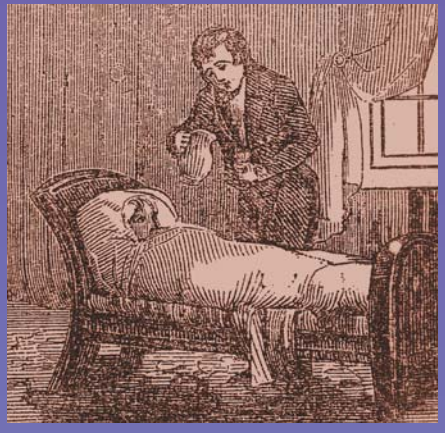

Fountains of Youth

NEW JERSEY'S WATER-CURES

by Sandra W. Moss M.D., M.A.

This is a story about the bustling medical marketplace in nineteenth-century New Jersey, and, in particular, the establishments known as water-cures. What we now call alternative, complementary, or holistic medicine was once referred to as sectarian medicine and its practitioners as irregulars. Most regular or orthodox physicians, often called "allopaths" by their critics, viewed the endless parade of irregular sectarian practitioners as either ignorant quacks or educated, but deluded, quacks. In order to get our bearings, we must look briefly at botanical and homeopathic sects before turning to the hydropaths, hygeio-therapists, and naturopaths.

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Acknowledgements: This paper is dedicated to the memory of Professor David L. Cowen (1909-2006), New Jersey's premier medical historian. Archivist Lois Densky-Wolff, Special Collections, University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, provided expert research assistance, as did the staff at Rutgers University Archives and Special Collections.

FROM JERSEY TEA TO JERSEY CURE

Botanical medicine was a mainstay in New Jersey from colonial times. "Herb and root" doctors and genuine (or bogus) "Indian cures" supplemented the domestic ministrations of housewives and neighbors. "Jersey tea," brewed from *Ceanothus americanus* during the Revolutionary era, later found its way into pharmaceutical compendia.[1] Early Swedish settlers used wormseed and moccasin flower for intestinal worms and spasmodic afflictions. Dr. Lawrence Vandeveer of Somerset, a founder of the Medical Society of New Jersey, credited skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*) with preventing rabies in hundreds of patients in the late-eighteenth century.[2]

False advertising and shameless promotion underlay most of New Jersey's colorful assortment of patent medicines, including Brown's Liver Invigorator, Dr. Brigg's Modern Curative, Goff's Annihilator, Indian Cough Syrup, Dr. Clark's Life Pills, Rough on Bile Pills, Wells' Health Renewer, Pell's Malaria Eradicator, and Jersey Cure.[3] The profitable G.G. Green company of Woodbury claimed that its "attested" August Flower and German Syrup remedies healed tuberculosis, promoted nervous energy, improved the quality and color of the blood, sustained mental exertion, and stopped "retrograde metamorphosis."[4]

DOCTOR WARS: IRREGULARS vs. REGULARS

From its founding in 1766, the Medical Society of New Jersey positioned itself as the guardian of legitimate medical knowledge and practice in the state. Quacks or not, the irregulars represented unwelcome competition for regular physicians struggling to make a living. Repeatedly stymied in its efforts to control practice through state licensing, the regular medical establishment dithered for decades over the problem of medical sects. In the 1820s, the Medical Society of New Jersey denounced the itinerant "irregular-bred pretenders to medicine" whose progress was marked by "cunning, deception and falsehood."[5] In the 1840s, regulars compared sectarian practitioners to "the scrofulous tubercles of the lungs [that] corrode and destroy the vitality of the whole system."[6] A leading Newark physician urged his fellows to banish homeopathic quacks to the "companionship of the superstitions that flourish in murky heathendom."[7] In 1865, the Medical Society of New Jersey counted some one hundred and

Cartoon in the *Water-Cure Journal* ridiculing the regular profession, portrayed as a crude, boorish man grinding up toxic pharmaceuticals.
Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reform, 1849

"Water"

by A.S.A.

Water, bright and beautiful water,

Pervading everything in Nature,

In the dew-drop on the leaves,

In the ocean's curling wave,

In the crystal fountain leaping,

In the lonely grotto sleeping,

In the springs and deep-cut wells,

In the silent shady dells,

In the rills with hues of silver,

In the rapid flowing river,

In the cooling shower refreshing,

In Niagara's cataract dashing,

In polar climes of snow and sleet,

Forming winter's winding sheet,

Where rainbow hues delight the eye,

All pervading element of nature,

Why can half thy goodness measure?

For burning fever, aches, and pains,

Water-cure the balm contains,

The "packing," "sitz," or "dripping sheet,"

Will quiet pain, encourage sleep;

The "plunge," the "douche," "half-bath," and "shower,"

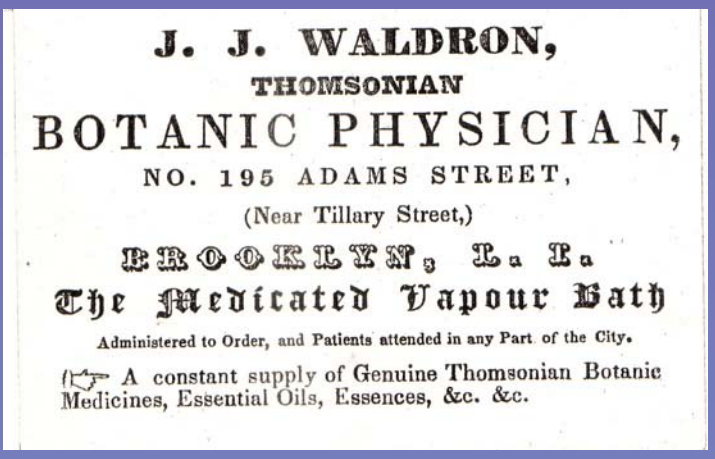
Will inflammation soon o'erpower,

With proper action, food, and air, Water will all our ills repair.

