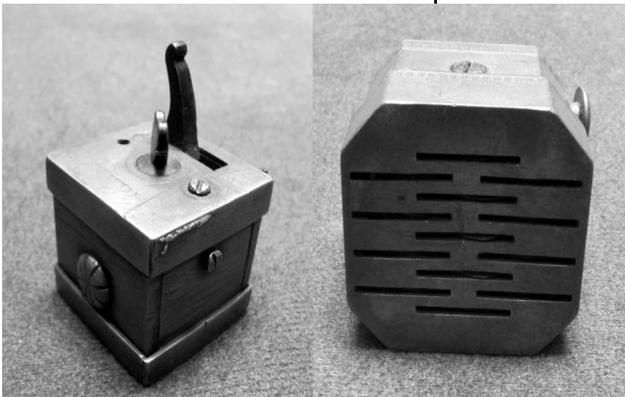


# Indiana Medical History Museum Late Winter / Early Spring 2010 Newsletter

## Bloodletting: Its History and Instruments

Inspiration for this article came from the museum's collection of blood letting instruments—some of which are pictured here.

Phlebotomy, more popularly known as bloodletting, is a process by which a doctor removes some of a patient's blood. Bloodletting was first used by the an-



A scarificator, pictured above, was a brass device that contained multiple blades that operated on a spring mechanism. When the blades were released they would cut the skin, allowing for bloodletting.

cient Egyptians and continued to be a standard practice throughout the Middle Ages. It reached its peak in use at the beginning of the nineteenth century. By the close of the nineteenth century, physicians began using other methods of healing and eventually bloodletting ceased being a common treatment.

In western culture, priests and monks were the original phlebotomists, but this changed after 1163 AD. In that year, a church edict forbade them from bloodletting. In their place was the barber-surgeon who performed

phlebotomies and surgeries. Our modern day surgeons grew out of this profession, which became increasingly more regulated.

Bloodletting was used to reduce inflammation, irritation, and other symptoms. Diminishing the supply of blood was believed

to help these conditions by bringing the four humors into balance. The four humors were blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. In early medicine it was believed that a healthy person had well balanced humors, while an unhealthy person had too much of certain humors

or not enough of others. By releasing blood, doctors would attempt to bring the humors into closer balance. There were four



Lancets were the primary tool for bloodletting. They were used to cut veins.



Glass cups were heated and placed over the area to be bled. The cooling of the cup caused a vacuum, which brought the blood to the skin's surface, making it easier to bleed.

primary tools of bloodletting: lancets, glass cups, scarificators, and leeches.

Phlebotomy is still practiced today. In fact, it is used frequently for diagnosis – when you have blood drawn for analysis you are receiving a phlebotomy. It is also still used for treatment. Two diseases that have found bloodletting to be a successful treatment are polycythemia and hemochromatosis. Polycythemia occurs when there are proportionately too many red blood cells; hemochromatosis occurs when there is too much iron in the blood. By draining some of a patient's blood these proportions (of red blood cells and iron) usually balance out.

# Spotlight On...

## *Rustic Remedies: Cures from Granny's Garden*

The latest exhibit at the Indiana Medical History Museum highlighted a few of the many medicinal plants that were available in Pioneer Indiana. Spicebush, witch hazel, basil, flax, bee balm, purple coneflower, and lavender are just some of the plants that were covered in the exhibit. In addition to providing information about how these plants and others were used for home remedies, the exhibit also served as a preview of the museum's own Medicinal Plant Garden. The Medicinal Plant Garden is planted and maintained by a group of Purdue Master Gardeners of Marion County, led by board member and Master Gardener Kathleen Hull, MD.

Our Medicinal Plant Garden was introduced in 2003 as a way to focus attention on the history of remedies of the past and present. Visitors learn the great extent to which medicines

for centuries, if not eons, were made of plant materials. For example, aspirin, digitoxin, morphine, taxol, and artemisinin are among the important modern medicines that were originally derivatives of plants.



