

# Miraculous healer

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## *Her method a mystery*

By JOANNE DENNIS

One television show called it "The Twilight Zone."

A current one terms it "Journey to the Unknown."

Psychologists refer to it as "extra-sensory perception."

Whatever the name, they're all talking about a certain something that goes beyond the realm of human understanding.

The current revival of interest in matters occult recalls that Syracuse had its own candidate for fame in this area several decades ago . . . a woman who appeared to possess supernatural powers.

People came from all parts of the world to visit Dr. Mariana Herbert, who lived on a quiet street on the North Side.

And many of them swore that she had a special power to treat and heal them.

She was criticized by many; scoffed by some.

But thousands of others maintained that she truly possessed a gift from God. Her unexplained powers to diagnose and cure various illnesses became legendary not only in this country but in Europe and Canada.

A Syracuse woman, now a grandmother, turns the clock back 50 years and remembers:

"I was a young wife and mother living in an apartment on the north side. When I used to walk my baby each day I would see people lining Park Street waiting to visit Dr. Herbert. She was respected and loved by many. My friend and I often speak of her and the wonderful things she did for others. I will never forget her."

Dr. Herbert was noted for her ability to diagnose ills by tying a rag or cloth around the patient's body. Later she would "read" the cloth.

"It was amazing what she could do," recalls a Syracuse man in his 80's. "My wife went to her for two years and was cured of a condition which never returned throughout the 81 years of her life."

"I never believed in her," says still another resident who was a small child during

Dr. Herbert's days of fame. "Many people did, but I just couldn't logically accept her."

"My mother doctored with her," says another Syracuse woman. "I used to go to the office on Park Street with her when I was a little girl. The office was always crowded and the people seemed to have a lot of faith in her."

A local relative of Dr. Herbert recalls: "She never spent a lot of time with her children or grandchildren although she was very good to them. She was too busy helping others. She only used two medicines which she prepared herself from herbs brought from Germany. She gave most of her money to religious organizations and charity."

According to a story that appeared in a

newspaper at the time of her death in August, 1920, Dr. Herbert was born in Bavaria in 1845. She discovered her powers as a young girl. She studied in a German university and took a course in a college in Ohio when she came to the United States.

One legend, popular in Central New York, claimed that a man once tried to trick her. He took a cloth and tied it around the family pet. When he returned with the rag, Dr. Herbert took it and informed him that she did not treat dogs.

People would line the street to her office as early as 5 a.m. Often there would be 30 to 40 people in her waiting room at once.

Dr. Herbert was a deeply religious woman. She felt that whatever powers she possessed were gifts from God, and because of this, she gave money to churches and charitable projects. Several clergy were helped

with their studies by her financial gifts. Her home held a chapel where she could often be found at prayer.

Dr. Herbert was the mother of eight children. Her husband was many years her senior and used to help care for the family while she saw patients. One son, John, survives her and lives in Detroit, Mich. Another son was a doctor in Syracuse for many years before his death. Mariana left many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

She died Aug. 8, 1920, at Lake George without ever disclosing her methods of healing. Perhaps she didn't understand them herself.

Many in Central New York believe to this day that Dr. Herbert possessed miraculous powers. Other skeptics will never believe. But Dr. Marianna Herbert remains a colorful figure in Syracuse history.