



# The Old Train Station News

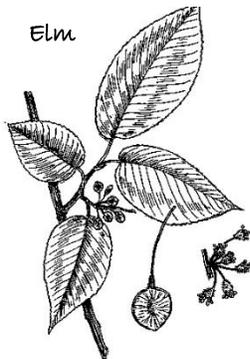
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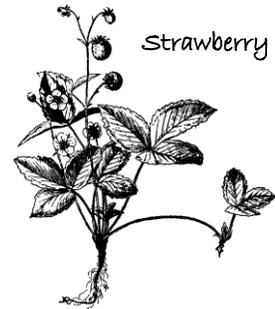
Dear Friends,

If you are of “a certain age” like me, your children don’t remember life before Medicare in Canada. Despite our complaining, we are blessed to have it available for us. Before it’s inception, folks often made tough decisions about whether they could afford medical care. I know my mother often paid the doctor with a combination of money and produce from the farm. Young people find it hard to believe how their elders survived without free medical.

The Mi’kmaq people lived here for thousands of years and were well equipped with knowledge, passed down from elders, of the plants and their medicinal properties. The Mi’kmaq herbalist had a large collection of herbs and remedies which were at least as complex and as effective as those available to Europeans at the time. In an article written on Pre-Loyalist Medicines, the following were among the many Mi’kmaq remedies described by early French settlers.



Nervousness was treated by a potion prepared from the fine roots of Lady's Slipper. Scurvy, coughs, colds and sore throat were treated with teas from hemlock bark or the needles and twigs of spruce and pine. Urinary troubles were treated with a tea prepared from the white pine, and bleeding hemorrhoids were treated with a white oak bark steeped and drunk. Swollen lymph nodes were treated with a juice of steeped high bush cranberries. Warts could be removed by rubbing them with raw meat which was then discarded. The Mi’kmaq knew how to treat superficial wounds, fractures, and dislocations and were familiar with forms of bandaging, bone setting, cauterizing, counter-irritation, cupping and techniques of poulticing, scarifying and venesection. They applied cold presses to bruises and treated various wounds and sores with fir balsam which when chewed or heated could be used as a kind of salve. They closed incised wounds by sutures made of inner bark or the tendons of deer. Beaver kidney was used for a poultice following an incised wound. Beeswax or juniper was applied to cuts and skin ulcers were treated by using the under-bark and juice of juniper berries. Padded splints were used for fractures and they used flint knives to amputate at joints and red-hot irons to cauterize bleeding vessels.



However, there were many European diseases that were unknown to them until they landed on Nova Scotia shores. Plant remedies were put to the test and, as far as we know, occasionally the Mi’kmaq and European settlers shared their knowledge. It was from the Mi’kmaq that Jacques Cartier learned of a cure brewed from twigs and bark of white spruce or hemlock for the scurvy that nearly wiped out his party of French explorers.

During the 1700s, the French at Fort Louisburg were supplied with French doctors using traditional bleeding, purging and blistering as well as the imbibing of infusions or teas and potions. The instruments available to the surgeons included basins for bleeding and shaving, bullet forceps, dental forceps, lancets, spatulas, probes, scissors, and needles as well as scales, weights, and mortar and pestles for preparing the various medications. For many ailments such as venereal disease and insanity, the patients were sent home to France.

It was not until the mid-1800s that anesthetic was discovered to make surgeries painless and that patients recovery rates improved by disinfecting wounds. During the cholera years (1830 – 1850), doctors disagreed over whether the disease was contagious, and treatments included bleeding, massive doses of opium, and cauterizing. At this time, it was suggested there was a relationship between diseases and sanitation, particularly clean water. Local boards of health were established to enforce quarantine and sanitary laws. In Antigonish, Dr. J. J. Cameron was the first Health Officer appointed, at the turn of the last century, and dealt with such issues as reporting the road to the water reservoir as filthy from cattle run-off, the drain on the west side of Church Street was being used as a sewer as cesspools were being allowed to overflow, and the need for a suitable place in case there was an outbreak of smallpox, typhoid or tuberculosis.