The medicinal plant garden located on the grounds of the Indiana Medical History

## **Coming Soon! Indiana Medical History Museum's Annual Medicinal Plant Garden**

As the snow melts and temperatures rise, our gardeners will get to work on cultivating the Medicinal Plant Garden at the Indiana Medical History Museum. They will begin working in the garden in mid-April and by mid-June the garden should be in full bloom. We encourage visitors to visit the garden during the entire process of planting, growing, and tending. We are excited to begin offering garden-specific activities! (See page 3)

# The Medicinal Plant Garden

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## *Root Doctors, Midwives, and Fried-Mice Pie: Medicine in Early Indiana*

Early Hoosiers only occasionally had access to doctors and lived mostly in isolation. They faced economic uncertainty and practiced self-sufficiency as much as possible. Families learned what they could from the doctors they encountered, but, using folk remedies, ended up doing much of their own doctoring. Modern science has proven some folk remedies effective, but Hoosiers had to be tough to survive many of these so-called cures. Using materials from the IHS Collection and beyond, storyteller Sue Grizzell shared the stories of these early Hoosiers and their efforts at curing their families' ailments.

This presentation was held March 20 and was part of the Sharing Hoosier History through Stories series sponsored by the Indiana Historical Society.

### *Garden Tours*

The Indiana Medical History Museum is excited to offer new programming this spring and summer. Beginning in June, the museum will offer guided tours of our Medicinal Plant Garden. Each Saturday in June through September, a tour guided by one of our Master Gardeners will be offered at 11am. Tours will include information on plants in the garden, their past and current uses as remedies and their contributions to the growth of pharmaceutical science.

It is thanks to our generous donors and supporters that we can continue to offer these programs.



The medicinal plant garden in full bloom.

### *Updated Guide to the Medicinal Plant Garden*

The museum's popular Guide to the Medicinal Plant Garden is back! The Indiana Medical History Museum is pleased to offer this guide for purchase. It is new and updated for 2010 and includes all of the plants located in our Medicinal Plant Garden and their possible uses.

The guide is available for purchase at the museum during normal operating hours.

# The Director's Corner: Featuring Mary

## *New Furniture*

The upstairs Library has a new table thanks to the generosity of the Pless family. The south end of the room contained two rectangular work tables, not original to the space and out of character with the historic 1890's furnishings. John and Lois Pless knew well how we make use of the room – not only as a period setting showing how the space originally supported the work of countless doctors and medical school students, but also as a practical meeting and activity area for various museum programs. Thanks to Dr. and Mrs. Pless, the museum now has a large, handsome, and functional circular pedestal table to use.



Installation of new library table in December 2009.

## *Board of Directors Annual Retreat*

Each year in late January, the Indiana Medical History Museum Board of Directors sets aside a Saturday to review the institution's Strategic Plan and financial status. Central to the gathering is a brainstorming session to discuss new and better ways the museum can fulfill the cultural and educational mission for which it was founded. Creativity and pragmatism were in abundance at the meeting on January 23! Like all non-profit organizations these days, the museum faces a serious challenge to stretch income to cover its costs. The establishment of the guided tours of the Medicinal Plant Garden took place at that table along with plans and commitments to staff the new program with volunteer experts. Led by Board President John E. Pless, M.D. the organization reaffirmed its continuing goals of giving visitors high quality and informative tours, maintaining the schedule of changing exhibitions and accompanying public events, and caring for the important historic site and precious cultural resource, The Old Pathology Building. And the vision of constructing an additional building on our site for supplementary exhibits and gathering places for educational activities lives on!

## Many Thanks!

To those who have responded to the museum's annual fund raising campaign with their donations we offer our heartfelt appreciation. The next newsletter will present a list of individuals, families and organizations actively supporting the Indiana Medical History Museum. We hope others will agree with them that contributing to the Indiana Medical History Museum is an excellent way to give to your community.