Water Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms 12 (1852), 18

fifty irregular practitioners in the state; of the twenty-one female irregulars, most were "of the class known as the progressive bloomer kind, spiritualists, and infidels."[8]

Nineteenth-century New Jerseyans witnessed the grim harvest of tuberculosis, typhoid, and epidemic cholera. Infant and childhood mortality and death in childbirth were common. The most skilled physicians had few effective medications, modern surgery was in its infancy, and antisepsis was unknown. Leaders of healing sects were united in denouncing the "heroic" medical practices of the regulars, and the public was inclined to agree. Regular practitioners relied heavily on phlebotomy (bleeding) to regulate and restore a vaguely understood internal balance. Generations of doctors purged and puked their hapless patients with calomel (a toxic mercurial laxative) and tartar emetic (an antimony-based emetic). Tonics such as Fowler's solution (an arsenical mixture) were prescribed to build up a depleted system. Irritant plasters raised blisters on the skin to draw out diseased matter from internal organs. As the century progressed, many of New Jersey's regular physicians abandoned heroic therapy in favor of gentler medications and a greater regard for the healing power of nature.


J. J. WALDRON,
THOMSONIAN
BOTANIC PHYSICIAN,
NO. 195 ADAMS STREET,
(Near Tillary Street,)
BROOKLYN, L. I.
The Medicated Vapour Bath
Administered to Order, and Patients attended in any Part of the City.
☞ A constant supply of Genuine Thomsonian Botanic Medicines, Essential Oils, Essences, &c. &c.

Advertising notice for New Brunswick Thomsonian practitioner, J.J. Waldron.
Special Collections, Rutgers University

LOBELIA And INFINITESIMALS: THOMSONIANS AND HOMEOPATHS

The windy promises of charismatic founders of new medical sects held great appeal for the ailing public. Early in the century, Samuel Thomson, New Hampshire farmer and self-proclaimed medical prophet, popularized his botanical system of healing, based on the notion of heat as a vital force. In the Jacksonian era of the common man, any intelligent layman could become a Thomsonian physician and join a Thomsonian Friendly Botanic Society by purchasing Thomson's *New Guide to Health*, and a kit of Thomson's sequentially numbered remedies. The jewel in the crown of Thomsonian therapeutics was lobelia (puke-weed, vomitwort, gagroot) a toxic plant which induced violent vomiting as it cleaned and allegedly regenerated the stomach, the Thomsonian furnace of the body. Enemas, steam baths and "hot" herbs such as cayenne pepper and ginger completed Thomson's system.[9] In 1831, John J. Waldron of New Brunswick paid twenty dollars "for the Right of preparing and using the medicine secured to Doctor Samuel Thomson by letters patent...[H]e is constituted a member of the Friendly Botanic Society and is entitled to all the privileges there unto Belonging."[10] New Jersey had just a handful of Thomsonian practitioners. A Burlington County physician wrote poetically in 1854: "Occasionally a son of Lobelia with his pepper and steam comes hissing through our orbit like a comet from the far-off regions, and disappears as suddenly."[11]

After the Civil War, the eclectic movement, drawing from regular medicine as well as homeopathic and botanical systems, became an important force in American practice. In 1865, the medical society counted thirty one eclectic practitioners in the state.[12] Charles Wilson, "botanic druggist" of Newark, boasted of three decades of "Eclectic, Thompsonian [sic], Botanic, Clairvoyant, and Family Prescriptions carefully prepared."[13] Eclectic physician Amanda Taft practiced with her husband in Newark in the 1870s and was secretary of the Eclectic Medical Association of New Jersey, founded in 1873.[14]

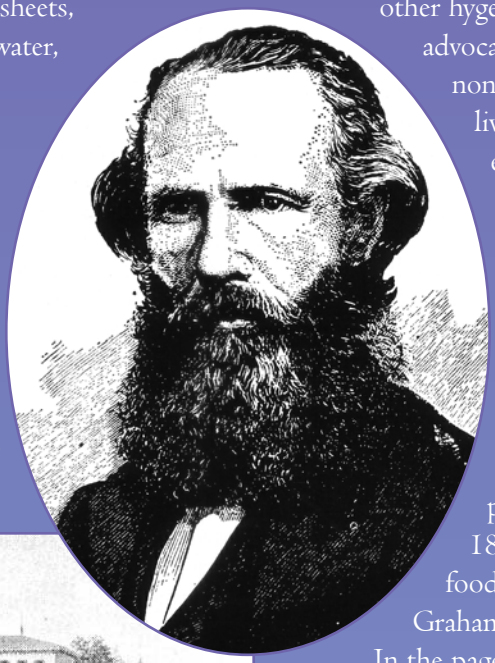
In the second half of the century, the greatest sectarian threat was homeopathy, the invention of disaffected German physician Samuel Hahnemann, who proclaimed his "laws" of similars and infinitesimals: remedies that cause a symptom when given in full doses would cure the same symptom when given in tiny doses. Such "infinitesimals" were created by a series of ritualistic dilutions.[15] Homeopathy, with its educated and sophisticated practitioners, including many German immigrant physicians, appealed to the urban middle and upper classes. With their gentle, watered-down medications and scientific-sounding patter, homeopaths were serious rivals to the regulars, who had little to offer (said the homeopaths) but harsh drugs and their own scientific-sounding patter. Homeopathic medical schools, societies, and journals flourished. Many homeopaths practiced a mixture of regular and homeopathic medicine, an appealing compromise for them and their clientele. In 1874, Newark counted eighteen homeopaths among its one hundred and five physicians.[16] The New Jersey homeopaths formed

their own state society in 1877. In debating the question of a state board of medical examiners, the president of the MSNJ declared in 1889: "At the present time the only quackery to legislate against in our state is Homeopathy. What chance is there against this powerful organization?"[17]

