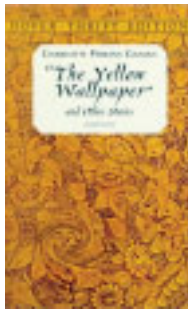
CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN (1860 - 1935)

NORWICH, CT ▲ SITE 76

The neighborhood of Washington St., Norwich, CT.



Ms. Gilman was a poet, a lecturer, a nationally known social activist and women's rights advocate. She was part of the new breed of women in the later Victorian era who worked in offices, using the new type writing gadget and becoming an indispensable part of modern business. Women became "free-thinkers" who spoke their mind and found ways to express their opinions in lectures and publications.

Charlotte was born in Hartford in 1860, the great-niece of Harriet Beecher Stowe and a distant relative of Louisa May Alcott. She was characterized as feisty and exuberant. For example, the *Norwich Bulletin* published a story that reported the contentious issue of chewing tobacco. Charlotte wrote a poem, *Unmentionable*, expressing her opinion, part of which reads:

> As some foul slug his trail of slime displays on leaf and stalk,
> These street-beats make a horror in the ways of those who walk.
> We cannot ask reform of those who do - they can't or won't,
> We can express the scorn, intense and true, of those who don't.

Ms. Gilman was a fascinating figure. She married a Providence artist named Charles Stetson, had one daughter named Katherine, and divorced soon after. Suffering from a mental breakdown, she wrote about that experience in a short story called "The Yellow Wallpaper." In 1890, she moved with her daughter to California where she became active in the Women's Congress, helped found the Women's Peace Party and lectured in America and Europe.

Charlotte was very busy with the lecture circuit through 1920. She also owned, edited, published and wrote a feminist magazine called *Forerunner*. While she seems to be most remembered for her advocacy of women's rights, her very progressive views on euthanasia and evolution were unusual. In September of 1896, she visited Norwich with her second husband Houghton Gilman and they moved to 320 Washington Street in 1922. Her major work, *Women and Economics*, was primarily written during that first visit. It advocated communal dining halls, professionally staffed childcare facilities and professional house cleaners – all to free ladies from the "tyrannies of cooking, childcare and housework."

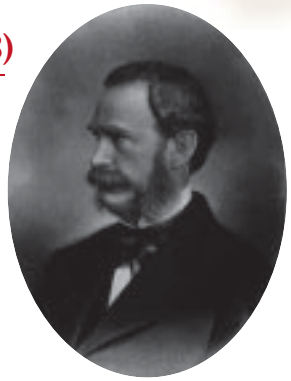
Lathrop, Arthur Lester. Victorian Norwich Connecticut. Salem, MA: Higginson Book Co., 1999

Medical Marvels ✚

DR. WILLIAM MORTON (1819-1868)

CHARLTON, MA ✚ SITE 77

A memorial for Dr. Morton is on the Charlton Common, Rte. 31, Charlton, MA.



Generations of medical and dental patients owe gratitude to Dr. William Thomas Green Morton for eliminating pain in surgery and dental procedures. He was born in Charlton, MA, in 1819, and educated at nearby Leicester Academy and Northfield Academy. An unremarkable student, he tried various professions to find his niche – clerk, printer and salesman. None turned out to be his calling.

In 1840, Morton entered the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery, the first of its kind in the world. He left before graduating and became the partner of Hartford dentist Horace Wells. Unfortunately, that relationship lasted only six months. Morton seems to have been plagued by a consistent lack of achievement.

William enrolled in the Harvard Medical School, once again failing to graduate. Morton conducted a dental practice in Boston without credentials. However, he excelled at developing new ideas for the field. He introduced a new kind of solder that would allow false teeth to be fastened to gold plates. He experimented with opium, stimulants, and even hypnosis to find a better method of extracting the roots of diseased teeth. He was introduced to ether after attending a lecture by Professor Charles Jackson, although no one had connected relieving pain via unconsciousness.

After trying it out on himself, Morton administered ether to a patient on September 30, 1846, with great success. The break-through made the newspapers and a public performance of this revolutionary advance was scheduled at Massachusetts General Hospital. True to his inconsistent nature, Dr. Morton was late to

appear, rescuing the apprehensive patient at the very last second. The audience was justifiably skeptical of the less than professional Morton, but was truly amazed when he performed pain-free surgery on the patient.