**With your help, we can make our next 40 years even better!**

**New for 2010:** Donate securely at [www.imhm.org](http://www.imhm.org). Click DONATE on the top menu bar.

**Please Note:** Donations to the Indiana Medical History Museum, a 501 (c) 3 organization, are tax-deductable.

# How You Can Help the Museum

## *Volunteer Spotlight: Amy Greenlee*

Amy is one of the Indiana Medical History Museum's newest volunteers. Amy grew up on the west side of Indianapolis and went to school at Ben Davis High School and then IUPUI. She now works as an accountant for the Indiana Blood Center and also volunteers with the Susan G Komen for the Cure, the Indianapolis Museum of Art, Ovar'Coming Together, and the Stutz Artist Association. In addition to work and volunteering, she spends her time watching NASCAR, spending time with her husband and their yorkie, and reading as many books as possible. Here is what she had to say about the IMHM....

### ***Why did you decide to volunteer at the Indiana Medical History Museum?***

My husband and I visited the museum last summer and were very fascinated with the medical era and psychology and how well preserved things are. At the end of the tour, our guide Norma said that the museum is always looking for volunteers. I signed up for the training session at the end of August and here I am.

### ***What has been your favorite part of volunteering?***

My favorite part of volunteering is seeing how interested many of the visitors are. They are not sure (as was I) what to expect. I think they are pleasantly surprised by all there is to see. Also, during the last Saturday I was in, I met two people from Belarus who were in town for classes. It was neat to show them a part of our city that is not the standard art or children's museum.

### ***What is your favorite room or artifact at the museum?***

I really enjoy showing visitors the manual centrifuge. The medical people also seem to find it neat. I think my favorite room is the amphitheater. It is a room perfectly designed for many functions which was great foresight by the planners.



Amy in the chemistry lab of the Old Pathology Building

## **Interested in science, medicine, or history?**

Then come use your interests and talents as a volunteer at the Indiana Medical History Museum! As the oldest free-standing pathology laboratory in the nation, the museum offers the opportunity to use your talents in a truly unique environment. Housing an autopsy room, amphitheater, laboratories and brain specimens, the museum gives visitors a glimpse of the earliest research in scientific psychiatry where, in 1896, pathologists began the search for the physical causes of mental illness. The building is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. You can be a part of this fascinating museum by volunteering as a docent to help with tours, or as a researcher to assist with programming or artifacts.

We're always looking for new volunteers. If you are interested, visit our website ([www.imhm.org](http://www.imhm.org)) to fill out a Volunteer Application (under the tab labeled "Opportunities"). Or, call the museum Wednesday through Friday at (317) 635-7329

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President: John Pless, MD  
Vice President: Jeffrey Kellams, MD  
Secretary: Missy Lewis  
Treasurer: Steven K. Stucky, CPA

Newsletter Layout: Elizabeth Becker

Museum Hours  
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Thursday-Saturday - 10am - 4pm; last  
tour starts at 3pm

Website: [www.imhm.org](http://www.imhm.org)  
Email: [Edenharter@imhm.org](mailto:Edenharter@imhm.org)  
Telephone: 317-635-7329

## *Upcoming Events...*

Wednesday, April 7<sup>th</sup> through Saturday, May 29<sup>th</sup>

### **Great Apes: The Culture and Biology of Our Closest Relatives**

Many people feel a strong connection to primates, particularly the great apes, because we are so much alike. This exhibit explores the behavior, culture, and biology of the great apes that remind us so much of ourselves.

Wednesday, August 4<sup>th</sup> through Saturday, October 9<sup>th</sup>

### **John Zwara**

Austrian-born water color painter, John Zwara, came to Indianapolis around 1933. Zwara spent several years living on the streets of the city, selling his artwork in order to buy more painting supplies. A friend of Zwara's, Alexander Vonnegut, recognized that he needed psychiatric help and had him committed to Central State Hospital in 1938. There he was diagnosed with dementia praecox (schizophrenia.) Zwara spent six months at the hospital before his escape. He died a pauper in 1951. This exhibit will feature many of his works that were completed at Central State and will also highlight what little is known of his sad but fascinating life.