

HEALING HISTORIES

MEDICINE IN YOLO COUNTY

Apothecaries in the old world were establishments for creating and distributing medicine, transforming the relationship between people and nature. Ancient knowledge of medicinal plants goes back generations and were an essential part of Native American, Alaskan Native and Hawaiian Native healing practices with long histories of using native plants for a wide range of maladies.



European colonization in the 15th century rapidly increased the population of the U.S. and expanded markets from the East to the West, creating demand for everything from medicine to cosmetics. In 1860, the first pharmacists arrived

in California. In the absence of a general store or pharmacies, homesteaders developed their own home grown medical recipes to relieve ailments. The abundance of natural resources, which were already known to Native peoples, were used in combination with modern or chemical based medicine.

As we look at the use of medicinal plants in Northern California, we ask how has our relationship with plants changed over time and how medical practices have adapted on our journey toward wellness.



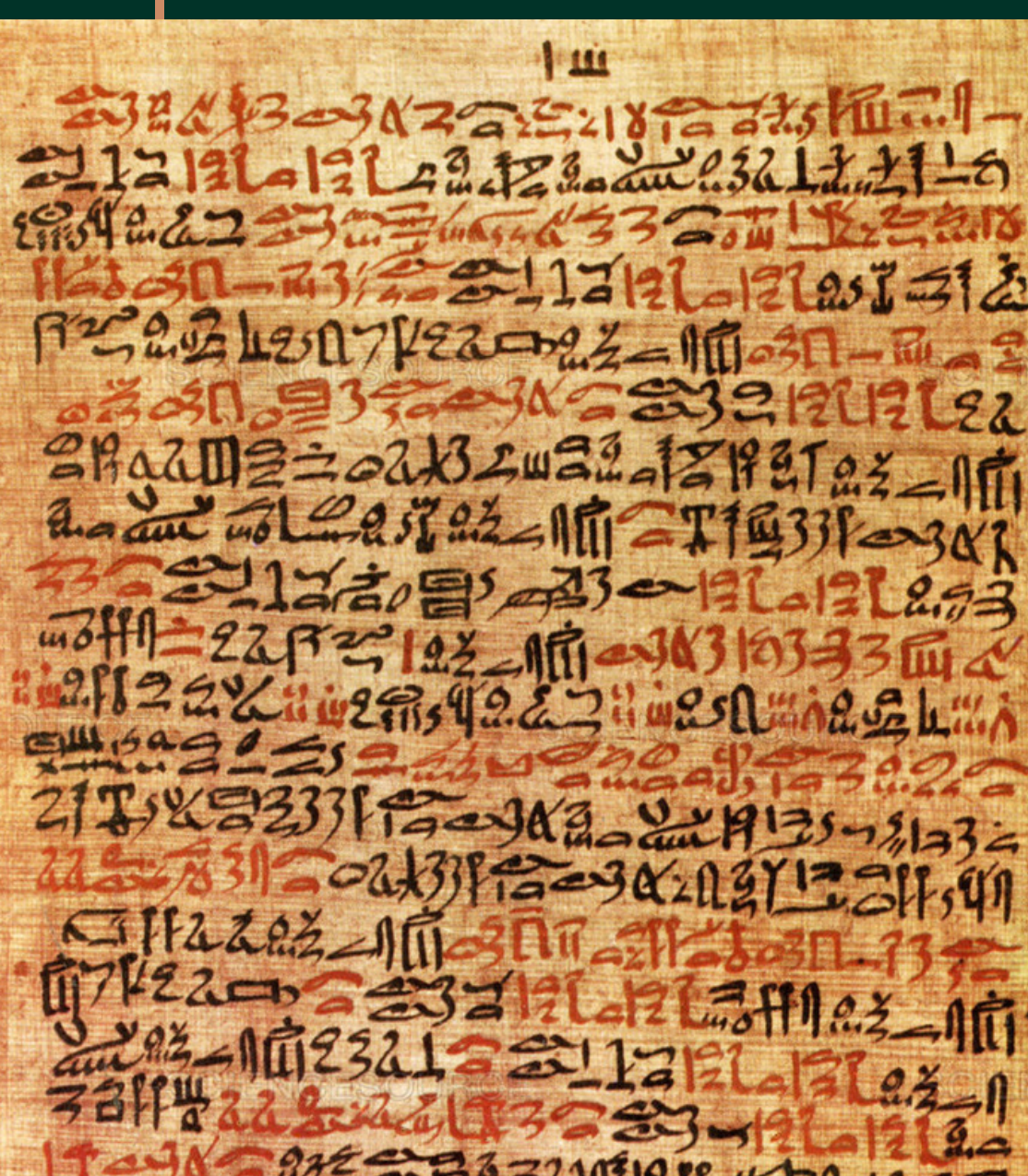
ACROSS THE WORLD

OLD WORLD HEALING

Across many lands and cultures, herbal medicine has been used for the overall health, well-being, and treatment of physical ailments. As far back as the 3rd Century BCE, the Chinese practiced natural remedies through the use of plants. Pen TS'ao is one of the earliest written works on roots and grasses, discussing about 365 different dried parts of plants that could be used in medicine, such as ginseng, jimson weed, cinnamon bark, and ephedra. Chinese herbalists thoroughly studied and practiced herbal medicine, familiarizing themselves with the physical properties of native herbs that were incorporated into teas, extracts or poultices.

Beyond the Chinese borders, other cultures developed their own healing practices. In India, the religious Sanskrit text, The Vedas, discussed treatments with aromatic spices, such as nutmeg, pepper, clove, and turmeric, for detoxification, blood

sugar stabilization, and anti-inflammatory properties. In Egypt, the Ebers Papyrus texts contained a collection of 800 prescriptions of hundreds of plant combinations used for therapy, including pomegranate, castor oil, aloe, senna, garlic, onion figs, willow, coriander, and juniper.



