

Flowerfield School  
Personal Hygiene

**An ounce of prevention is  
worth a pound of cure.**

# Historic School Personal Hygiene

TIME: 10 minutes

OBJECTIVE:

Students will be instructed on the benefits of cleanliness and will wash at the basin.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Dr. Georgia Arbuckle Fix was the only woman in the 1883 graduation class of nine from the College of Medicine in Omaha. She moved to this area in 1886 with her stepfather, Tom Reeves. Her marriage to Gwynn Fix in 1888 resulted in divorce in 1889. She moved to Gering in 1892, bringing her pony team and buggy, her medicine kit, a few books, household goods, and her dogs. She later established a sanitarium in Gering.

Her approach to medicine was creative and cautious. She used medicine sparingly. She was acclaimed for dealing with frontier accidents such as fractures skull of Eli Beebe which she mended with a silver plate hammered from a coin. When she lost the battle for life, she would often perform the burial service herself. Like many doctors of her time, she accepted payment in goods and materials and often provided food and necessities for a new baby when needed.



Because of her different lifestyle and interests as well as her frankness, Dr. Fix was often the subject of gossip. True, she was no housekeeper or cook, and did not care for "fancywork." But, she did appeal to children and young people. She provided a home and assistance for schoolgirls, gave her valuable microscope to the schoolchildren, or would give a child one of the birds from her interesting home.

A cheerful word does the good of a medicine.



# WIZARD OIL

## THE GREAT MEDICAL WONDER



### HAMLIN'S COUGH BALSAM PLEASANT TO TAKE MAGICAL IN ITS EFFECTS



There were few trained pharmacists at this time. The drug stores available did prepare prescriptions and sold a wide range of patent medicines. Society was hooked on those medicines because people had little faith in most doctors. Medicine shows were welcomed by many communities for the entertainment as well as providing tonics and treatments. But, most of the so-called medicine was of little value, or indeed, harmful. Drug abuse, induced by addiction to patent medicines, was a major health problem at that time. Women, especially, were prone to the dangers since the tonics they took usually contained large amounts of alcohol. These salves, tonics, and "cures" were prominently advertised at the time but no Food and Drug Administration existed to require proof of claim. Dr. Fix was wise to stay away from many of those "remedies".

### "Great health is above wealth."

Nebraska was espoused by many land agents as a beautiful and healthful climate. The easterner listening to these agents heard about the many benefits of clean air and water available in Nebraska. The tree-less condition was even touted for its healthiness since settlers would not have to face the "debilitating effects of the 'miasma' found in rotting logs and forest that causes so much illness".

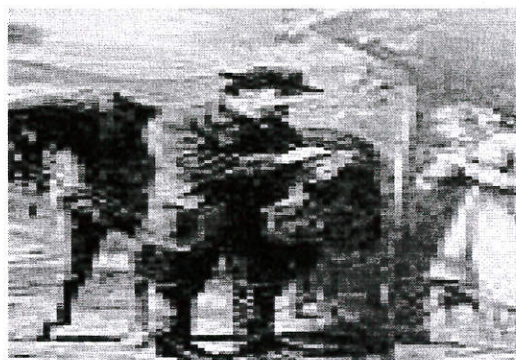
The following health precepts were taught by many teachers:

- A) Eat slowly.
- B) Pure air and wholesome food make for good blood.
- C) To keep well, we should have clean skin and clean clothes.
- D) Cleanliness is the best guard against disease.
- E) Always know what you are taking.
- F) Make all your habits desirable ones.
- G) Never use handkerchiefs that others have used.
- H) Learn the value of different foods and how to secure a balance of kinds.
- I) Stimulants and narcotics tend to poverty and suffering.
- J) Health and comfort are more important than fashion and style.
- K) Teeth are more than diamonds, for without them, perfect health is impossible.

# Historic School

## ACTIVITIES FOR PERSONAL HYGIENE

1. Instruct children on use of the wash basin in pairs. Discuss the maxim, "Cleanliness is next to Godliness". Have children smell their hands to ensure that they have washed well with the 'lye soap'.



## PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES FOR PERSONAL HYGIENE

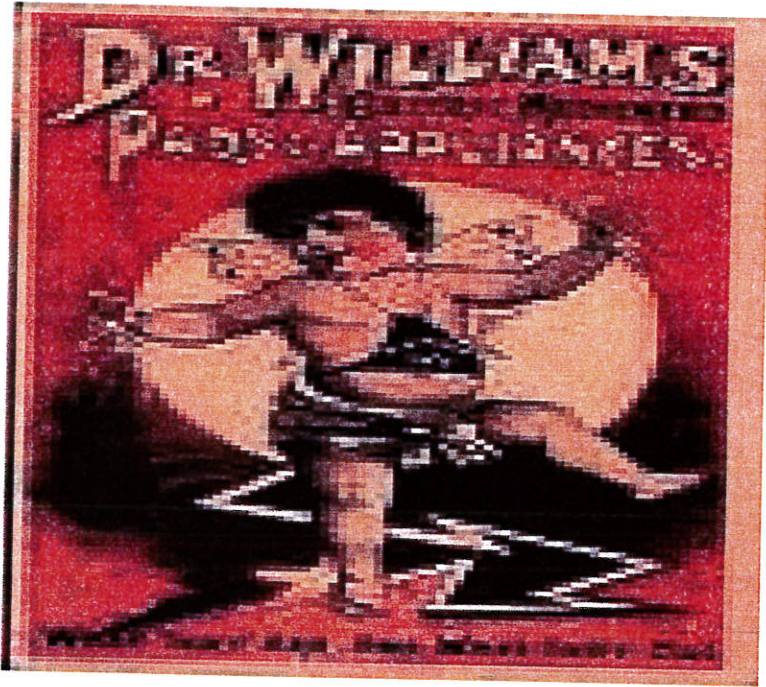
1. Instruct children to bring a handkerchief on the day they attend Historic School. Kleenex will not be available.

*"Tis easier to prevent bad habits than to break them."*

## FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES FOR PERSONAL HYGIENE

1. Students may further investigate the life of Dr. Fix who practiced medicine in this area in the late 1800's. Several resource persons are available to visit classrooms. Mari Sandoz's book, Miss Morissa, would be a fine addition to this investigation.
2. Collecting antique medicine bottles has become a profitable and enjoyable hobby for many. Several books are available on that subject. Read labels on those old bottles. The language is superb!
3. Further investigate patent medicines, drugs, and pharmacology. Ask SOAR for help in planning a Medicine Show and for suggestions for resource speakers.
4. An interesting way for students to look at the history of this time is to compare it to today. Drug abuse? There is certainly a correlation there. Look at old newspaper headlines and compare. War veterans (Civil War) are not recognized and are receiving poor treatment? Parents wanting Bible reading to be banned from the schools? Taxes? Complaints about weapons being brought to class? The teaching of a second language? Was it 1888 or 1988????







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SKIN DISEASE.  
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