Overview

Explore the medicine chests and bookshelves of the everyday nineteenth-century American through a colourful array of advertisements, popular texts and key documents.

*Popular Medicine in America, 1800–1900* offers access to an outstanding collection of highly visual primary source material, together with supplementary features designed to aid research and teaching.

The resource documents the history of ‘popular’ remedies and treatments in nineteenth-century America, through primary source materials from the extensive collections at the Library Company of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

The material covers popular trends such as phrenology, herbal medicine and hydrotherapy, and documents the rise of widespread advertising by commercial manufacturers of medical aids.

The intended audience for these original materials was the ordinary man in the street rather than medical professionals, with the focus upon enabling him to treat himself and his family at home using an array of inventive methods and fashionable techniques.

“This is a unique digital resource for the study of the social and cultural history of medicine in America during this period”

James N. Green, Librarian, Library Company of Philadelphia

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**Key Themes**

- Botanic Medicine and Homeopathy
- Women’s Health
- Phrenology
- Sexual Health
- Health and Hygiene
- The Thomsonian movement
- Children’s Health
- Production and Trade
- Electrotherapy and Hydrotherapy
Collection Highlights

- A wide-ranging collection of illustrated trade cards, advertising popular remedies.
- Popular texts written for the general public to educate them on treating their medical conditions themselves.
- Ephemera and business documents relating to manufacturing and advertising.
- Writings on preventive medicine and guides to a healthy regimen.
- Comical illustrations satirising the ‘quack’ doctor.
- ‘Self-help’ guides, focusing on common topics of interest such as sexual health, childbirth, and care of children.

Key Features

Primary source content is supplemented by the following secondary features, providing further tools for research and teaching.

- A fully searchable visual gallery of illustrations, advertisements and posters.
- Online exhibitions, showcasing some of the collection’s highlights.
- Carefully selected external links to aid research.
- An interactive chronology charting key dates in the history of popular medicine.
- A glossary of medical terms.
- Topical academic essays from leading scholars.
The Library Company of Philadelphia

The Library Company of Philadelphia is an independent research library specialising in the society and culture of America between 1600 and 1900. This resource draws on LCP’s outstanding collection of medical material, much of which has been donated by noted collectors Charles E. Rosenberg and William H. Helfand, both of whom have acted as consultant editors for Popular Medicine in America.

Philadelphia Museum of Art

The museum’s collection features world-class art from America and beyond. Popular Medicine in America incorporates carefully selected material from the museum’s famed Ars Medica Collection, which comprises a rich variety of sources relating to eighteenth and nineteenth century pharmacy and medicine.

Editorial Board

Charles E. Rosenberg, Harvard University
William H. Helfand, Collector
James Green, The Library Company of Philadelphia

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The publisher is grateful to the Library Company of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Museum of Art for the reproduction of all images used in this flyer.
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