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Introduction

This paper, based on notes by Glenn McCartlin, concerns some of the native medicines used by his grandmother, Minnie Fouts (1871-1949). Mrs. Fouts was a highly respected member of the Lenape or Delaware Indian tribe, and her home three miles north of Dewey, Oklahoma, was a center of traditional Lenape activities. It was there that the Big House Ceremony was briefly revived during World War II.



Figure 1. Minnie Fouts.

Glenn McCartlin made these notes when he was about ten or twelve years old. His interest in herbal curing was awakened when he observed his grandmother administer native medicines to a white neighbor bitten by a spider.

Mr. McCartlin is proprietor of the Lenape Trading Post near Dewey, Oklahoma. Some of the proceeds from this business are used to maintain the Delaware Indian cemetery northwest of Dewey,

and to help Delaware families defray the high cost of funerals. The co-author, Jim Rementer, has studied the Lenape language, customs, and culture for many years, mainly with the late Nora Thompson Dean "Touching Leaves Woman." For this article he has researched various references for evidence of the same remedies used by other Lenape, or by Indians of other tribes.

A number of publications refer to native medicines used by the Lenape Indians, especially those derived from vegetal sources. The popular and botanical names of many herbal cures have been listed in these papers (see References).

Historical Background of Lenape Medicine

For many centuries the Lenape people lived in Lenapehoking, the "Land of the Lenape," now New Jersey, southeastern New York State, eastern Pennsylvania, and northern Delaware. Like other Native Americans, they used available natural resources and locally available medicinal remedies including herbal plants, roots, bark, clays, mud, and also the sweat lodge. The Lenape believed that Kishelēmukōng, "The Creator of us all," had placed these curative substances on earth to benefit the Lenape people. They also believed that each type of plant had its own manitu or spirit. One could not casually pick such plants and expect them to yield their goodness. These plants had to be gathered ritually, for it was important to address not only the Creator who made them, but also the spirit that dwelled within the plant. When the required plant was found, a pinch of lēni kwshatay (Indian tobacco) was offered to the spirit of the plant. Then, allowing that plant to remain untouched, the herbalist went on to gather others of the same kind. Such plants, roots, or bark could be used directly, or they might be dried for use at some future time.

Seventeenth-century Europeans travelling in Lenapehoking wrote about the skills of the Indians in using these remedies. In 1650, Adriaen van der Donck wrote, "... the Indians know how to cure very dangerous and perilous wounds and sores by roots, leaves and other little things . . . [but] as we are not skilled in those things, we cannot say much about them" (Donck 1909:299).

Many Europeans had a high regard for native herbalists and curers, although some, who tried to cure themselves without having acquired the necessary skills, experienced sometimes disastrous results. One writer tells us:

. . . There was a certain danger in experimenting with unknown American plants.

A group of Virginia soldiers who . . . gathered a mess of young Jimson weed "for a boil'd Salad" were dangerously affected. A contemporary account says that they suffered from amnesia and temporary insanity for eleven days . . . Then there was John Josselyn, who went out for a walk in the wild country near Scarborough, Maine, about 1638. On a tree, he "chanc't to spye a fruit as I thought like a pine Apple . . . of an Ash Colour." It was a queer-looking fruit, to be sure, and remarkably big; but Josselyn had seen so many strange things in this new country that he was not greatly surprised. He grasped it--only to be stung by an emerging swarm of furious hornets, so severely that his companions could hardly recognize his swollen face (Bakeless 1961: 193).

Later in time, we have more complete accounts written by people who actually lived among the Indians and were treated by a Lenape nantpikes (herbalist) or m̃teinu (medicine person or healer). The Moravian missionary, Rev. David Zeisberger, who lived among the Lenape for more than fifty years during the early 1700's, says, "Concerning plants and roots of medicinal value, it would be possible, if one were to devote himself to inquiry, to secure a great deal of information from the Indians, for what one does not know another does, each man and woman having some knowledge in this direction, some more, some less" (Zeisberger 1910:55). A fellow Moravian, Rev. John Heckewelder, wrote, "The Materia Medica of the Indians consists of various roots and plants known to themselves, the properties of which they are not fond of disclosing to strangers. They make considerable use of the barks of trees, such as the white and black oak, the white walnut, of which they make pills, the cherry, dogwood, maple, birch, and several others. They prepare and compound these medicines in different ways, which they keep a profound secret" (Heckewelder 1876:224).

