



Ursinus College

Digital Commons @ Ursinus College

Alfred L. Shoemaker Folk Cultural Documents

Alfred L. Shoemaker Pennsylvania German Folk Cultural Files

1950

Folklore Term Paper on Folk-Medicine

Robert B. Long

Franklin and Marshall College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/shoemaker_documents



Part of the [American Material Culture Commons](#), [Cultural History Commons](#), [Folklore Commons](#), [Linguistic Anthropology Commons](#), [Social History Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

[Click here to let us know how access to this document benefits you.](#)

Recommended Citation

Long, Robert B., "Folklore Term Paper on Folk-Medicine" (1950). *Alfred L. Shoemaker Folk Cultural Documents*. 1.

https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/shoemaker_documents/1

This Term Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Alfred L. Shoemaker Pennsylvania German Folk Cultural Files at Digital Commons @ Ursinus College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Alfred L. Shoemaker Folk Cultural Documents by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Ursinus College. For more information, please contact aprock@ursinus.edu.

FOLKLORE
TERM PAPER
ON
FOLK-MEDICINE

FOLK-MEDICINE

(Introduction)

Folk medicine, in my opinion, is one of the most interesting topics of folklore. A few of the remedies are familiar to me, since they have been used by my parents, grandparents, and in a few instances by myself. I know that some of them are reliable, and as a result I want to find out about other remedies and practices known by other people. Some of these remedies and practices are common, others are odd. Some are reliable, others are not. I believe folk medicine, like any other kind of medicine, requires the patient to have faith in the particular medicine he or she uses.

In collecting almost any kind of information of this sort, I ran into a few difficulties. My biggest trouble was to find people who would confess having any knowledge about the subject. The usual reaction of the person being interviewed was that he or she did not know anything about folk medicine or the practice of it. Usually, with some detailed questioning I was able to make them recall different occasions when old remedies or practices were used to try to cure an ailment. I approached one person who would not give me any information, because she did not believe in any of the remedies or practices and refused to tell any one else about those that she did know. None of the people who I interviewed are very old, but rather middle aged. I am not very well acquainted with any old people.

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Do you know any sayings or proverbs about health or illness?
2. What are some of the popular beliefs and notions about the causes of disease that you remember?
3. Do you know of any way that disease or illness can be avoided?
4. Do you know of any way that a disease or illness can be diagnosis?
5. Do you know of any charm or charms that can be used to ward off illness or disease?
6. Do you know of any way to transfer disease, illness or deformity to another object?
7. Do you know of any treatments that pow-wow doctors perform?
8. Can you pow-wow for any ailment?
9. Do you know of any treatments for toothaches, boils, hives, etc?

FOLK-MEDICINE

Listed below are a few remedies and practices with which I am familiar:

1. For earache my grandfather used to blow cigar smoke into my ear and then put a wad of cotton in the ear to keep the smoke in.
2. Warm urine is also put in the ear to cure earache.
3. My grandmother now-wowed for warts which I had on my hand. This was done at a certain time of the month when the moon was shining.
4. She also did the same for corns.
5. To cure a nose-bleed place a coin between the upper lip and gum.

The following material was collected from my father, Clyde L. Long of East Petersburg, who has resided in that town all his life. He is 54 years old. This data was collected on December 12, 1949. I gave him a list of questions and asked him to jot down anything he might know concerning folk medicine. A few days later I interviewed him and he told me the things he had jotted down.

1. To get rid of warts, take a potato and cut it in half. Rub one half of the potato over the wart and at the same time say, "To the Father, To the Son, and To the Holy Ghost". After which the potato is placed under the water spout, and as it rots the warts will disappear.
2. Warts are rubbed with a penny and then the penny is thrown over the right shoulder, and the person who picks up the penny will get the wart.
3. Baby is given catnip tea for cholic or pains in the stomach.

4. A basin of water put under the bed will stop nightsweat.
5. Ham speck put over splinter to draw it out.
6. To do away with freckles take dew off of grass in month of May.
7. Take after-birth of child and bury it under a spout and after the after-birth rots, the child will not get convulsion.
8. Scratch poison until it is open and then put warm urine on it.
9. Tie a string about the finger to keep from forgetting.
10. For Gall under the arms take elderberry leaves and put them under the arms.
11. Smell stocking every night during winter keep a person from getting a cold.
12. If you defecate and someone set fire to it, you get a sore anus.
13. Eat red beets to make blood.
14. Remove foreign matter from one eye by rubbing the other eye.
15. For hiccups drink 9 swallows of water without breathing.
16. For hiccups have someone scare you.
17. Carry horse chestnuts for rheumatism.
18. Take a skin of a raw egg and put it on a carbuncle to make it come to a head.
19. To stop stitches in the side, spit on a stone three times and throw it backward over your shoulder.
20. Before going swimming, urinate on your legs to prevent cramps.