PARALLELS TO TODAY

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' HERBAL HISTORY

Much like the self-care routines people practice today which include daily skincare or morning yoga. Our daily rituals instill meaning into our lives. Ritual and ceremony have always been an essential part of traditional Native American healing. Native ceremonies were sacred, connecting physical and spiritual health with processes and rituals that allow for thoughtfulness and care by reflecting on “Spirit,” “the Creator,” and “the Universe.” These ceremonies included prayer, chanting, drumming, stories, and the use of sacred objects and natural herbs.



In Yolo County the Patwin people, known today as the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, have their own practices that are a part of ceremonial healing rituals. Shamans of the Patwin tribe would perform tribal dances while



preparing herbal remedies using a mortar and pestle. Public ceremonies, called si'ka, were also held each year with dancing, drumming and food to ensure the health of families within the tribe.

Early-American physicians, medical botanists, settlers, and missionaries integrated Native American herbalism into their practices and studies, sometimes at the cost of Native American values and traditions. Eventually, natural healing methods and information about native plants became incorporated into American pharmacological practices.

CHANGES OVER TIME

EARLY AMERICAN PHARMACIES & MEDICINE

The early 19th century was a turning point for the use of medicinal plants in drugs (both synthetic and natural). Scientific discoveries and experimentation with plants marked the beginning of the pharmaceutical industry.

With advancements in chemistry and medical research underway, active substances such as hormones, vitamins and mineral compounds were used with more frequency in medicine.



Ancient medicine allowed for discoveries that shaped modern health practices. For instance, aspirin was derived from willow bark, which Native Americans chewed on to relieve pain. The famous drink, Coca-Cola, was available in apothecaries because it relieved headaches and tiredness due to its active ingredient, cocaine.

Pharmacies and apothecaries have since been separated into different categories of medical practice. Pharmacies have established themselves as more scientific and beneficial to a wider range of