Heckewelder went into some detail about Indian doctors who use herbal medicines, identifying them as:

. . . good and honest practitioners who are in the habit of curing and healing diseases and wounds, by the simple application of natural remedies . . . Their science is entirely founded on observation, experience and the well tried efficacy of remedies. There are physicians of both sexes, who take considerable pains to acquire a correct knowledge of the properties and medicinal virtues of plants, roots and barks, for the benefit of their fellowmen. They are very careful to have at all times a full

assortment of their medicines on hand, which they gather and collect at the proper seasons, sometimes fetching them from the distance of several day's journey from their homes, then they cure or dry them properly, tie them up in small bundles, and preserve them for use . . . I have myself been benefited and cured by taking their emetics and their medicines in fevers . . . I have also known many, both whites and Indians, who have with the same success resorted to Indian physicians while labouring under diseases. The wives of missionaries, in every instance in which they had to apply to the female physicians, for the cure of complaints peculiar to their sex, experienced good results from their abilities. They are also well skilled in curing wounds and bruises . . . Indeed, it is in the cure of external wounds that they particularly excel . . . this branch of knowledge is carried to a great degree of perfection among them. I firmly believe that there is no wound, unless it should be absolutely mortal, or beyond the skill of our own good practitioners, which an Indian surgeon (I mean the best of them) will not succeed in healing (Heckewelder 1876:228-29).

In the years that followed the work of the Moravian Missionaries, little was done to record Lenape medicines. It was not until the twentieth century that the subject was again treated. In the 1930's, one of Frank Speck's students, Gladys Tantaquidgeon (a Mohegan Indian from Connecticut), made a study of Lenape medicines with Dr. Speck's informant, James C. Webber, whose Indian name was Witapañxwe. This was published under the title *A Study of Delaware Indian Medicine Practice and Folk Beliefs* (Tantaquidgeon 1942). Witapañxwe's knowledge was but a small part of the known Lenape herbalism and curing practices, and it is unfortunate that Gladys Tantaquidgeon was unable to come to Oklahoma where the most knowledgeable elders lived.

The next important work was done in 1969-70 by George Hill. For this study, entitled *Delaware Ethnobotany*, Mr. Hill worked with Nora Thompson Dean, Freddie Washington, Reuben Wilson, and Anna Davis. Pressure to get the article in print prevented him from completing the work as he might have wished (Hill 1971).

In 1973, C. A. Weslager published *Magic Medicines of the Indians*. This book discusses not only the medicines and curing practices used by the traditional Lenape Indians in Oklahoma and Canada, but also those of the Nanticokes. More recently, a section of *Turtle Tales* was

given over to the medicines of the Anadarko Delawares of Western Oklahoma, a group separated from the main body of Lenape Indians for 193 years (Hale 1984).

The following is a list of the Lenape medicines used by the late Wemeehelexkwe (Reverberates Everywhere Woman), whose English name was Minnie Fouts. It is not a complete record of the many herbal cures known to her, but rather a listing of some that interested the youthful Glenn McCartlin and are presented as originally written. So far as can be determined, most of these herbal medicines have not been published heretofore. "Authors's Notes" and "Other References" are so noted, and comments are inserted between brackets.

Wemeehelexkwe's Herbal Medicines

(As Originally Recorded by Glenn McCartlin)

1. To stop vomiting: Take six limbs of Box Elder about 1 1/2-foot long, from those that are pointing east, and scrape these limbs starting from the ends. And take two limbs from a Redbud tree, and put all in a pan with some cold water and drink it every little while until it quits.

Ed. note: Bark and twigs were usually taken from the eastern side of the tree where the morning sun was thought to impart a special strength.

