. Because there's no bubbles in spruce. I think the bubbles are in the var. –**Dot O'Brien**



Sap also known as turpentine, or myrrh. Courtesy of Pixabay.

CUTS



Cobwebs. Courtesy of Pixabay.

When I think about cuts I know that a lot of people used the sap from trees. Some people referred to it as myrrh so that would've been from spruce or fir trees. I remember my dad telling a story of him having a bad cut when he was young and they used flour. So he had gone I think to a neighbour's home and they put on a handful of flour and the blood still came through and it was applied three times and eventually that was fine. So I guess whatever you had on hand that you thought would work. So that was a good one. I think that would work - I think that still would work. Although we don't have to do that now. **–Jeanette Russell**

LICE

My mother would keep us right clean and that's what lice would go for. Anyone clean. I remember one time I picked up lice then they had [to get] the fine tooth comb and get a piece of white paper and comb it out of your, and when they combed them they would kill them with the back of their thumb. —**Edward Crane**

The fine toothed comb was the first defence for that. So you would have to sit there for a long period of time and your hair washed and then combed through to take the nits away. If that were the case. I can remember going on holiday to Bell Island to visit my cousins and coming home with them and having my hair cut. We all had long hair then and so my hair got a bowl shape. I can remember my dad cutting my hair and I think that may have been the first time I had short hair then and I was probably five at the time, maybe seven. It was a regular occurrence. If you were scratching, you were going to have your head checked because you had a big family, and things spread. —**Jeanette Russell**

Head lice, that was a common, common problem. It still is of course. It always has been in the schools. Mom would put brown paper or newspaper on the floor and we would sit on a chair and she would brush all our hair up over our heads and down over our heads and a fine, fine tooth comb. It was this powder this kind of really smelly type of powder and that would sprinkle in your hair and then she would leave that for a while I guess to kill the nits, to kill the lice. Then you would comb them out. You would see them fall out on the paper. We were always forewarned: Don't sit next by such and such because they have lice. Don't put on anybody else's hats and keep your hair up. We would get haircuts by mom and dad, you would sit on the chair and just get your haircut and

LICE

that was it there was no picking out what hairstyle you wanted. I mean if the bowl fit on your head and you cut around the bowl that's what you got. That's what everybody had to do. We rinsed our hair too. I think vinegar was used quite a bit in those days because it was easy to get and pretty inexpensive. —*Dianne Carr*



Mecca Ointment advertisement. The old time songs and poetry of Newfoundland. Doyle, Gerald S. 1940.

The background is a solid dark blue color. Scattered across the entire surface are numerous small, stylized green leaves. Each leaf is a simple, elongated oval shape with a small notch at one end, resembling a leaf from a plant like a geranium. They are distributed randomly, with some appearing in small clusters and others in isolation.

PRACTICAL RECIPES & HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS

WALLPAPER PASTE

Wallpaper paste. Mix up flour into a paste and place it on what they call sheeting paper then and stick it on the wall! **–Mike Whalen**

That was just flour and water and just make it thick and then mom would put it on the back of her paper and when we got older we would have to help her till she got it stuck on and you would have to try to keep it on until it got hard enough. That was first when we were young but after that there was already pasted and wet paper. **–Jennie Sheppard**

Wallpaper paste, I can remember that plain, I mean—years ago, before Christmas everybody painted. You'd go in a house and you'd smell paint. That was the thing to do, or you'd put a new bit of wallpaper on or something, so that was the kind of paste that we used, just a bit of flour and water.

Why do you think it was before Christmas?