A look at death records tells us that many, especially in rural areas, never saw a doctor in their lives. They relied on home remedies, local herbalists, and help from mid-wives. According to Christina Connors, her mother, Catherine (Katie MacEachern) MacDonald was a mid-wife for the community of Brown’s Mountain. She was called on to attend to the birth of many children from as far as Pictou Landing and Marshy Hope arriving by horse and wagon, sleigh or by train. She would be called out in times of illness and accidents as well. Kate produced home remedies, *“Tansy was boiled and bottled and given to women for their monthly cramps. A poultice of milk, bread and onions was used for infections and boils.”* She was often called to clean and prepare a corpse for viewing before burial. Not to be overlooked, was Kate being called to administer to an animal in distress. In the same time period, Catherine McCallum, recalled a cure they had for chest colds, *“which required rubbing heated goose grease on the chest, seemed to work miracles.”*



Home remedies have changed since those early days. Now we go to the pharmacy to pick from the numerous cold preparations whether to prevent them in the first place, deal with the symptoms, or try to cure the virus. We stock up on bottles of herbal remedies at the health food store and listen carefully to the claims of the newest superfoods. As in days of yore, it is better to do something than nothing at all – just in case it works.

*The Epistolarian*

**Upcoming Events:**

**April 9 – May 4: “Mourning in Antigonish” – St. FX student, Natalie Chicoine has a display of items reminiscent of past mourning traditions. All are welcome to view the display until May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018.**

**May: Gaelic Awareness TBA**

**June: Acadian Community TBA**



## Dr. J. J. Carroll: A Legacy

**James Joseph Carroll** was born in March 1901 in Worcester, MA, the oldest of eight children of William A and Emma (MacNanley) formerly of Melrose, New Brunswick. The family moved to Halifax in 1904 when he was just a child, where his father worked as an agent for Singer Sewing Machines. After finishing grade school, he received degrees from both St Mary's and Dalhousie University. On completion of his medical degree, he came to Antigonish in 1930. The present St. Martha's Hospital was only four years old at the time. It was the beginning of the Great Depression with no Medicare or hospital insurance and few jobs to pay for medical treatment. Dr. Carroll served this community with tireless devotion regardless of the ability of his patients to pay for his services.

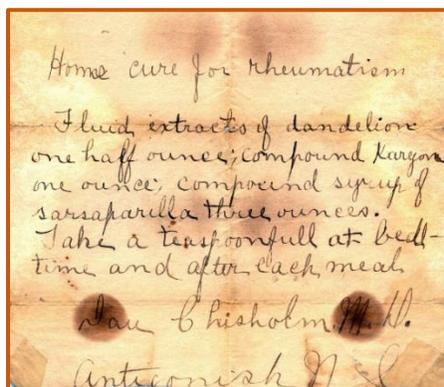


On Jan. 14, 1936, he married Mary Elizabeth MacEachern, R.N., (1901-1981) daughter of Daniel and Florence (Gillis) MacEachern of Mulgrave at Immaculate Conception Church, Truro, NS. They settled into a house on Hillcrest Street, but they did not have children.

At that time most doctors made house calls, a service he provided long after others had given up the practice, and "would go where he was needed." Dr. J.J. lived and worked in Antigonish for fifty-seven years as a surgeon, obstetrician, and general practitioner. His work has been described as a blend of high professionalism, dedication, and compassion. His professional stature was recognized throughout the province and on the national level. Dr. James Joseph Carroll was awarded Doctor of the Year in Nova Scotia in 1973 and a year later, he was awarded Honourary Doctor of Laws at St. F. X. University.

Despite his heavy workload and professional honours, he remained good-natured, pleasant, and was seldom seen without a smile. He remained the same friendly neighbour, one of the best-known and respected citizens of the town and county. He had a love for sports and as a youth loved to swim the Northwest Arm in Halifax. He was also known to love a nice car and in time bought himself a Jaguar. Dr. Carroll was devoted to the women and children of Antigonish. Several families named their babies after him such as Carroll Kenneth Purcell and Carroll Grant.

When he died on Dec 23, 1987 he left an important legacy to the people of Antigonish and area in both fond memories and gratitude but also in his estate. Besides J. J. Carroll House Senior's public housing, he left sport bursaries and the J. J. Carroll Medical Scholarship for students entering medicine from Eastern Nova Scotia. Truly a remarkable man and a credit to his adopted Antigonish home.



### Home cure for Rheumatism

Fluid extracts of dandelion – ½ ounce  
Compound Kargon – 1 ounce  
Compound syrup of Sarsaparilla – 3 ounces  
Take 1 teaspoon at bedtime and after each meal

Dan Chisholm, MD  
Antigonish, NS

Dr. Chisholm was born in Inverness, CB and practiced medicine in the West. His time in Antigonish is not known.

**REMINDER!** April is **membership month**. Please check your membership status. If you are not a member we would love to welcome you on board. Membership forms are on our web page.