Authors' Note: Box elder. We found no other references to this being used to stop vomiting; however it is mentioned for stomach troubles.

Other References: "If a child was constipated, there were laxatives . . . [one being a tea] made of the fresh inner bark of the Box Elder tree, Acer negundo" (Fielder 1975:175).

[Redbud.] "Bark steeped in cold water for a drink to reduce fever and stop vomiting" (Tantaquidgeon 1942:25).

"Cercis canadensis . . . Redbud. The bark of this beautiful leguminous tree, indigenous and well known throughout the eastern and central United States . . . has been recommended as an astringent in the treatment of chronic diarrhea and dysentery" (Wood and Osol 1943:1311).

2. If you want to vomit, start from the end that's toward the main tree or the bigger end. Do the same way as #1. [This treatment refers to Box Elder and Rosebud as previously mentioned.]

Authors' Note: We found no mention elsewhere of these plants being used as an emetic.

3. Blackberry Roots are used for running of bowels. Take the roots and boil them. When it has cooled off, drink it, until you feel better.

Other References: "Tea made from the root is used to cure dysentery" (Nora Thompson Dean, in Weslager 1973:69).

"According to the Merck Index the active constituents of the dried bark of the rhizome and root of Rubus, blackberry, are in the 'Therapeutic Category,' antidiarrheal" (Terrell 1984:39).

"The vine is combined with wild cherry bark to cure dysentery" (Tantaquidgeon 1942:28).

"500 Indians of the Oneida tribe were attacked by dysentery in one season, and all recovered by the use of blackberry root, while their white neighbors 'fell before the disease'" (Vogel 1970:268).

4. Cherry Bark is used for bad colds of the chest. Take the cherry bark and boil it and drink when it cools off or when it's warm if you prefer. [This refers to the native Black Cherry (Prunus serotina)].

Other References: "Strips of bark taken from different places on the tree and boiled in water to make a tea, which is drunk hot to treat a heavy cold, cough, or even pneumonia" (Nora Thompson Dean in Weslager 1973:76).

"The presence of the cyanogenic glycoside prunasin in the wild cherry bark is the cause of a mild sedative affect. . . as an ingredient in cough medicines" (Terrell 1984:41).

5. Locust Tree [Honey Locust (Gleditsia triacanthos)] chips and bark, boil them and drink when cool or warm.

Authors' Note: Glenn McCartlin remembers his grandmother, Minnie Fouts, using trees with long, sharp thorns known to the Delaware Indians as "Thorned Locust" or "Thorny Locust," actually the Honey Locust (Gleditsia triacanthos). This tree has been misidentified in two published accounts of Delaware Indian botanical cures (Hill 1971:6, 9; Weslager 1973:69, 75). It is, therefore, noted that the noxious Black Thorny Locust, or simply Black Locust (Robinia pseudoacacia), and the beneficial Honey Locust (Gleditsia triacanthos), were both called "Thorned Locust" or "Thorny Locust." The two species were sometimes unintentionally confused in the literature. In speaking of the "Thorned Locust,"

Nora Thompson Dean intended that the Honey Locust (Gleditsia triacanthos) should be used in a tea to induce perspiration and treat colds. She was well aware of the fact that the Black Thorny Locust (Robinia pseudo-acacia) was not a cure in Lenape pharmacology, and might, in fact, cause illness when taken by humans. Mrs. Dean had naturally learned to identify herbal plants by their Lenape names, and since she had no formal training in the labels used by white botanists, she was unable to comment on the accuracy of the scientific names used in identifying these two trees. As a consequence, the similarities in the popular terms resulted in the one being taken for the other. Paradoxically, the noxious Black Thorny Locust tree has thorns which are only 1/2 to 3/4-inch long, whereas the Honey Locust has thorns that are 2 to 3 inches long. Nora Thompson Dean, using the Lenape name Pitblais, for the Honey Locust noted that some plants can have both good and bad about them. The medicinal properties were good, but the long thorns were bad, being a danger to both humans and livestock.

