



Stalking the Doctors of the Full Moon

A talk on the practice of medicine in the Blackstone Valley during the early American Industrial Revolution, September 10

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WEBSTER, Mass. – In 1834, the American Industrial Revolution was evolving and growing at a frenetic pace along the Blackstone River, with dozens of textile mills fueling the new industrial economy.

Medical practices, however, had yet to advance into a scientific era. Medical knowledge remained basically unchanged during the first half of the 19th century.

In the Blackstone Valley, a small group of well-educated and respected doctors formed the Union Medical Association to share their knowledge and document their cases. The group met monthly in Mendon on the Monday following the full moon, and each member was compelled to prepare a report.

The medicine the doctors practiced was based on the Hippocratic humoral system, that the body fluids blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile, when out balance, caused illnesses. Treatment generally involved bleeding and purging. Nothing was known yet about infections and contagion.

Medical historian Sande Bishop discovered a wooden box labeled U. M. A at the offices of the Worcester District Medical Society. In it were more than 400 of the Association's medical reports, dated 1834-1845.

Ms. Bishop compiled and analyzed the papers for her book, *Stalking the Doctors of the Full Moon*, a fascinating look at what it was like to be a physician before the dawn of modern medicine.

Ms. Bishop and curator of the Worcester District Medical Society Dr. Dale Magee will discuss the book at a special presentation at the Samuel Slater Experience museum, 31 Ray Street, Webster, on Sunday, September 10, at 2 p.m. The event is free, but registration is requested. To register, go to the museum website www.samuel Slater Experience.org or Eventbrite.com. The event is sponsored in part by the Webster Cultural Council.

About Samuel Slater Experience

Samuel Slater Experience opened last year to tell the story of Samuel Slater, the beginnings of the American Industrial Revolution, and Slater's impact on mill towns such as Webster Massachusetts. The museum employs state-of-the-art digital technology with immersive video and interactive exhibits to recreate two time periods: the early 1800s and the early 1900s. For more information and tickets, visit www.samuel Slater Experience.org.