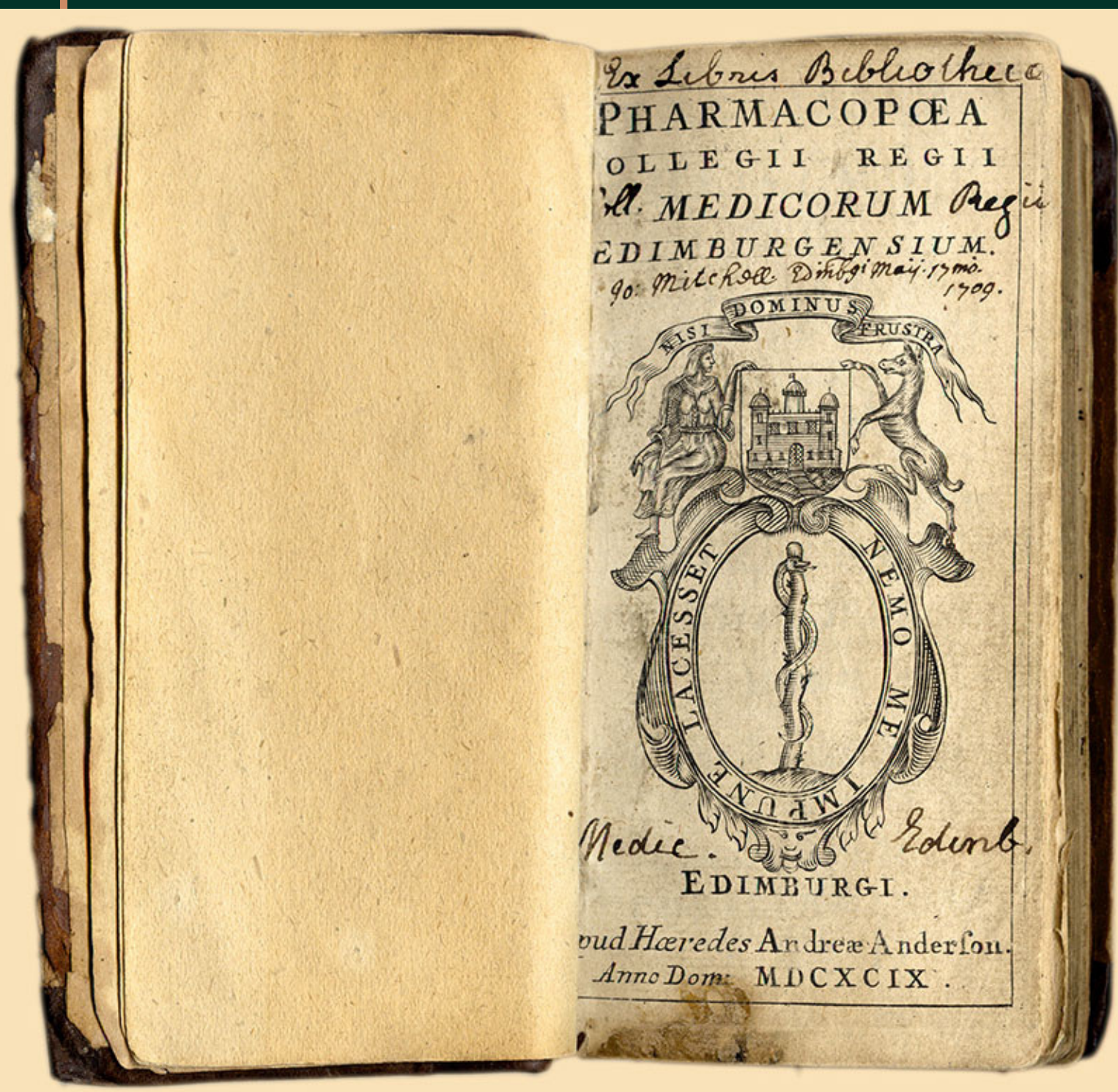
health conditions, while apothecaries or homeopathic centers established themselves as catering to a narrower set of ailments with natural remedies. Today, pharmacies and drugstores largely meet all our medicinal needs.



HEALTH AT HOME

MODERN DAY MEDICINE AND REMEDIES

Many pharmacopoeias (books of medical drugs with their effects and use) all over the world use herbal medicines as a prescription with actual medicinal value based on the experiences of popular medicine and scientific research. Under the recommendation of a physician or pharmacist, medicinal plants can be used on their own or with other synthetic drugs.



In Yolo County, at any Farmers' Markets and natural food stores there are vendors selling locally grown natural home remedies. The popularity of essential oils, supplements and teas have demonstrated the rise in popularity of naturally derived products.

Now more than ever, sustainable production and local resourcefulness have played a major role in our everyday lives. History has come full circle as the wellness practices of the past have evolved into the self-care practices of today.

