

A History of Healing in Lytton

Part 1.

Although everyone is familiar with St. Bartholomew's Hospital, not everyone would be aware of the long connection between Lytton and the art and science of healing.

The story of St. Bartholomew's actually begins in 293 B.C., when an outbreak of plague in Rome caused the city to send for a statue of Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine, from Epidaurus which was the most celebrated healing centre in the Classical world. The statue was enshrined on an island in the Tiber River where there were already healing springs and a hospital was established there.

In 998 A.D. the island was rededicated to St. Bartholomew, apostle, who was known to answer the prayers of the poor and sick and a Christian church and hospital established. The relics of the apostle were enshrined there and the healing springs reconsecrated to him.

Just over a hundred years later a visiting Englishman named Rahere, who had been the King's jester, became sick with malaria while on pilgrimage and was taken to the hospital. While Rahere was there he had a vision of St. Bartholomew, who promised healing to him and asked that he establish a hospital for the poor and sick when he returned to England.

In 1102 Rahere founded a church and hospital dedicated to St. Bartholomew. This was the origin of the famous St. Bartholomew's Hospital, "St. Bart's" in London, which still functions as a great centre of healing and medicine to this very day.

When the early Anglicans came to Lytton and conceived of founding a hospital here it was natural that in 1893 it be dedicated to St. Bartholomew and thus continue a healing tradition of more than two thousand years.

As it happens the Catholic mission in Lytton was also dedicated with a connection to healing . St. Ann , after whom the present church is named, is famous as the focus of the two great healing pilgrimages of St. Anne de Beaupre in Quebec and Lac St. Anne in Alberta.

Part 2.

When the Chinese came to Lytton in the 1850's they brought with them a healing tradition of their own going back at least to 2838 B.C., when the

legendary Emperor Shen Nong is credited with establishing the basis of Chinese herbal medicine through the painstaking process of testing more than three hundred plants that could be used for healing. He eventually became the god of medicine prayed to for advice on healing remedies.

The coming of Buddhism to China in the first century B.C. brought the traditions of Indian medicine, as well as the recognition of the power of compassion to heal. This compassion eventually came to be represented as Kwan yin, the one who listens.

Among the Chinese who came to Canada for the gold and later railway work were men who were knowledgeable in herbal medicine, and they gave treatment to everyone including the First Nations and Europeans as well as their fellow countrymen. The first Chinese doctor in Canada started practice in 1859.

In early 1880s the Chinese in Lytton suffered from a series of disease outbreaks that resulted in much suffering and death; and so they conceived the desire for a place where they might go to pray for the dead and for healing of both body and spirit.

This dream was fulfilled with the opening of the Joss House in Lytton. This was a small temple dedicated to healing in the form of Kwan yin, Great Compassion, attended by Shen Nong, Patron of Herbal Medicine and Zhu Rong, Protector from Fire (including the fires of anger and disease). Ah Cheuh became keeper of the Joss House.

On May 10th 1883 the Chinese railway workers at camp #37 were attacked, and one man named Ye Fook was beaten to death. The injured men were taken to the Joss House in Lytton for treatment where Ah Fook died of his injuries one week later.

When the Joss House was finally taken from the Chinese and torn down in 1928, there were protests from Chinese people all over B.C. as well as from the Chinese government but to no avail.

Most joss houses in Canada seem to have been devoted to the ancestral gods of commerce and business success in the new world. The temple in Lytton may very well be unique in its dedication to healing and to Great Compassion.

On June 28, 1928 Tun Kee, who kept a small store on the road to Earls court Farm and dispensed Chinese medicine to everyone who came, was shot dead in his home and place of business. He was eighty-one years old.

The Chinese healing tradition continues down to the present day in Canada

through the gifts of acupuncture and herbal medicine which have become so integral to modern health care.

Part 3.

The Nlaka'pamux have been the holders of this place at the coming together of the great rivers since time out of mind. Their stories tell how the Botanie Valley was created by the Old Woman as a source of medicine and healing plants as well as food.

They were there, in that valley, in midsummer 1808, when Simon Fraser and his companions came down the river in canoes. When they were told of the approach of the strangers, the people came down with their leaders and healers to the place where the rivers meet and to the encounter which was to alter everything beyond recognition.

Their healing tradition continues down to the present not only in the medicines such as Devil's club ointment and Arnica salve made by local people but also in the knowledge shared with all who come. The Chinese healers as well as the European herbalists such as Louis Hautier, a Belgian immigrant who built the first Lytton Hotel, have all learned from the Nlaka'pamux people the benefits of the healing plants, and have gathered medicine in the Botanie Valley.

Part 4.

This is a place where everything meets, the wind and the sky, the rivers and the mountains, the heat and the cold and where everyone meets, from East and West, upriver and downriver, residents and sojourners and those "just passing through", the humans and the animals.

The meetings in the past have been often difficult with as much pain as comfort. May this meeting and mixing and melding be towards joy and learning and at last to healing.