[H1] Introduction

The video starts with a montage of clips from videos in the series concluding with the title of the video, for this one "Tymen Stidham: The First Doctor of New Sweden." The title is followed by text reading, "Presented by," and then appears the Delaware Historical Society logo.

[H1] Rosemary, a Medicinal Herb

A simple sprig of rosemary. Maybe it makes you think about dinner, but in the 17th century they had some other ideas. Boil it with white wine, and you have a potion to remove blemishes from the face. Sprinkle it inside your clothes and ward away moths. Ah, but boil it in linen, drink the liquid, and it's a recipe to ward off all evils from the body. This is pretty powerful stuff.

[H1] Dr. Tymen Stidham

These are just three of many treatments that appear in a book of herbal remedies owned by Dr. Tymen Stidham, Delaware's first doctor, and maybe he knew what he was talking about. Stidham lived 76 years, almost doubling the life expectancy of the 17th century. He did so while making four round-trip voyages across the Atlantic, once surviving a shipwreck that cost him the lives of his wife and children. Years later, he died a wealthy man owning most of what we now think of as the northern third of downtown Wilmington.

[H1] Shipwreck in the Caribbean

Stidham first arrived on these shores in 1640 on the Kalmar Nyckel's second journey to New Sweden. He was one of two barber surgeons on board, cutting hair, performing surgery, and doing some basic dentistry. His first stay in New Sweden lasted four years before he traveled back to the Old World. But in 1649, he embarked once again for the colonies this time with his family aboard the cat. That voyage ended in disaster when the ship hit a reef and sank in the Caribbean, marooning the passengers on an uninhabited island 80 miles off the coast of Puerto Rico.

[H2] Marooned on a Deserted Island

"We had to lick the stones with our tongues, but could not secure so much wet for eight days that we could quench our thirst."

The video shows After the Shipwreck (1595), an etching of a shipreck on a rocky shore [01:52]. A voiceover speaks the quote.
Eventually they were discovered by Spanish and French sailors who robbed them of their possessions. It took Stidham two years to get back to Amsterdam. Less than a third of the colonists survived the ordeal, Stidham’s wife and children did not.

Beaten but not broken, Stidham returned to New Sweden in 1654, just in time to see the Dutch conquer the Swedish Colony and annex its settlers into New Netherland. But the Dutch needed doctors too, and Stidham spent decades practicing his trade prescribing remedies of horehound and boneset, pennyroyal and sassafras.

Dr. Stidham was appointed city surgeon of Christina in 1662 and passed away 24 years later in 1686. His Wilmington house on 14th street near poplar was demolished in 1888, but one of his books of herbal remedies still survives, offering a glimpse into the medical practices of another time.