When a state board of medical examiners was finally created in 1890, however, the statute called for five regulars, three homeopaths and even one eclectic member. By 1910, New Jersey's homeopaths and eclectics were welcomed into the ranks of the regulars; all three united in opposition to what they all saw as the new common threat from osteopathy.[18]

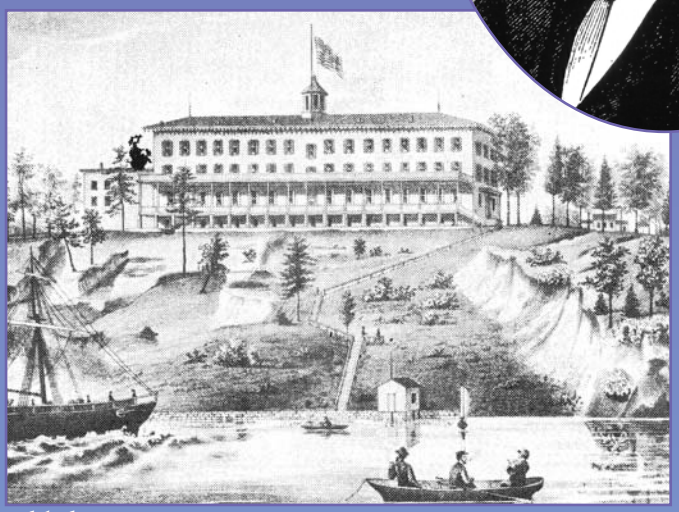
THE WATER-CURE: PACKING, PLUNGING, AND SITZING

Physicians and healers since time immemorial have used water in the form of baths and compresses as part of their therapeutic arsenal. In the 1820s, Vincent Priessnitz, an Austrian farmer, catapulted his personal cold-water cure into a "system" of hydropathic treatment for all the afflictions of mankind. Priessnitz opened the world's first water-cure establishment at Gräfenberg, Austria, in 1826, enjoying great success among the European glitterati of the day (along with some Americans), while influencing a generation of devoted disciples. Not for the timid (or very sick) were the vigorous regimens of wet bandages, baths, showers, soaks, copious water drinking, and a rather grim diet. Although some regular medical men were wooed and won, others became severe critics; one such critic called Priessnitz a "water-daemon."[19] In contrast to the hot mineral waters so enjoyed by Europeans at pleasant resorts such as Bath and Baden Baden, hydropathic cures worked through the force of pure, cold water. A Philadelphia medical journal pronounced hydropathy the "reigning humbug in Europe" and predicted that Americans would happily submit themselves to wet sheets, tumblers of cold water, and "stale rye bread."[20]



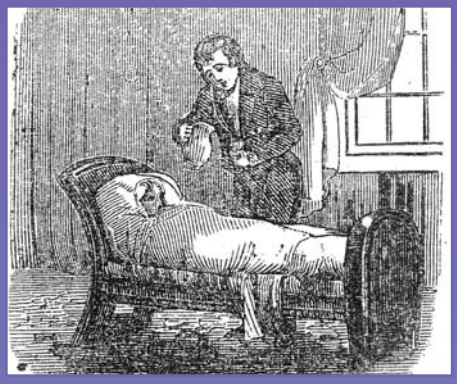
Right: Russell G. Trall, American champion of the water-cure.

Below: Trall's Hygeian Home and Hygeio-Therapeutic College, Florence, New Jersey. J.D. Scott, *Historical Atlas of Burlington County, New Jersey*, 1876



One of the first water-cures in America was opened in New York in 1844 by Russell T. Trall M.D., a graduate of Albany Medical College and the American champion of the Preissnitz water-cure. Trall had studied regular medicine in search of a solution to his own unspecified "persistent ailments." According to an 1891 biography, however, he discovered that "the only true remedial agents were those bearing a normal relation to the vital organism, like air, light, water, food, exercise, sleep, electricity, etc."[21] Trall adopted the more inclusive and scientific-sounding name "hygeio-therapy" for his system. The New York Hydropathic School, later the New York Hygeio-Therapeutic College, was opened at Trall's water-cure institute in 1853. In addition to water-cure, Trall and other hygeio-therapists advocated temperance, non-smoking, hygienic living, physical exercise, vegetarianism, sensible dress (no tight-laced corsets!), sex and childbirth education, and the unbleached and unsifted flour promoted in the 1830s by preacher and food reformer Sylvester Graham.[22]

In the pages of the *Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms*, Trall outlined the American version of Preissnitz's water-cure system. The wet-sheet packing, in which a cold wet sheet and an outer layer of blankets were tightly wrapped about the body, was said to "correct morbid and restore healthy secretions" in addition to sedating and soothing the nervous system. The mummified patient was left to shiver, then sweat, for fifteen minutes to two hours. In rubbing wet-sheet treatments, patients were wrapped in a wet sheet and rubbed "energetically and perseveringly" to divert internal toxins to the pores of the skin. For the fit and hardy, there was the douche (shower), in which a forceful torrent of piped-in mountain spring water gushed onto the patient from above. The douche was said to "arouse the absorbent system." The



The wet-sheet pack, believed to rid the body of toxins through the pores in the skin.

Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms, 1850

The douche-bath, a forceful gush of cold water, often piped in from a mountain stream, which fell from a height upon hardy subjects.

R.T. Trall, *Hydropathic Encyclopedia*, 1853

The sitting-bath or sitz-bath, conducive to reading.

R.T. Trall, *Hydropathic Encyclopedia*, 1853

The plunge-bath, a quick total-body dip in a pool of cool water, often following a wet-sheet pack.

Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms, 1850

sitting or "sitz" bath, still used today for symptomatic relief of painful bottoms, was recommended as a "revulsive" for "affections of the head and chest" (presumably drawing the toxins away from the affected areas) as well as a "corroborant" for disorders of the lower abdomen and pelvis. The cold plunge bath, a quick immersion of the whole body up to the neck, was recommended after packings and as a regular morning ablution. Both men and women might be prescribed the "wet dress," a coarse cotton or linen garment to be worn at night. Wet bandages were applied to the chest or abdomen to treat regional afflictions. The liberal intake of pure water and, at the other end, colonic irrigations were also part of various water-cure regimens. Insistence on cold water treatments was variable, and tepid or warm water was used in some patients.[23]

Hygeio-therapy had much to recommend it. Leaders of the profession emphasized personal responsibility for health and the role of the mind and emotions in intensifying symptoms. Magazine articles and books such as Trall's "Water-Cure for the Million and The Hydropathic Encyclopedia" laid out programs for home care and consumer education. The hydropathic emphasis on personal cleanliness, emerging in an era when regular bathing was considered esthetically unnecessary and even dangerous, appeals to our modern sensibilities.

For some converts, hydropathy took on a moralistic tone, as they washed away "corruption and putrefaction."[24] Hydropathy fit in well with mid-century reformist ideals of human perfectibility. Women, as the guardians of family health, found that hydropathy appealed to their intellectual and egalitarian sensibilities. Like homeopathic and eclectic medical schools, the hydropathic schools welcomed women students and faculty. Women, who turned to hydropathy for "female complaints," appreciated the presence of a female doctor on staff.[25] Trall's daughter-in-law, Rebecca, was also an M.D. and water-cure doctor. In 1853, the ladies of Trenton formed a water-cure society for "those ladies who desire to become better acquainted with their own constitutions, and feel disposed to engage in the work of forwarding a proper system of female physical, as well as mental, education."[26]

In his "Hydropathic Encyclopedia," Trall fired back at the regulars who were critical of hydropathy and other drugless sects: "...no age of the world presents a medley of medical scribblers in the regular profession more biased and bigoted in their notions, more visionary in their speculations, more puerile in their theories, and more inconsistent in their practices, than is furnished by the history of the present state of the medical profession in this country."[27]

The Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reform, to which Trall was a major contributor, reached a large audience and readers were urged to sign up new subscribers. In 1853, a Princeton student wrote to inform the editor that he was busy with his studies and had little time to sell subscriptions. He was pleased to report that "quite a number of the students have the Water-Cure Encyclopaedia, by Dr. Trall, and various other of your publications."[28]

JERSEY WATER-CURES: CRYSTAL-CLEAR WATERS IN THE GARDEN STATE

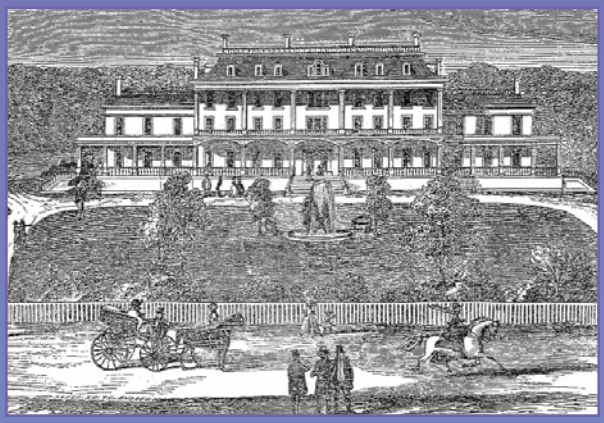
In 1867, Trall brought his water-cure to New Jersey, founding the Eastern Hygeian Home at scenic Florence Heights overlooking the Delaware River (Burlington County). The grand establishment catered to three hundred

residents. Recreations such as billiards, rowing, and a river promenade complemented the hydropathic regimens.[29] By 1869, Trall's Hygeio-Therapeutic College transferred operations to the Florence establishment. Among the students was young John Harvey Kellogg, who would go on to earn an M.D. from Bellevue Medical College and make his name as the colon-obsessed medical director of the sanitarium at Battle Creek, Michigan (celebrated in the film "The Road to Wellville").[30] Trall's institute continued until 1875, when it was offered for sale. He died from complications of a respiratory infection in 1877 and is buried in Florence.[31]

In 1967, Harry B. Weiss, New Jersey State entomologist and a prolific historian of Jerseyana, together with Howard R. Kemble, wrote "The Great American Water-Cure Craze," painstakingly documenting over two hundred American water cures, including ten in New Jersey. Typically, guests stayed for weeks or months, Resident physicians often boasted European credentials. Many water-cures, located in lush rural settings. were operated and advertised like magnificent resort hotels. The earliest known water-cure in New Jersey was in Morristown, where Dr. George Dexter, an associate of Trall, operated his rather pricey ($12 per week) and short-lived facility between 1845 and 1847, complete with a spacious plunge bath and spring-fed douche. From Morristown, Dexter published *The Fountain or Hydropathic Journal,* which lasted just two issues.[32]

The Orange Mountain Water-Cure, opened in 1848, operated from an impressive building situated on sixteen scenic acres in South Orange, "on the line of the Morris and Essex Railway, by which passengers are landed at the Station House of the establishment." Founder and first director, Dr. Charles H. Meeker of Newark, had observed and studied with Priessnitz in Austria for over a year.[33] *The Water Cure Journal* proclaimed that Meeker "has the largest, best, and every way the most attractive Water Cure House in the State, which is always liberally patronized. This place needs no recommendation from us."[34]

Advertisements boasted of "extensive panoramic views" and woodland paths.[35] By 1851, the expanding water-cure-cum-resort, with room for one hundred "cure-guests," offered an outdoor packing room, plunge bath, douche, wave bath, and swimming bath as well as horses, billiards, bowling, and, (for the ladies) a working flower garden. As was common among American water-cure establishments, owners and medical directors came and went in rapid succession. For a time, German medical graduate Dr. Joseph Weder, who was familiar with European spas, was the resident physician at South Orange.[36] A later resident physician, Edward Fellerer, announced the opening of the New Jersey Hydropathic Collegiate Institute on the South Orange site in 1853, though few, if any, students matriculated. Fellerer was the author of "A Report of Two Hundred Interesting Cases Treated With Water." Under new ownership, the water-cure sputtered along until 1857, when it became a summer resort hotel.[37]



The Orange Mountain Water-Cure, frequently advertised in hydropathic journals.

Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms, 1853

A decade after it closed, Stephen Wickes, M.D., a leading regular physician from Orange, subjected the Orange Water-Cure to withering criticism. Orange, wrote Wickes, had been "the center of a grand experiment in the annals of medical pretension." The regular physicians lost patients to the blandishments of the "pretending quacks," and it seemed as if "the good old paths of sound medical truth were to be washed out by a flood of water." Water, at once a tonic and a "debilitant," had its place in regular therapy; but only the trained physician, Wickes asserted, familiar with the disease process and the "state of vigor or debility of the patient," could properly prescribe such treatments.[38]

The Schooley's Mountain Water Cure in Washington Township (Morris County) operated between 1851 and 1853, catering to wealthy clients. A financial dispute between the physician owners ended the venture. In the Plainfield area, a British physician and his daughter-in-law operated the Washington Springs Water-Cure for ladies in 1853. A subsequent physician/owner treated both men and women, offering "electrochemical baths" for some years until unpaid debts shut down the facility. Dr. E.J. Loewenthal, who had previous experience at the prestigious Brattleboro (Vermont) Hydropathic Institute, operated a water-cure in Bergen Heights in the 1850s.[39]

The Parkerville Hydropathic Institute (Gloucester County) opened in 1848 under the medical directorship

of George Dexter, late of the Morristown water-cure. Investors were given the option of being repaid in hydropathic services. Dexter, who also dabbled in spiritualism, claimed that his methods could cure "galloping consumption" (rapidly-progressive tuberculosis) in one month. Parkerville boasted a circular stone room in which cold spring water fell from a height of thirty feet onto patients deemed sufficiently hardy for a douche bath. Parkerville, which closed in 1852 maintained separate facilities for alcoholics, abusers of morphine and stimulants, and the insane.[40]

Some New Jerseyans sought water-cures out of state. In 1850, the registry at a famed water-cure in Brattleboro, Vermont, listed five ladies from Trenton. Dr. Schieferdecker's notorious water-cure in Philadelphia was the site of the negligent death from gangrene and bedsores of the daughter of an Episcopal clergyman from Belvidere, N.J., in 1874.[41]

By 1870, hydrotherapy was in decline and many lavish water-cures were closed. The novelty wore off as the public wearied of self-denial and uncomfortable treatments. The horrors of the Civil War put the damper on visions of human perfectibility. Scientific advances such as the germ theory, the promise of new medical and surgical therapies, and the beginning of a revolution in medical education helped raise the status of regular medicine in the eyes of the public.[42]

KNEIPPISM: FROM THE DANUBE TO DENVILLE

At the end of the century, hydropathy enjoyed an international revival. Preissnitzian hydrotherapy was repackaged in Germany by Sebastian Kneipp, a tubercular young priest. Renewed in health and strength by dips in the chilly Danube, Kneipp opened a sanitorium at the monastery in Wörishofen, refining his system to include herbal baths and potions, exercise, dietetics, hot baths, steam baths, and local applications of water by means of a watering can or hose. In order to toughen up their weak, enervated, urbanized bodies, Kneipp's followers took long barefoot walks in the morning dew or frost. They were urged to clear their minds of worries, wear loose and comfortable clothing. limit spices, avoid alcohol, and get as much fresh air as possible.

Father Joseph Joch (far right, seated), the resident physician (far right, standing) and a group of patients at St. Francis, Denville, ca. 1905.
St. Francis...The First 100 Years. Special Collections, UMDNJ

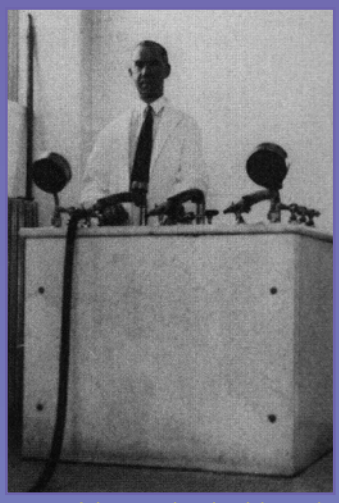
In 1895, Father Joseph Joch, a temperamental Austrian-born priest, together with seven Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother of the Third Order of St. Frances, arrived in New Jersey from Wisconsin, where they had ministered to German immigrants. Joch credited Kneipp with his own cure from tuberculosis, becaming a faithful disciple. Joch was determined to set up a Kneippian water-cure in Denville (Essex County) near the large German enclave in Newark. The Order of St. Francis purchased two hundred acres along the Rockaway River. While residential facilities for the St. Francis Sanitarium were still in the planning stage, day patients came from nearby towns to stand on submerged wooden platforms in the "invigorating, crystal clear water." In the decades that followed, the residential and therapeutic facilities expanded; among the features were treatment rooms with floors and walls of marble.

Initially, Joch administered the water-cure treatments for the male patients and Sister Wendelinha Bauer looked after the female patients. In 1898 a water-cure physician from Wisconsin joined the sanitarium as house physician.

St. Francis attracted a national and international clientele as it took on the trappings of a health spa and resort hotel in the 1920s. Promotional literature in the late 1930s stressed that the health resort catered to the mildly ill, convalescents, and those in need of "rest and recuperation." It was not a hospital and did not have the staff or equipment for "bedridden cases, incurables, nursing care, or night attendance." "Drug fiends" and alcoholics were "debarred." The old Kneippian water-cure regimens were expanded into a smorgasbord of trendy therapies. By the 1940s, the resident physician might prescribe alcohol rubs,

electric light baths, infrared lights, pine needle bubble baths, salt rubs, sulfur baths, short waves, or ultraviolet rays.