Ed. Note: It is interesting to observe that the Lenape credited Kishel'mukong with having created only good and useful plants, but Mahtantu, an evil spirit, put the thorns on berry bushes and other useful plants (Kraft 1985:29).

Other References: "Thorned Locust, Honey Locust (Gleditsia triacanthos). The bark is used to make a tea which will induce sweating and reduce bronchial congestion" (Weslager 1973:75).

"A bark tea good for a bad cold was that made from honey locust, Gleditsia triacanthos, using the twig bark only. You can call the honey locust by these names in some localities: sweet locust, tree-thorned acacia, thorn locust, honey, honey chucks, or, sweet bean" (Fielder 1975:194).

6. Blackjack Bark: Take the yellow-like bark and boil it, and take for husky or hoarse voice.

Authors' Note: The following references to Red Oak should also apply to the Blackjack or Barren Oak (Quercus marilandica) as they are both in the Red Oak tree family.

Other References: "NTD stated that the Delaware use red oak for hoarseness and to keep the throat clear. To open the throat the inner bark was boiled in water to make a 'tea.' To

clear throats, chips of red oak wood were placed in a bucket of water and the infusion drunk" (Hill 1971:8).

"Red Oak . . . oaks in general contain tannins . . . [and] tannins have astringent properties" (Terrell 1984:31).

7. Muletail Weed Leaves: Squeeze together until the juice comes, then put on face for pimply face.

Authors' Notes: The authors found no other references for the use of this plant.

8. Spider Bites: Take leaves that have fallen last year and wash them together with an old piece of wood that is rotten and ready to fall apart. Boil these, and drink about half a cup two times a day. Also, sponge sore bitten spots.

Other References: "If a black widow spider bites you, make a mixture made with a spider web and dried leaves to put on it" (Willie Snake, Bessie Snake, and Martha Ellis in Hale 1984:20).

9. Also for a sore throat. [This refers to the old leaf and rotten wood tea cited above.]

10. Snake Bite: Get mud from the bottom of a creek or river and put on bitten place. Tie it on with a rag, when it begins to get dry, get some more mud.

Authors' Notes: The authors found no other reference to this remedy for snake bite.

11. Centipede Bite: Kill a chicken and cut the breast out and put on where bitten.

Other References: "If a centipede bites you, rub a hot chicken brain on the bite. Shawnees put a chicken gizzard, while it is still hot, on the bite, (Willie Snake, Bessie Snake, and Martha Ellis in Hale 1984:20).

"I never heard of but one Person bitten in Pennsylvania or New-Jersey with the Rattle-Snake, and he was helpt of it by live chickens slit assunder and apply'd to the place, which drew out the Poysom" (Budd 1685:35).

12. Cactus [For a sore throat] Burn the stickers and cut them out. Slice the cactus and tie both pieces on both sides of the throat with a rag, or handkerchief. When you want to warm them, put them in some water in a skillet and place over a fire and heat.

Other References: "The prickly pear, Opuntia humifusa is in itself a healer. We may bind the peeled stems of the prickly pear over the cut as we would a bandage" (Fielder 1975: 16)

"Prickly Pear: The leaf is shredded and placed on a piece of cloth and applied to boils and carbuncles" (Nora Thompson Dean in Weslager 1973:72).

- 13 Cedar Tree: For anyone having nightmares or bad dreams all the time, burn cedar limbs and leaves in hot coals, and let the smoke go in all the rooms."

Other References: "If people are having bad dreams, they are also smoked with cedar" (Bessie Snake, in Hale 1984:19).

- 14 Bean Tree: Take a very small piece of bark and put on aching tooth. Fix a rag or handkerchief so that it does not touch other teeth as if it touches your other teeth they will become easy to crack or chip off.

Authors' Note: We found no other reference to this use of the Bean Tree.

- 15 Maple Tree Leaves: Place them in cool water, bring to a boil. Put the juice in your eyes if they hurt or are sore.

Other References: "Red maple, Acer rubrum, provided another bark infusion for eyewash" (Fielder 1975:66).