21. A child that wets the bed should urinate into a freshly dug grave, in order to be cured.
22. For waste, cut a notch in the door frame at the same height as the person who has the disease. When the child or person effected get taller then the notch, he or she will have outgrowned the disease.
23. For heavy colds, put wiskey in a cup and burn it until all the alcohol is burned and then drink the remaining liquid.
24. Press a knifeblade on a bump on the forehead or a black eye to prevent swelling.
25. Put butter on a bump on the forehead to prevent swelling.
26. Put mud on the sting of a bee or wasp, to reduce swelling and pain.
27. If you should hook yourself with anything steel, take a cud of chewed tobacco and hold it on the wound to draw out the poison.
28. A fresh cob-web will stop the flow of blood.
29. People carry camphor in a little bag tied around the neck during winter to ward off illness.
30. Place warm cow dung on boil to bring it to a head.
31. Take fresh horse droppings and make a tea of it for a bad stomach.
32. Tie woolen stocking about a sore throat.
33. Piles can be relieved by pouring hot water in a chamber and sitting on it.
34. Goose grease is good for colds.
35. Put something cold on the back of neck to stop nose-bleed.

36. Chew raw dandelion keeps a person from getting rheumatism.

37. For ivy poison, apply household ammonia.

38. Cupping is sometimes used for back-aches.

39. Cupping used to draw boils.

40. Butter is placed on burn or scald.

41. Put paper in shoes to keep feet from freezing.

42. Drink warm water in the morning to avoid constipation.

43. If a persons tongue is coated, then he or she is sick.

44. Slogan, "An apple a day keeps the doctor away."

As a result of an interview I had with Mrs. Lillie Brubaker of Lancaster, Rd 8, I was able to collect the following material. Mrs. Brubaker has lived in Lancaster county all her life, and is about 53 years of age. I have known her all my life and believe the information she has given me is true. I interviewed Mrs. Brubaker over the Christmas vacation.

1. If a child is liver-grown, you pass him around the leg of a table. This is done three times, and the child's head must be in the direction of the movement which should be counter-clockwise.
2. Whooping cough is prevented by putting assafetida bag around your neck.
3. Place a sick person on a sheep skin to avoid bed-sores.
4. For a sore throat, take your left stocking, turn it inside-out and place the foot around the sore spot. The dirtier the stocking, the better.
5. When a baby drools, pass a small fish throught its mouth, after which you put the fish back into the water alive.
6. Water from the first snow in winter prevents sore eyes.

7. For hiccups, put a little brown sugar on the tongue.
8. To stop sneezing, press finger under your nose.
9. To start sneezing, look at the sun.
10. For piles, take pure lard and rub it on a pewter dish until it is the color of pewter, then apply.
11. For a bealed breast, use cocos butter.
12. Wash sore eyes in milk.
13. You get freckles if you go out in the rain on the first day of May. Where-ever a rain drop hits the skin there will be a freckle.
14. To get rid of freckles, on the first three days of May take the dew of the grass and rub it on the freckles, looking at the sun and saying, "What I rub on take off, what I look at take on", then you smack some part of the body. The freckles will go to that part of the body which was smacked.
15. Wash face with buttermilk for a beautiful complexion.
16. Washing face with cloth used in washing milkcans will produce a beautiful white complexion.
17. When a child loses a tooth, place it in a mouse hole and the child will get another tooth.
18. Never pay the doctor in full or there will be sickness in the family.
19. To cure a horse or rotting frog, use a poultice of cow dung.
20. To cure a cold, use onion poultice.
21. To cure a cold, use potato poultice.
22. Tea made from sheep manure is good for bed wetting.
23. Tea made from elderberry blooms is good for bringing out measles.

24. Sassafras tea is good for purifying the blood.
25. Sulphur and molasses is good for purifying the blood.
26. To cure arthritis make a brew or tea out of roots of Canadian thistles.
27. For a bad stomach, make a brew of snake root.
28. Use the pedals of lillies soaked in whiskey for bad cuts or bad sores.
29. Cut corns in the decrease of the moon.
30. Ability to tell a change in the weather by the way a corn reacts.
31. To get rid of mumps, rub the persons face against a pig trough.

Mrs. Mae Mosel of Chambersburg, Pa., gave me the following information pertaining to folk-medicine. I have known Mrs. Mosel for the last five years, and have every reason to believe that the information she gave me is reliable. This lady is around 65 years in age. She has resided in Chambersburg for the last 12 years.

