

## PART VI

# TONICS, ELIXIRS AND QUACKERY

Unfortunately, for many early Oregonians, “quack” physicians were their first exposure to medical services. These “quacks” understood the powerful combination of ignorance and desperation exploited the public’s wariness of medical treatment, by soliciting testimonials from “patients” who claimed to have benefited from the advertised treatment. Advertisements of cures flooded the newspapers throughout the country. The wondrous cures and improved health and well-being made by self-proclaimed medicine men peddling tonics, elixirs, and snake oil were often no more than mixtures of water, opium, cocaine, or alcohol. Since the therapeutic treatments of most quack physicians were never endorsed by reputable medical journals, “patient” testimonials became the route by which quacks gained their reputations as well as access to markets.<sup>325</sup>