# Songs from the Stacks

The Glen Forest Water Cure and glimpses of early Antioch College

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Yellow Springs understood the curative powers of water long before the village incorporated under that name in 1856. From the time Lewis Davis first purchased the Yellow Spring in 1803, its healing qualities have been extolled in print. The earliest account of someone using the Spring for wellness comes from “Memorandums of a Tour made by Josiah Espy in the States of Ohio and Kentucky and Indiana Territory in 1805,” published in 1870: “The water of the spring,” Espy wrote, “ is intensely cold… considering the intense coldness of the water, and apparent hardness, it is surprising what quantities may be drank with perfect safety—it usually operating as a diuretic, sometimes as a cathartic. It is now most used in rheumatisms and eruptions of the skin, and with great efficacy.”



The Glen Forest Water-Cure.

The Glen Forest Water-Cure—a pictorial representation of which we give our readers today—is delightfully situated in the vicinity of Yellow Springs. It is accessible by carriages and by railway, a neat, little station house having been built on the Little Miami road, below the village. Leaving the station the visitor crosses by a pleasant carriage drive a wild, romantic ravine and, in a few moments, reaches the summit beyond, upon which stands the buildings. These are commodious and suitably furnished—not only with baths and the necessary appliances, but with *all* the necessary adjuncts of a well ordered home. To visit this spot in mid-summer is a rare luxury. On every hand are cool, leafy groves and rippling streamlets, and refreshing breezes of the forest, present a pleasant contrast to the sultry air of the city streets. Added to these, is the medicinal feature

While the use of cold water in the medical profession goes back to the writings of Hippocrates, it had become less prevalent among Enlightenment age physicians of the 18th century who saw themselves as doing battle with illness and disease. Consequently, conventional medicine of the time could be quite horrifying to the patient. Beginning in the 1820s, however, healing with water made a stirring comeback as "hydropathy." Also known as water cure, hydropathy could be practiced as self-care or under the direction of a hydropathic physician. In mid-19th century Yellow Springs, Ohio, the local hydropath physician was Dr. Abner Cheney, who operated The Glen Forest Water Cure Institution located in the southern half of Glen Helen. The only description Antiochiana has of "the Cure" from a patient's perspective follows, complete with original misspellings.

The writer, Clara True, about whom we know almost nothing, mentions "taking pack sheets," sheets she probably packed herself based on the advertisement about The Water Cure Establishment that appeared in *Reilly's Ohio State Business Directory* for 1853: "Patients are requested to bring with them 2 coarse cotton sheets" among other

linens and towels. Pack sheets are first soaked in cold water before the subject is wrapped up tightly. Eventually, the patient's body temperature warms the pack sheet, which based on Clara's account takes about forty minutes. That she wrote this letter in mid December and mentions that nearby Antioch College opened a week after she arrived tells us that Clara has been at the C
wonder she dreads the "bath bell."




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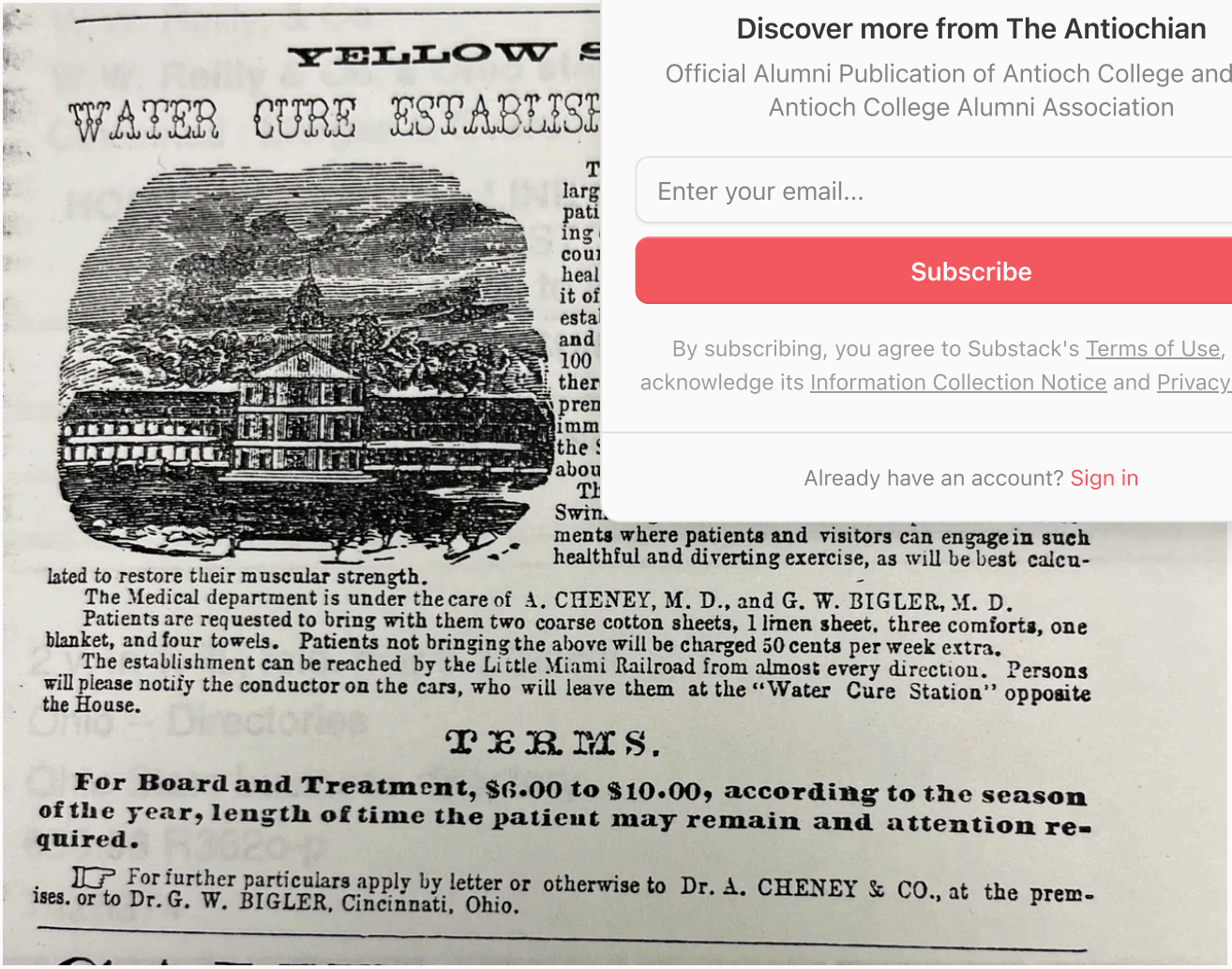
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Swim
ments where patients and visitors can engage in such healthful and diverting exercise, as will be best calculated to restore their muscular strength.