Because people prepared for Christmas in the fall, but it was mainly—from my recollection, it was done for Christmas. Even with all my friends, it didn't matter what religion they were, but it just seemed like that was the thing. **–Judy Symonds**

RECIPES

I can remember mom brushing with baking soda and water for whitening her teeth. –*Deborah Noel*

We used toothpaste but if you ran out then you would use baking soda. That's what we used in the household and that would be a common thing I think for a lot of people. I don't know of any other thing that would've been used for brushing your teeth. –*Jeanette Russell*

Now we didn't have toothpaste, we didn't have store bought toothpaste, but mum would mix up baking soda and salt in a bowl, and then she would put it in this small glass container. And that was our toothpaste, that salt and baking soda mixture. –*Sally Peddle*

We would wash our hair with soap. We had shampoo in a bottle; I do remember looking at magazines and the shampoo I recall being advertised in those days was called Breck shampoo. I can see those ads now in my mind's eye and they always had the models with the beautiful glossy hair. But other than that I don't recall really a whole lot. Sunlight soap and I'm not sure when Ivory soap came on the market. But I know that most of the time it was and you would get, we had a pantry and there was a sink in the pantry and we would go in there when we needed to wash our hair. We would get up on a chair and put our heads down in the sink and then mom or dad would wash our hair with the soap. For rinsing it out we would usually just take a jug of water and pour it over your head and rinse it out because I don't think, I know in early days we still didn't have water in the house. Then we would also rinse our hair with vinegar so that was something that was done like the

RECIPES

vinegar would get all the soap out and would make your hair really, really squeaky clean. –*Dianne Carr*

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Breck. The Daily News (St. John's, N.L.),
1958-05-05 Page 16.

CLEANING

For cleaners they would have none of the newer things that are on the go now. But you would have sunlight soap for practically everything. —*Jennie Sheppard*

They had Sunlight soap, in bars and people made their own soap out of lye and fat or something. —*Mike Whalen*

My mom and them, you would see them with the iron ore, clothes. It is not easy to get iron ore out of your clothes from the mines. They would have the big washing tub with the scrubbing board, and the blood would be coming out of their fingers. Scrubbing with the sunlight soap on that washboard trying to get the iron ore out of the clothes. —*Edward Crane*

Then they'd hang the laundry out on the line, and the sheets—a lot of them, they'd put it on the ground, on the grass, if it was a sunny day, and that was supposed to bleach them. Because I can remember looking out in the garden, and there'd be white sheets all over, because that's all they had, was white sheets, they'd make them out of flour sacks or whatever they had, right? Then there was always a clothesline, of course. From one end of the kitchen to the other. —*Patricia Rodgers*



Sunlight Soap. Western Star
(Corner Brook, N.L.), 1944-
11-11 Page 26.

PRODUCTS

Cod Liver Oil - The Gerald S. Doyle blue bottle of cod liver oil was a sure sign of spring. It too was given to school children as a diet supplement. Much of it never reached home. –**Wesley Gosse, *Stories and Stuff Spaniards Bay, page MORE 1***

I can remember Friar's Balsam, that was something. And if you had a toothache or something, they put Friar's Balsam on it. –**Judy Symonds**

In them days they had although you don't see it around too much anymore - Mecca Ointment. In a can. It would cure anything. Burns, scalds, anything. –**Mike Whalen**

We were given cod liver oil in school, and we were forced to take it at home. A lot of people broke it on the way home, but you know, we always had cod liver oil, or cod liver oil capsules, in later years. –**Judy Symonds**

Mom said they used to give them a drink. They would get the drink at recess like ovaltine. Mom said she used to be excited to go to school just to get that drink. It tasted like malted milk and they would do that because children were starving and the poverty was so great. –**Deborah Noel**

Now old people mixed up a lot of stuff years ago with remedies. For colds grandmother and them would give you nine drops of liniment. Nine little drops of liniment, Minard's Liniment, it was white in a bottle. Minard's Liniment and you would take nine drops of that in about a quarter of a glass of water, stir it up and give you that to drink. –**Edward Crane**

PRODUCTS

When I was in about grade, I'd say three or four, for two or three years, the government provided Cocomalt in a great big tin. Recess time, the teacher would put the kettle on, just before recess, and boil it. We all had to bring a mug to school. Then she'd come, and she'd put a spoonful or so in each cup, and we'd drink the Cocomalt. It was provided by the government, I think, for us children, to make sure we were getting some vitamins or whatever was in it, I don't know, but our parents couldn't afford to buy it, so we'd have a cup everyday. *—Patricia Rodgers*