- 16 Peach Tree Bark: Boil in water and take in cups to relieve colds.

Authors' Note: We found no other reference to the use of Peach tree bark.

- 17 Stomach Trouble: Take Birch tree bark and Plum tree bark and an old rotten piece of wood that is ready to fall apart and boil and drink when cool.

Other References: "The root bark of the paper birch, Betula papyrifera, was . . . said to alleviate stomach cramps" (Fielder 1975:128).

Authors' Note: We found no other reference for plum tree bark having this medicinal useage.

- 18 Mud Dauber's Nest or Wasp Nest: Take all the bugs and insects out, boil in water. Take a drink of it and sponge spider-bitten spot.

Authors' Note: Glenn McCartlin relates that his grandmother, Minnie Fouts removed the wasp grubs because she believed the thought of

them would make the white neighbor sicker than he already was, but normally the Indians boiled the nest, grubs and all.

Other References: "A mud dauber's nest is boiled in water, and the strained liquid makes an excellent gargle for a sore throat" (Nora Thompson Dean in Weslager 1973:88).

Conclusion

As more of the traditional Lenape herbalists and curers leave this life, the loss of knowledge becomes more acute. This brief list of herbal medicines and cures supplements and, in one instance, that of the Thorny Locust, corrects what has already be written. It is ardently desired that other efforts at preserving the ancient Lenape ways will be forthcoming.

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PECKED, POLISHED AND PERFORATED

by Herbert C. Kraft

Seton Hall University Museum
South Orange, New Jersey 07079

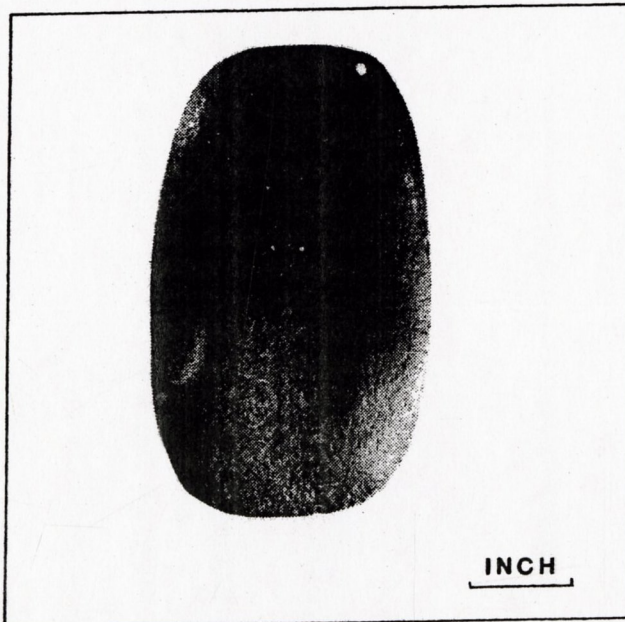
If ever an Indian made an artifact to confuse archaeologists, this is it. Taking a flat greenstone pebble, the artisan carefully pecked and polished it to a smooth ovoid form with nicely flattened edges. He then drilled a biconical hole near one end as close to the edge as possible without breaking through.

Of what use is such an object? Measuring 4 3/4 inches in length, 2 3/4 inches in width, and 1 inch in thickness (12 x 7 x 2.5 cm), it is probably too heavy for a pendant, for it weighs 14.5 ounces (411.7 gms), and would certainly hang askew. It is also doubtful if so much labor and care would have been expended on a perforated sinker (see pages 7-9 in this issue). The hole, presumably intended for suspension, seems so fragile. So what was the specimen used for?

This perforated artifact was found along the Delaware River near Milford, Hunterdon County, New Jersey. However, it is not unique. The upper half of a similarly perforated pebble has

been found on Mashipacong Island in Sussex County, New Jersey.

Information concerning other objects of this kind would be very much appreciated.



Edge-perforated artifact from the Warren K. Miller Collection, Seton Hall University Museum. Catalog Number 80.2-7.