The Medical department is under the care of A. CHENEY, M. D., and G. W. BIGLER, M. D.

Patients are requested to bring with them two coarse cotton sheets, 1 linen sheet, three comforts, one blanket, and four towels. Patients not bringing the above will be charged 50 cents per week extra.

The establishment can be reached by the Little Miami Railroad from almost every direction. Persons will please notify the conductor on the cars, who will leave them at the "Water Cure Station" opposite the House.

TERMS.

**For Board and Treatment, $6.00 to $10.00, according to the season of the year, length of time the patient may remain and attention required.**

☞ For further particulars apply by letter or otherwise to Dr. A. CHENEY & CO., at the premises, or to Dr. G. W. BIGLER, Cincinnati, Ohio.

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Copy of a Letter from Clara True to her Brother-in-Law, Ralph Collier of Guilford, Indiana. Original in possession of Mrs. Chester W. Murphy, RFD 5, Xenia, a granddaughter of Mr. Collier.

Yellow Springs, Dec. 15, 1853.

My dear Brother Ralph,

Your very welcome letter is before me, which was received 2 days after mail, and which I should have acknowledged e'er this, but I felt so little like writing of late and besides Mr. Smith was talking of leaving in 2 or 3 days so I thought it expedient to turn my attention to him while he remained. He left Monday morning for Cincinnati, his health very much improved. I feel very lonely indeed since his departure. Life at the cure now is rather monotonous. There are only 4 patients here now. Dr. says it is invariably the case in winter. How much I would like to write you a long interesting letter, but my head aches so bad. I am now taking pack sheets. I have taken one every day for a week, in the afternoon 40 minutes. I have never got warm in one yet. Dr. says they will finally be beneficial to me even if they do make me worse now. If it was not for this hope, I would not submit to the packs, they are so unpleasant. Sponge bath in the morning, Sitz at 10 A.M. 75 degr's, foot at 7 P.M. 90 degr's. I am very unpleasantly situated for writing. I don't what kind of a letter this will be. I am in the sitting-room. Mrs. Cheney is talking at her usual rate which is not slow I assure you. The children are playing, which is very confusing as well as annoying. Now I am interrupted again by the dreaded ring of the bath bell.

Well, I have just returned from the bath room as cold as ice, and resumed my pen. The children have gone, but Mrs. C. interrupts me occasionally. Ellen the bath nurse tells me I have a dripping sheet this afternoon. You know how well I like them. Have I ever told you anything about Antioch College? It is a splendid affair. It was dedicated the next week after I came here. It is not finished yet. It accommodates about 2 hundred scholars. I wish your urchins could have the benefit of it. It is estimated at now I have forgotten the exact value, but several hundred thousand. It is one of the largest if not the largest College in the United States, Honorable Horace Mann is President. I suppose you know him by reputation. He is a distant relative of David Mann's the invetrate talker. Wouldn't I like to hear his lectures? Dr. Cheney considers him a superior being. This College is built for the accommodation of the world in general, entirely free from sectarianism. All denominations and none at all attend, Male and Female. It is a mixed school. I intend to visit it before I leave this place. Dr. Cheney thinks that I might almost as well leave now as to leave in less than 10 weeks, it is so necessary to remain that long, but I know I cannot remain more than half that long. He reduced my board $1, so that will be 4 dollars per week, as cheap as I could ask. He

does not oblige me to pay weekly. How are the folks all getting along out there. Does the Bloomerites still wear their costume? I wear mine yet and expect to until there is a greater improvement made then I shall adopt. I want to see you all, but I have no desire to go home, and would not for six months yet if I could remain that long, for I know it is absolutely necessary. Dr.Cheney would ensure me a cure if I would stay long enough. I am bound to stay as long as I can. You need not expect a letter from me often as it requires a little fortune to write so much. Dr. Cheney says that I am the coldest subject he ever saw. We have a good Library, very good, among which is Andrew Jackson Davises writings the clairvoyant. They are very interesting . if read without prejudice, you nothing can be interesting clogged with prejudice.

Goodbye,

Clara.


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A guest post by

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Antioch Archivist since before the turn of the century.

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