Dear Friends:

This year’s Labor Day weekend is bound to look a lot different from usual, as many cancel their holiday at home or head outdoors for some socially distanced fun. This week, we invite you to take a virtual journey with us via our collections, from inside the Library itself to New York’s hot springs, London and Brazil. You can even learn to swim with tips from as early as 1818!

From the Collections: The Mineral Waters of Saratoga

Early American vacations were often “taking the waters,” in which spring and hot springs transmitted the healthful benefits of mineral baths. In the late 19th century, spas drew their water way from Saratoga Springs, in Saratoga, New York. The Library was once overlaid by nearby Saratoga Springs, and New York’s physician and author, Dr. Simeon Bird (1770-1847) covered both these waters in his 1809 work “A dissertation on the mineral waters of Saratoga, including an account of the sources of the mineral waters of the City of Bath.”

Color Our Collections: St. Clement Danes

While international travel is curtailed, we can use our imagination. St. Clement Danes, a London church designed by Sir Christopher Wren, was erected on the Strand in 1671 after the previous building was damaged in the Great Fire of London. This image comes from an 1886 book, British History of London, in the Delamere and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago. Colorful Collections gathers images from libraries, archives, and museums around the world.

Images from the Past: Anteaters of Brazil

Starting almost 400 years ago, the Dutch tried to colonize northeastern Brazil and populated it with the Portuguese. In 1684, a leader of the Dutch expedition, Willem Pauw’s Historia naturalis Brasiliae (Natural History of Brazil), published in Leiden, in King George Margaret (1567-1586) wrote the eight sections of the book dealing with animals and plants. This library also included the antechamber and the animals that appear in the book as woodcuts. We have digitized the book’s introduction and 15th sections, from which this illustration comes.

From the Blog: Swimming from 1818 to 1918

In this strange summer, socially distanced swimming is still possible. A list of books separated by 100 years focusing on how to swim and stay well to improve health. The 1818 book was The Art of Swimming, by J. Frost — now often forgotten — but highly illustrated and provided proper techniques. This image, roll-drive, comes from the craving of Frank Gehry’s London Swimming Centre (Cassino), published in 1990.

Noted Elsewhere: A Fanciful Map of North America

This cartoony map (from NYAM’s Small, Great and Outrageous: A Menu of Maps) celebrates the five-year quest of Anton Thomas to add his personal touches to a huge map—much like mapmakers of centuries past—and provides a fun way of finding out about faraway places.

We look forward to welcoming you back to the Library. As we wait, stay safe, stay engaged and stay connected.

The NYAM Library Team

Your support helps us preserve the Library’s treasures, share them with researchers and the public, and safeguard the history of medicine to inform the future of health.

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The New York Academy of Medicine (NYAM) tackles the barriers that prevent every individual from living a healthy life.

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