Hydrotherapy at St. Joseph's ended in the 1960s.[43] St. Joseph's was particularly proud of its "douche table," a "hi-tech" piece of equipment purported to place hydrotherapy on a firm scientific foundation. The table was developed by American physician Simon Baruch (father of financier Bernard Baruch) who embraced hydrotherapy as an essential component of general medical practice. The fine marble table was fitted with hoses and faucets for spraying hot or cold water. The operator, who controlled temperature, timing, and pressure, sprayed water at the patient who braced himself some ten feet away. Alternately, water at the prescribed pressure and temperature could be transmitted to a cage-like apparatus that distributed the stream into multiple encircling showerheads.[44]



State-of-the-art "douche (shower) table" for directing water spray at water-cure guests, St. Frances Health Resort in Denville, ca. 1940s.
St. Francis...The First 100 Years. Special Collections, UMDNJ

In South Jersey, Dr. Charles Schmidt (later Smith) of Atlantic City opened a water-cure sanitarium at Egg Harbor City (Atlantic County). The founding myth went something like this: Schmidt himself had drunk the waters and bathed in a fountain of youth somewhere in the vicinity in 1836. He "rediscovered" the site at Egg Harbor City in 1859, but it was not until 1900 that he could open Dr. Schmidt's Water-Cure. Early guests, most likely from the German-speaking community of Egg Harbor City, bathed near a waterfall, drank Persian herb tea, and walked until they and their clothes were dry. Later guests, many from neighboring states, waded and bathed in the cedar waters of a cleverly designed "serpentine bathing channel" next to the large guest house. To reinforce the myth, Schmidt, who sported a full white beard, claimed to be one hundred and thirty years old. The sanitarium failed in the early 1910s.[45]

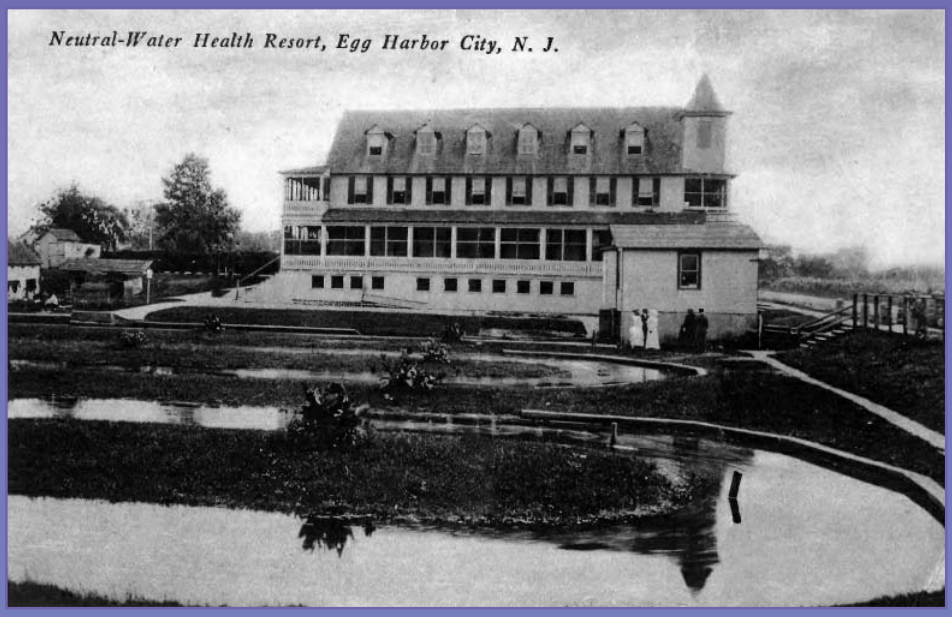
The Idlyease Inn in Newfoundland (Passaic County) was advertised in 1908 as a modern health resort, offering "All Forms of Hydro-Therapy and Massage." Idylease was a "quiet, homelike place for Semi-Invalids, Convalescents, Neurasthenics, and Mild Cases of Cardiac, Nephritic and Stomachic Troubles, and for those desiring change of environment. No Tubercular or Objectionable Cases."

The resident physician and superintendent was Dr. D.E. Drake. A brochure published in about 1930 stressed the round-the-clock availability of staff physicians, Norwegian-trained massage therapists, and the "most approved scientific apparatus for administering baths, sprays, and douches." Potential guests, in the accepted social order of the day, were reassured by the policy boldly stated on the first page of the brochure: "Hebrew Patronage Not Solicited."[46]

Idylease's prohibition of tubercular cases reflected modern understanding of tuberculosis as a transmissible infection caused by bacteria. Robert Koch in Germany first isolated the tubercle bacillus in 1882, although it took some years for the medical community to fully accept the infectious nature of the disease. Victims of tuberculosis, previously thought to be suffering from an inherited or constituional weakness of the lungs, belonged in sanitoriums, not water-cures. This attitude contrasts sharply to earlier claims of tuberculosis cures by nineteenth-century water-cure practitioners. Indeed, many water-cure doctors became converts to the system as a result of their personal return to health from what they believed to be (and often was) progressive tuberculosis. In retrospect, we know that untreated tuberculosis is often

St. Francis Health Resort, Denville, N.J., ca. 1952. Special Collections, UMDNJ

marked by spontaneous remissions (and relapses), although some unfortunate sufferers experience a relentless downhill course. Until the introduction of streptomycin in the late 1940s, doctors and patients naturally attributed apparent recoveries to the treatment of the moment, whether it be crisp mountain air, long sea voyages, the piney Adirondacks, or the water-cure.