One would think that this act would successfully clinch Dr. Morton's place in dental and medical history. He secured a patent for ether administration and the international community recognized him with a number of awards. He made his method available for free to charitable institutions. However, he was unsuccessful in convincing Congress and President Pierce to recognize his rights to the profits derived from his discovery. He died quite suddenly of a brain hemorrhage at the young age of 48.

Britannica Online Encyclopedia. "William Thomas Green Morton." http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9053858/William-thomas-Green-Morton, (accessed March 12, 2007).

DR. WILLIAM BEAUMONT (1785-1853)

LEBANON, CT ✚ SITE 78

William Beaumont House, on the Green, junctions of Rtes. 87 and 207, Lebanon, CT.

Born in 1785 in the house his father Samuel built, William Beaumont is known as the "Father of Gastric Physiology." He took a teaching post in Champlain, NY, in 1806 but within a few years was studying medicine with a doctor in Vermont. Beaumont received his medical license in 1812 and served as an assistant army surgeon during the War of 1812. After briefly practicing on his own, William reenlisted in the army and was stationed at a wilderness post in Michigan.

While at Fort Mackinac, Dr. Beaumont treated Alexis St. Martin, a French-Canadian trapper. St. Martin was suffering from a gun shot wound to the stomach and chest. Although he recovered, a small hole into his stomach never healed over. For the next 11 years, Beaumont studied the human digestive process by examining and testing various foods as St. Martin's stomach digested them. William's process was primitive, lowering and raising food directly in and out of the stomach cavity by a thread, but he was able to decipher the way digestion worked and the chemistry of gastric fluids. Beaumont published his findings in 1833 and was instantly recognized for the importance of his work.

Dr. Beaumont moved to St. Louis where he practiced medicine until his death in 1853. His research still holds up today.

Wayland, Alicia. Around the Lebanon Green. Lebanon, CT: Town of Lebanon, 1999.

THE SWEET FAMILY (19th century)

LEBANON AND FRANKLIN, CT ✚ SITE 79

Lebanon Historical Society, Rtes. 87 and 207, Lebanon, CT.

In the nineteenth century, modern medicine had only progressed a few faltering steps. Many entrepreneurial and innovative doctors strove to come up with medicines and procedures that would alleviate suffering. Dr. Charles Sweet (1810-1896) of Lebanon, and his brother, Dr. Stephen Sweet of Franklin (1798–n.d.) were two such men. They invented a line of patent medicines in the mid 1800s, but were more notable as bonesetters. Although not trained medical doctors, they were called "doctor" by laymen because of their ability as bonesetters.

If one suffered with complaints of paralysis of the limbs, then "Dr. Chas Sweet's Rheumatic or Stimulating Liniment" was advertised as a cure. "Dr. Chas Sweet's Healing, Cooling Extract Salve" was touted as a cure for scrofula (tuberculosis of the lymph glands), ulcers and other ailments. Those patients needing to quell other stresses were recommended "Dr. Chas Sweet's Relaxing Liniment." Dr. Stephen Sweet sold "Stephen Sweet's Infallible Liniment," touted as a cure-all.

The Sweets reputation as bone setters was famous. Dr. Charles Sweet had offices in both Hartford and Springfield, MA, where he practiced once each month. Dr. Stephen Sweet was acclaimed in the New York Times, April 4, 1874: "Dr. Stephen's Sweet's father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were distinguished bone-setters. So were his uncles and great-uncles back to the original Benoni, who died in North Kingston, R.I. in 1751 at the age of 90."

William Lloyd Garrison, a prominent abolitionist of the day (1805-1879), sought out Stephen Sweet to treat Mrs. Garrison, who had been injured in an accident in Springfield, MA. "Mrs. Garrison's right arm dislocated at the elbow, but was maltreated by an ignorant doctor as if broken, so that weeks of suffering ensued till the limb be set." Garrison recounts a special trip to Dr. Sweet, "the famous bonesetter" in Franklin "who succeeded in the difficult operation."

Garrison, Wendell Phillips and Francis Jackson Garrison. The Story of His Life Told By His Children. New York: The Century Co., 1889.