Another—now, Friar's Balsam, did you ever hear of that? It's kind of in a blue bottle. It was, you know, since I've been married, you still can get it—but then, dad used to take—another thing for a sore throat—he used to take a little bit of sugar, or maybe a spoonful, and put a little bit of this Friar's Balsam on it. Well, it was the most horrible taste ever you could taste. He would get us to take it down. You could feel it going down, but it cured the sore throat. So my sister hated it that much that if she had a sore throat, she wouldn't tell mom or dad, because it was so hard to take. *—Patricia Rodgers*

We got cod liver oil when we went to school, they gave us a bottle every year. I hated it. Hated it. When we'd be home our parents would make us drink it, because



Doyle's Pure Newfoundland Cod Liver Oil. Western Star (Corner Brook, N.L.), 1949-02-04 Page 18.

PRODUCTS

we got it in school and it was good for us. Some of the boys would have it drank before they got home, but I'd be the longest time. Before each meal, mom would give me a spoonful. I hated it. Oh, it used to make me so sick. That was all government supplied then, I suppose, it had to be. So we'd get a bit of nutrition in us or something, but anyway, it was all fun. You know, you just went with the flow, and there was no arguing. **–Patricia Rodgers**

One thing for a sore throat, we would—my parents would boil molasses on the stove, and when it'd get boiled—from what I can remember, now—they put a few drops of kerosene oil in it. And they let that boil up, and they'd take it off, and they'd give us a spoonful of that.

I heard of someone putting Minard's liniment in the molasses.

Yeah, that's another one. Now kerosene oil, I don't know why they did that, because that was for the lamps, right, but a couple of little drops, and they'd give it to us, so. It cleared it up. But the Minard's liniment is another one, I forgot about that. **–Patricia Rodgers**

Oh and know something else that mom used to do? If you had a sore throat, they would heat the molasses. Now, if you were in Norman's Cove it would be blackstrap molasses. We couldn't buy blackstrap molasses where I lived, but if you went to downtown St. John's, you probably could—but there was molasses, and mom would put in Minard's Liniment. Which mom had until the day she died, or the day she went in the home, and it was probably outdated, probably ten, fifteen years, but she swore by it. She put a little tiny bit of that in molasses. Then you would put the

PRODUCTS

spoon down in the molasses, and you would twirl it, and as the molasses cooled, it stayed on the spoon, and you just sucked on it like a lollipop. The medicine of the Minard's Liniment was soothing, the molasses was coating that, so that was something that we did. I can remember that. –*Judy Symonds*

There were a fair number patent medicines available and used with varying degrees of success. I guess in most family medicine chests - or for us for sure there would have been iodine, mercurochrome. Nobody wanted to have iodine! So the mercurochrome was red and didn't hurt. There was always a bottle of olive oil and it was written on the label that it was not intended for internal use. That would have been for earache or for wax of the ears too. So warm oil would be dropped in. I know with my own children, my son had an earache one of the things my husband would do was blow smoke in his ear and it seemed to relieve it. That is something they did commonly in Bay Roberts - where I lived when I was married. So that was a common cure there for that. –*Jeanette Russell*

The home remedies that we had were mostly iodine and then mercurochrome came on the market. There were self remedies like that. Vinegar, baking soda was used in a lot of things like poultices or bandages. So everybody just kind of did the best they could with what they had. Certainly there were no drug stores and nothing close to us. Even doctors - I mean you would never take up a doctor's time with just minor cuts, and bruises and things like that. People would try and look after it themselves or else they knew a neighbour who knew how to handle a certain type of ailment and so that's how it was done. I mean I don't remember anybody in our family - unless it was a broken bone, I

PRODUCTS

think my brother, I think he broke his arm playing hockey, or fell off his bike or something like that and then he had to go to the doctor and have the bone set. But if it was like cuts, and even if you required stitches unless it was like a huge gash you know it was just okay keep putting bandages on it and let it heal. Myself included, there are people walking around with scars because we didn't have that medical expertise. *–Dianne Carr*

As a young child I did not want to eat and it caused my mother quite a bit of concern. So one of the things that I had to have growing up was a tonic and the one that was given to me and I believe at one point my dad actually bought a case of it was Brick's Tasteless. It was not tasteless. It was horrid. Nobody else had to have it and I drank quarts of it. Then of course I would get these sore throats so they were concerned with keeping me eating. My siblings would probably say I liked the attention more than the food. *–Jeanette Russell*



Brick's Tasteless. Western Star (Corner Brook, N.L.), 1949-02-04 Page 21.



ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

BUTTONING A HORSE



Dave Dunn. 2017. Photo by Terra Barrett.

See, I didn't grow up with animals, even though my grandfather did, but then when I came out and started dealing with animals myself, you got to deal with the problem, you know. If a horse is in trouble—if they need to get a pill in them, you've got to get a pill in them, you've got to figure out ways to make things work. If you've got a cow that's calving and you've got to push it back in, you push it back in until you can grab the legs and finally hook their back legs. You can kind of feel that their back legs are different from the front legs, and then you've got to pull the cow or the calf out.

I had a horse that got kicked out in central Newfoundland. Actually, that's where I bought it, and I had to put it in a pasture out there. When I

BUTTONING A HORSE

went to get the horse, there was a hole in the side. I had to patch it, and I couldn't get a vet. So I sewed buttons on the outside of the horse. Sewed buttons on the top and bottom of the hole, and I laced it up with a shoelace. When I brought it back here—I had called the vet, the vet met me up in the driveway. When I took the horse out of the trailer and she looked at it, she said, "I couldn't have done any better." I never took a picture of it. Never took a picture. I left [the buttons] there until it cured and then [the vet] said, "You can cut them out," so I did, I cut them off. If I sewed them on, I could take them off.

How big were the buttons?

The cut was about that long. Wallace's horse had caulk shoes on it. And that's what kicked my horse. The front caulk just caught in the flesh, and peeled back about an eight inch cut, in kind of a horseshoe shape, so I had to sew three buttons on there, and the rest on top. So it was seven buttons—one, two—yes, seven buttons. I got sutures from a drugstore—I went to a doctor, actually, in Lewisporte, and he wouldn't come. He said, "People will call me a horse doctor." So he gave me some sutures, and I went to the drugstore. I couldn't get any painkiller, but I bought all the orajel they had in the store. That's what you put on kid's teeth, right. So I smeared that all over the horse so that she wouldn't flinch when I tried to sew her. But the repercussion of it was that it was a hot day, and while I was in there trying to do it, I was rubbing sweat off my head—and next thing I know, my forehead went dead, and my nose went dead, and my mouth went dead, and my fingers went numb—oh, it was so funny trying to do it. That was the funny part. It just made it into such a lark. —**Dave Dunn**

