

## **Sophronia Athearn Nichols Medical Doctor and Homeopath**

**Part II**  
by Gail O'Quinn

After graduating from the Boston University School of Medicine, Sophronia established her first medical practice in Corry, PA. Her family was proud of her and stood by her in her accomplishments. But she was a woman Doctor in an age that was leery of female practitioners and her practice was not flourishing.

In December of 1875 Sophronia and her mother took the two children, Alice Jane Nichols, age 8, and Wilfred Athearn Nichols, age 2, to San Francisco where her two older brothers lived. They had written to her, expressing their belief that she would find more open minds in the West than in the conventional East. Sophronia left young Willie in the care of her mother and her brother Joseph, and she and Alice took a steamboat to Seamockaway, Washington Territory. They stayed briefly and then Mother and daughter continued on to Albany, OR in 1876 where she set up her medical practice. Sophronia was 41.

In the world at large Colorado becomes the 38th State to enter the Union. It's the American Centennial, our 100th Birthday! The battle at Little Big Horn is fought, and the telephone invented, impacting the worlds' ability to communicate in a powerful way.

Being a medical Doctor and a Homeopath, Sophronia was in an excellent position to incorporate the best of both approaches in treating her patients. In an era of pioneers, she was a true trailblazer.

I can imagine how she felt. Today Homeopathy is much more widely accepted in America, and yet, still met with skepticism in some circles. Why? It has to do with the dilution process involved in making the remedies.

"The more a remedy is diluted and succussed (vigorously shaken), the stronger it becomes as a cure. The concept of the infinitesimal dose is one of the great stumbling blocks for a conventionally trained scientific mind," says Miranda Castro, in *Homeopathy for Pregnancy, Birth, and Your Babies First Year*. With Homeopathy, less truly is more.

In 1878 Sophronia could be found listed in the Albany City Directory as Mrs. S. Nichols, Physician. Her Practice is considered the second best in Albany. At this time both her children live with her sister, Carrie Foss, in Alpine, CA. So far away from her children and family; maintaining a solitary medical practice and making a name for herself; Sophronia contracts malaria.

The first medicine "proved" by Samuel Hahnemann, when he was busy discovering homeopathy, was Cinchona, or Peruvian bark. During a proving a substance is administered to healthy individuals and their resulting symptoms recorded. What a substance can elicit it can cure. Some of the symptoms elicited by the Cinchona provers were; shaking, extreme chills, fever, nausea and heavy sweating. The same symptoms malaria produces. When rendered homeopathically, Cinchona proved highly effective in treating malaria and I imagine that's what our dear Sophronia used. And isn't it interesting that Peruvian bark contains quinine, the same substance conventional medicine uses to treat malaria.

Later that year Sophronia's children, Alice and Willie traveled by steamer to join their mother in Portland, OR. Sophronia sold her practice in Albany and the family moved to Santa Cruz, CA. In 1879 she received her California Medical License, the 26th to be issued in the state. She opened her practice in Santa Cruz and they stayed there for only two years before moving on to Petaluma, in Sonoma County, CA, where Sophronia maintained her practice for five years. During that time the Presbyterian Congregation of Petaluma builds it's first church on Kentucky Street; seventeen inch

hailstones, weighing 1.75 lbs fall in Dubuque, Iowa; Morgan Earp is assassinated by outlaws while playing billiards in Tombstone; the cornerstone for the Statue of Liberty is laid on Bedloe's Island, and Chester Arthur is President of the U.S.

Watch for Part III of Sophronia Athearn Nichols, Medical Doctor and Homeopath in next month's Tattered Tidbits.

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