1. For a fair complexion, take a wet baby diaper and wipe the baby's face with it.
2. To stop a nose bleed, put salt on your tongue.
3. To kill a nerve of a tooth, take a piece of pointed hemlock and jam it into the root.
4. Place a woolen cord around the neck for a sore throat.
5. For a sore throat, tie a woolen rag around the neck with a slim piece of ham speck on it.
6. Unsalted butter has healing properties.
7. Mix boric acid and clean lard together to make a salve for cuts and scratches.
8. Rub a sty with a wedding ring.

9. If you step in a nail, take the nail out of the wood and put it in clean lard.
10. Drop a penny down the back to stop a nosebleed.
11. As a cure for ivy poison, use the milk of a milkweed.
12. Horsechestnuts are good for piles.
13. For rheumatism, carry potatoes in the pocket.
14. For piles, cook mullein and mix it with clean lard to make a salve.
15. Gingsen is used for inward trouble.
16. To keep hair from growing, take lard fried from a toad and put it on the place where hair is not to grow.
17. Saturate your hair with coal oil to kill lice in it.

The following information was given to me by my mother, Mrs. Clyde Long, East Petersburg, Pa. She is around 50 years of age and has resided in Lancaster county all her life. I interviewed her over the Christmas vacation.

1. For a back ailment, read different verses from the Bible, and pray the Lord's Prayer every night before retiring.
2. For fits, have the person drink the blood from a menstruating woman.
3. For wetting the bed, cook flax seed and take a teaspoon of the syrup every night before retiring.
4. For tooth ache, take the oil of cloves and apply it to the tooth.
5. If you defecate along the roadside, you will get a sty.
6. Put salt on the tongue to stop coughing.
7. Pregnant women may tie a string around their waist to cut the pain.
8. Tape a coin on the navel to keep the corns from sticking out.

9. For a blood clot, put a leech on any part of the body affected.
10. Put figs on a boil to make it come to a head.
11. For a abscess in the mouth, put a raisin in hot milk, then place the raisin on the abscess.
12. Use tar plaster for croup.
13. Put potatoes in hip pocket to cure a bad back, as the potatoes shrivels the back ache will leave.
14. For asthma, take chicken manure with other herbs.
15. Blackberry wine is good for diarrhea.

Mrs. Guy Long, who has lived in Chambersburg, Pa., for the last ten years and is 27 years old, gave me the following material. I interviewed her at her home around the beginning of December. The information she gave me, in my opinion is true. I have known her the last five years.

1. Sitting on hot pot of turpentine will cause abortion.
2. Goose fat is good for a sore throat.
3. For cuts or scratches, take the carbon from inside of a smoking pipe and rub it into the wound.
4. Bathe sprains in epsom salts.
5. Unsalted butter good for bee stings.
6. Eat walnuts to avoid constipation.
7. To cure wetting the bed, put Bible under the bed.
8. To cure nightmares, put stick under the pillow upon retiring, and take it out from in under the pillow on arising the next morning.
9. To cure hiccups, breathe in a paper bag.
10. To stop the flow of blood, read certain chapters in the Bible.
11. To cure indigestion, take a mixture of vinegar and baking soda.

12. To cure lumbago, place a silk string in the flesh of the back and draw it up every day a little tighter.
13. To cure sore eyes, put string through the lobes of the ears, then every day you pull the string back and forth and that will make the eyes stronger.
14. To remove a corn, take lard and put it on the corn.
15. The first time the baby is taken out of it's crib, it should be taken up to the attic of it's home to make it intelligence.
16. For neuralgia, place either hot or cold packs on the affected parts.

The last person I interviewed was Mrs. Lilly Hyle of Rexmont, Pa. She resided in Lancaster county part of her life and the rest of the time in Rexmont. She is about 55 years in age. I have known her all my life and believe she is very reliable. In the interview which took place last week, she gave me the following material.

1. Ground hog grease is good for frozen feet.
2. Boneset tea is good for high blood pressure.
3. Mullein tea is good for sore lungs.
4. Boneset wine is good for kidney disease.
5. Use sweetroot to thin the blood.
6. Senne leaf tea is good for constipation.
7. Rub frozen feet with snow.
8. Wiskey and nutmeg is good for stopping diarrhea.
9. Penny Royal tea will cause abortion.
10. Take a dishrag and rub it over warts and then bury the dish rag.
11. Place hands in a tub of ice-water to cure head ache.
12. To keep from getting lumbago, place red flannel on the back.

13. For low blood pressure, drink wine mixed with a raw egg.
14. Put a flax seed in you eye to remove a cinder.
15. Handle a toad and you will get warts.
16. Hoarhound tea for colds.
17. Rhue tea is good for worms.
18. Eat sauerkraut on New Years Day to keep well the rest of the year.
19. Eat fish on New Years Day to keep well the rest of the year.
20. If bat get in a women's hair, the women will get bald headed.
21. If bat gets a women's hair, lice will get in her hair.