BUTTONING A HORSE

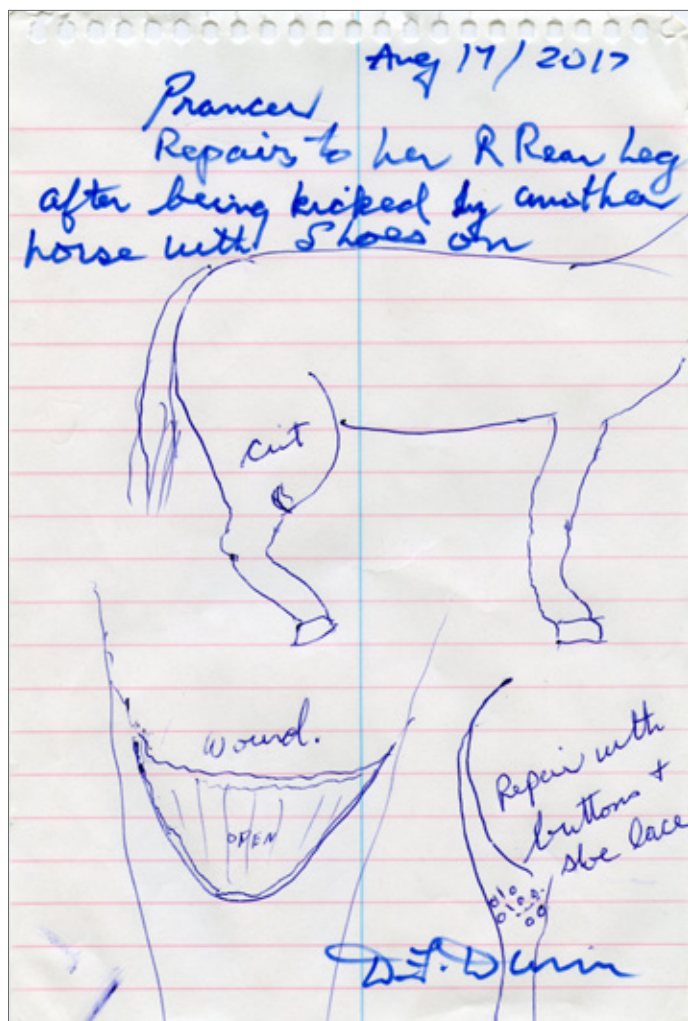


Diagram drawn by Dave Dunn. 2017

BUTTONING A HORSE

Where did you get the idea?

Someone had said that they remembered a cow getting cut on a barbed wire fence in Clarke's Beach. This was in a conversation with someone down there, when I had a cow down there in pasture on Clarke's Beach, and someone had mentioned that—out of the blue—that an old guy had a cow down there one time, and he got cut open on the barbed wire fence, and buddy tried to sew it up, and he put buttons on it, and that's how he got the cut closed. And when we were up there in the field [in Central Newfoundland] and I saw the horse—oh my god, my heart broke, because I had borrowed a trailer from Harry Bishop down in Bay Roberts, he had a race horse down in the track in the Goulds, so he raced every weekend, whatever. So in between races, I borrowed his trailer to go out and bring my horse in. And when I went out to get it, here it was, slashed open. I tried to get a vet, and I couldn't get a vet. I didn't want the thing to bleed to death, so I said, I'll do something, and right out of the blue someone mentioned, "There was a farmer who had a cut cow." I said, "Yes, that's right. And he used buttons." And so I said, "Wallace." His wife was there—Myrtle, I think it was—and he says, "Myrtle, we'll get the buttons! Buttons!" She came out with this cookie tin. [laughs] There must have been 500 buttons in it. And that's where we picked the buttons out of it. Once you got the first one on, you got the hang of doing it. But by then my hands were all numb. I had to look at that finger, and tell that finger to squeeze—no, pull—you know, and you're telling, your mind is telling your fingers what to do. That's the funny part, that's the part that I found so fascinating about it. Anyway, finally it worked out, and I came home and all that. Like I said, animals make everything. —*Dave Dunn*

THANK YOU

Clarice Adams - Tilton
Nathan Barrett - Bishop's Cove
Ralph Barrett - Upper Island Cove
Dianne Carr - Spaniard's Bay
Joyce Chipman - Spaniard's Bay
Edward Crane - Upper Island Cove/Spaniard's Bay
Pearl Drover - Bay Roberts East/Spaniard's Bay
Dave Dunn - Makinsons
Sarah Griffiths Ennis - Placentia
Berdina Gosse - Spaniard's Bay
Wesley Gosse - Spaniard's Bay
Kim Granter - St. John's
Eyvonne Harris - Upper Island Cove
Peter Lane - St. John's/Spaniard's Bay
Deborah Noel - Mount Pearl/Spaniard's Bay
Dot O'Brien - Cape Broyle
Sally Peddle - Toronto/Spaniard's Bay
Ruby Rees - Spaniard's Bay
Patricia Rodgers - Carbonear
Edna Roberts - Labrador/Carbonear
Jeanette Russell - Spaniard's Bay/Bay Roberts
Jennie Sheppard - Spaniard's Bay
Judy Symonds - St. John's/Norman's Cove
Mike Whalen - Spaniard's Bay
Sheila White - Spaniard's Bay

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Newfoundland & Labrador

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