The Serpentine Creek at Dr. Smith's Neutral-Water Health Resort and Sanitorium in Egg Harbor City, ca. 1910. From the collection of Ron Hesse, Courtesy Egg Harbor City Historical Society

Among many prominent adherents to the water cure was John Augustus Roebling, Trenton's famous engineer and industrialist. In 1869, Roebling lay dying in excruciating pain and misery from tetanus, a complication of a foot injury sustained while examining the site of the future Brooklyn Bridge. Beyond help from any physician, regular or sectarian, the great engineer steadfastly demanded hydropathic treatments; his tremulous handwritten deathbed notes insisted upon "no nonsense of the Drs."[47] He was buried in Trenton, a city plunged into mourning.[48]

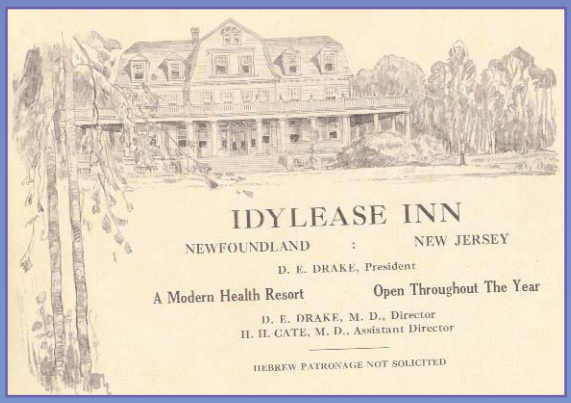
THE ROAD TO YUNGBORN: BACK TO NATUROPATHY

Young German-born Benedict Lust was living in New York in the early 1890s when he, too, developed tuberculosis. Pronounced incurable by his American doctors, he returned to Germany, took the Kniepp water-cure, and recovered. He also investigated various German "nature cures."[49] Back in New York, Lust's fertile imagination and flowing pen transformed the Kneippian water-cure into a universal system of healthful living that Lust called "naturopathy."

"The masters of healing in naturopathic pathology," wrote Lust, "seek to attack the cause of disease by liberating upon and within the organism, the beneficent forces of nature..."[50] Until his death in 1945, he would be naturopathy's greatest champion.

In 1896, Lust chose Butler (Morris County) in the Ramapo Mountains as the perfect site for a new venture. Variously called the Kneipp Naturopathic Establishment for Promoting Natural Life, Jungborn (roughly, "fountain of youth" in German), and, finally, the Americanized Yungborn, Lust's New Jersey health resort was a "place to grow well and strong again, to be born anew, to regain lost health and vitality and with it the fire and enthusiasm and the joy of living that comes with a perfectly sound body and a vigorous and well-poised mind."

As part of the "regeneration cure," Yungborn guests took the usual hydropathic treaments, inhaled the invigorating mountain air, hiked for miles, walked barefoot in the dewy grass, sunbathed in "the garb of nature," absorbed the "healing magnetism" of mud baths, performed calisthenics, exercised in the "splendidly equipped" gymnasium, enjoyed massages and physiotherapy techniques such as "Swedish movement," drank pure spring water, and ate the vegetarian meals supervised by Mrs. Lust, N.D.[51] Lust rhapsodized that within every person lay the potential for "Massive Muscle, Surging Blood, Tingling Nerve, Zestful Digestion, Superb Sex, Beautiful Body, Sublime Thought, Pulsating Power... Glorious Freedom, Perpetual Peace, Limitless Unfoldment, and Conscious Godhood."[52]



Brochure for Idylease Inn, ca. 1930, with restrictive policies. Special Collections, UMDNJ

From Yungborn, Lusk operated his Nature Cure Publishing Company, offering books such as Louisa Lust's *Good Dinner Cook Book,* reprints and translations of important German naturopathic authors, and his own array of journals and books. The Kneipp Naturopathic Supply Store at

Yungborn sold "porous health underwear," as well as "air shoes" (sandals), air bath gowns, and porous suspenders, some of which sound comfortable to the modern ear (except for the porous suspenders). The voice of naturopathy in America was Lust's magazine, *Naturopath and Herald of Health* (originally the Kneipp Water-Cure Monthly). In 1913, he opened a second Yungborn in Tangerine in central Florida.[53]

Lust founded the American School of Naturopathy in New York in 1901, offering the degree of N.D. (Naturopathic Doctor). Students were trained in vibration, massage, electricity, magnetism, physical manipulation, hydropathy, diet and fasting, and exercise regimens. For mind, spirit, and soul, students learned such principles as self-culture, pure love, and "spirit-unfoldment." Except for healing herbs, students were to view all drugs as poisons and those who prescribed them as little better than murderers.

Some courses were offered at Yungborn, such as the "special residence beginners and post-graduate courses." Lust eagerly brought new healing systems under the naturopathic umbrella.[54] A 1917 advertisement invited students to "Become a Doctor of Naturopathy which will qualify you at the same time as Osteopath, Chiropractor, Hydropath, Dietician, Electropath, Mechanotherapist, Neuropath, Zonetherapist, Mental Scientist, etc."[55] Lust himself was a graduate of homeopathic and osteopathic schools, and often billed himself as N.D., M.D., D.O., and D.C.

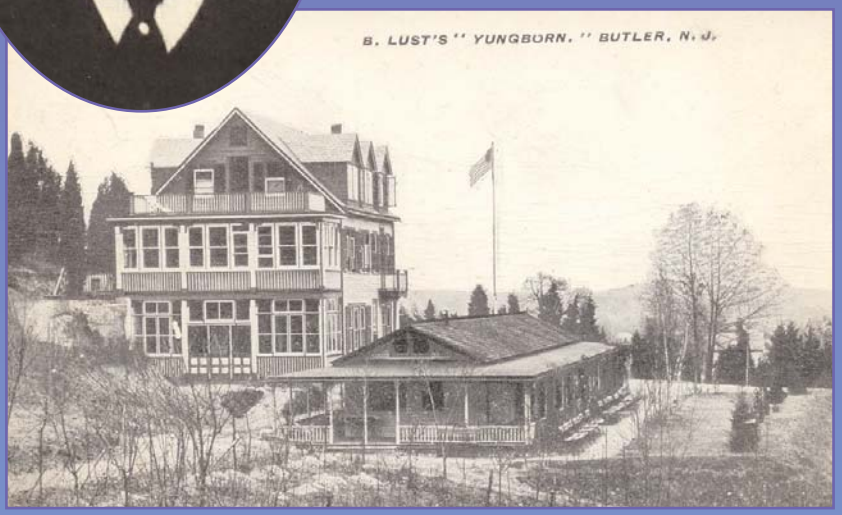
The flirtation with chiropractic ended by the 1930s, when Lust accused the chiropractors of trying to destroy naturopathy using "despicable, dastardly, treacherous tactics." The chiropractors were, he fumed, worse than the "medical crowd."[56]