Marshall, Benjamin Tinkham. A Modern History of New London County, Connecticut. New London: Leis Historical Publishing Co., 1922.

Alicia Wayland

DR. SAMUEL LEE (1773-1814)

WINDHAM, CT ✚ SITE 80

Windham Center Cemetery, Rte. 203, Windham, CT.

Little is known of Samuel Lee's early life other than his birth date. During the Revolution, he was "discharged from the office of surgeon to Col. Durkee's regiment in Continental service." He is most famous, or perhaps infamous, for a medicine he patented in 1796 called "Samuel Lee's Genuine Windham Bilious Pills."

No doubt the need to include the word "genuine" had to do with another doctor named Samuel H. P. Lee who lived in New London and who in 1799 also created "Bilious Pills." Samuel Lee of Windham was not happy about what he felt was an incursion on his patent and said "If people incautiously purchase his pills for mine, I shall not be answerable for their effects." For years a competition was waged for the public's trust in newspapers and ads. The market appeared to tolerate both preparations and each doctor prospered.

Dr. Samuel Lee's original pills were touted as a cure for dysentery, dropsy, bilious and yellow fevers, worms and complaints common to women. They were composed of aloe, soap, nitrate of potassa and garboge. Whether the ingredients were effective is not documented, but garboge, an Asian tree resin of distinct yellow, is known to be a purgative. Dr. Lee was a clever marketer. He labeled his famous pills with an American eagle – what could be a more reliable symbol in the new country?

Dr. Samuel Lee died in 1814 and was buried in the Windham Center Cemetery where his age was noted as 42 years. After his death, his brother, Dr. Charles Lee of Norwich, got into the drug trade and carried on the family patent for the famous Windham Lee's Pills.

Anderson, Ann. Snake Oil, Hustlers and Hambones: The American Medicine Show. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2005.
Caulkins, Francis Manwaring. History of Norwich, Connecticut: From Its Possession by the Indians to the Year 1866. Hartford: H.P. Haven, 1874.
Hinman, Royal Ralph. Historical Collection from Official Records, Files, etc. of the Part Sustained by Connecticut During the Revolution. Hartford: E. Gleason, 1842.
The Medical Messiahs: A Social History of Health Quackery in Twentieth-Century America. "Chapter 2: The Lawless Centuries." http://www.quackwatch.rog/12Hx/MM/02.html. (accessed May 16, 2007).

DR. ELISHA PERKINS (1741-1799)

PLAINFIELD, CT ✚ SITE 81

The Stone Meetinghouse, Rte. 12, Plainfield, CT, is part of the Plainfield Street National Historic District.

Along with patent medicines, early healers were sometimes inventors of devices to alleviate or eliminate physical complaints. Dr. Elisha Perkins was one of these men, born in Norwich and educated by his father, also a doctor. Elisha settled in nearby Plainfield and began his practice. He was one of the incorporators of Plainfield Academy and member of the Plainfield Church.

As a cure for inflammation, Dr. Perkins invented metallic tractors, said to have been composed of a peculiar alloy of metals. The devices were pointed objects only inches in length and were applied point down on the inflamed area. Then they were repeatedly pulled across the surface from top to bottom.

Dr. Perkins received many accolades from his colleagues. The Perkins Tractors were studied and recommended by well-respected physicians and medical institutions in the U.S. and parts of Europe. The new theory of treatment was then named "Perkinsian," and published cured cases numbered in excess of 5,000. However, in 1797, Dr. Perkins, a founder of the Connecticut Medical Society, was ejected from that prestigious group due to his efforts to promote the use and sale of the tractors. The official grounds for his ejection were that he was "a patentee and user of nostrums (Bickford)."

In an effort to develop a better treatment for dysentery and sore throats, Dr. Perkins invented an antiseptic. He tested it during the 1799 outbreak of yellow fever in New York. However, he died after contracting the illness himself.

Bickford, Christopher. Plainfield Transformed: Three Centuries of Life in a Connecticut Town 1699–1999. Plainfield, CT: Plainfield Historical Society, 1999.
Virtual American Biographies. "Elisha Perkins." http://famousamerican.net/elishaperkins/ (accessed October 31, 2007).