

UNCLE PETE'S REMEDIES

Good day everyone...it's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.

In doing research for a musical about Pennsylvania that I wrote back in 1950, I was pleased to come across George Korson's "Minstrels of the Mine Patch" and it has been on my shelf ever since. And in reading the works of authors who researched the regions and the Dutch country, I have come across remarkable "remedies", which were good for everything and anything. "Uncle Pete" was a character whom Korson knew around Tremont in lower Schuylkill County, and beside being a home remedian, he was also a pow-wow, not for personal profit but to help his neighbors. You'd be surprised how many people go to the Holy Bible still to pow-wow their aches and pains away.

"Uncle Pete" had some great remedies too--using the herbs, roots, blossoms and bark of the hills, creekbanks and trees. As a blood purifier, he recommended woodfern, pepper wood, sassafras root and wild cherry bark in equal parts. "Boil them in a pot", he'd say--and added, winking--"like you'd boil up whiskey". Let it cool, then drink a teacupful three times a day. He had a remedy for nervousness. Make a tea of the roots of the moccasin flower, which you can pick about the time honeysuckle blossoms. Take it twice a day and it'll cure your nervousness. To get the sugar out of your blood, make a tea of horsetail leaves which you can find growing along the culm banks of the coal collieries. Two or three cupfuls a day for three days--then for the three next days, make a tea of the leaves of huckleberries--and take that. And switch back and forth until you're better. If you ached from sore hands and legs, "Uncle Pete" advised that you find the Jimson weed near a colliery

engine house ash pile. Note the exact location! It's a high bush with an awful smell. Fry the leaves in lard and lay them on the sore parts. Guaranteed to cure--but your neighbors would hate you for a few days. Ah, no more so than they did when we wore the assafetida bags when we were kids! Explain to the younger folk what they were. Cured everything, didn't they? Remember? I think the best remedy Pete had was for convulsions. The root of the water-lily boiled into tea was good for them. But you were to drink this stuff before you felt a fit coming on. Now all that sounds silly, but in medicine today, many such herbs which grow in Pennsylvania are used scientifically to cure; and herbology has become a marvelous gardening hobby; jellies, teas, beverages of all kinds are made by country folk for the table. You'll find folks still using weeds, leaves, and smelly-brewed plaster packs to cure those ailments that so much annoy. Ah, if I only knew a Pennsylvanian who had a home receipe for this pain in the big toe that comes on me occasionally. I'm sure such a plant grows in Pennsylvania.

This is Pete Wambach. It's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.