Lust never stopped looking for the fountain of youth. In the 1920s, he was sure he had found it. "Blood washing" was a system of lengthy warm showers in which the subject frequently changed position in order to expose all areas of the body to the hot spray. In his 1923 book, "The Fountain of Youth or Curing by Water: How You May Quickly Overcome Acute and Chronic Illness by the Use of the Biological Blood-Washing Bath," he described his epiphany: "And so I went down to my sanitorium in Butler, N.J., where I was sure I would have plenty of hot water; and there I rigged up such apparatus as suited my purpose, and I took the new blood-washing bath...I am not exaggerating when I say that three of those eight-hour units...made me, a man of sixty, feel twenty-five years younger...There is no tedium under the shower. It is as enthralling as an opium dream is said to be." Blood-washing was later prescribed for patients at Yungborn.[57]

In 1943, Lust was overcome by smoke at his Florida Yungborn. He remained convinced until his death in 1945 that the sulfa drugs prescribed by his physicians to control the infections that so commonly prove fatal in burn patients, had poisoned his body and shortened his life. He is buried in Butler near his New Jersey Yungborn.[58]

New Jersey had its own naturopathic medical college in Newark, gloriously named The First National University of Naturopathy: Embracing New Jersey College of Osteopathy, Mecca College of Chiropractic, United States School of Naturopathy, United States School of Physiotherapy, National School of Physical Culture. The college was incorporated by its founder and dean, F.W. Collins in 1905, although it is unclear when the school actually opened or how long it lasted. The lavish brochure of 1930 listed lecturers (including Lust) with an alphabet soup of medical degrees after their names, along with the names of the school's two prominent attorneys, retained to fight off challenges from "our powerful and influential enemy the Medical trust, A.M.A."

Left: Benedict Lust as a young man, ca. 1903.
Adolf Just, *Return to Nature: The True Natural Method of Healing and Living and the True Salvation of the Soul*, 1903



Below: Benedict Lust's Yungborn Sanitorium, Butler, N.J., ca. 1921.
Special Collections, UMDNJ

Course offerings covered hydrotherapy as well as a spectrum of dubious fads, including iridology (diagnosis of disease by examining the iris), thermotherapy, actinotherapy, universal naturopathic tonic treatment, astro-science, phrenology, pelvic adjustment, the Collins neuro-chrome therapy, and naturopathic foot correction.[59]

Rx: BATHE OFTEN, EAT RIGHT, EXERCISE REGULARLY

Regular practitioners gradually adopted some of the practices of the hydropaths and naturopaths, although much of the impetus for change came from within medicine itself. In 1900, the Cooper Hospital in Camden, along with many other American hospitals, claimed success in treating typhoid fever with a system of cold baths invented by Ernst Brand of Germany.[60]

In the absence of effective antibiotics (prior to the early 1950s), tuberculosis experts also looked to nature. A 1906 editorial in the *Journal of the Medical Society of New Jersey* proclaimed: "Gradually, almost in spite of ourselves, the truth has forced itself upon us that the consumptive is, generally speaking, better off without drugs...'Back to Nature' must we go before we can make any headway in the management of this widespread and intractable malady [i.e., tuberculosis]... Fresh, pure, outdoor air, sunlight and properly selected food form the tripod upon which the entire modern treatment of consumption rests."[61]

Johns Hopkins internist William Osler, the dean of American physicians at the turn of the twentieth century, recommended cold baths and wet chest binders for tuberculosis.[62]

Baths and compresses continue to find frequent and varied applications in modern physical therapy.[63] Prior to the mid-twentieth century, when effective psychotropic medications became available, psychiatric institutions routinely used baths, packs, and showers to calm agitated or delirious patients.[64]

It's hard to argue with taking baths, eating sensibly, exercising regularly, dressing comfortably, and keeping well-informed about health. Many of the late-nineteenth-century hydropaths and naturopaths were sincere in their beliefs, despite their entrepreneurial spirit and a propensity for outrageous claims and shameless hyperbole. Lust and his colleagues, in their "reverential absorption in the benevolent mysteries of nature," indiscriminately championed and marketed every drugless fad that rolled down the 'pike.[65]

The spirit of hydropathy and naturopathy lives on in comforting, if fuzzy, concepts such as "organic" and "holistic." As was the case with hydropathy, "alternative medicine" has gained greater respectibility in regular medical circles when reframed as "complementary medicine."

Much of the attraction and the power of hydropathy and other sectarian medical cults lay in the fact that regular medicine seemed to have little to offer in the half century following the Civil War, particularly in the area of effective pharmaceutical therapy. The New Jersey hydropaths and naturopaths of a century and more ago were a colorful bunch with a flair for drama. Let us raise our cups of *Ceanothus americanus* (Jersey tea) and our bottles of pricey designer water (with natural antioxidants) to their memory.

"The Nature Cure at Butler"

For Mister Lust can make you well, if you will let him lay

The plans for what you eat and wear, and his commands obey.

He's got an Eden out of town, where you will get no meat,

And walk 'mid trees as Adam did, in birthday suit complete;. . .

Roast beef, cigars, and lager-beer you'll never want again,

When you've been healed by Butler, by fruit, fresh air, and rain.

It's very cheap as well as good ~ this wondrous Nature Cure,

And if you take it home with you, its blessings will endure;

For all the ills of all mankind, the cheapest and the best

Is Mister Lust's great Nature Cure ~ just put it to the test!

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