

History of Nursing in Guilford County

By Eloise "Patty" Lewis

Nursing skills were being learned by the women of Guilford County. These skills were put to greatest use when the armies of Greene and Cornwallis met at Guilford Court House, March 15, 1781.

Two women, Ann Jessup and Caroline Stewart are given credit for leadership during the difficult days of the Battle of Guilford Court House. Ms. Jessup was very influential in recruiting women of Guilford and the surrounding counties to care for the wounded. Many of the wounded British soldiers were cared for at New Garden's Friends meeting. Women were influential in securing release of the wounded American prisoners and placing them in private homes. History does not provide the evidence that the British soldiers received care in exchange for the American prisoners but it is not a totally unreasonable notion.

Caroline Close Stewart was very much in evidence at the Battle of Guilford Court House. She was a well-known herbalist and healer. She carried with her bundles of herbs, lint, bandages and some clean shirts. Her calm, experienced presence was as welcome as her home made remedies—bandages, poultices and herbal drinks.

She continued her work with the sick and injured until her 100th birthday. There is a charming story about how "miffed" she was that she was not allowed to officiate at the birth of her great granddaughter who was born on the special birthday. She died at 103 leaving behind a legacy of caring, healing and caring for others.

Mr. Cone went to see for himself and when he returned home he offered the position to Miss Wyche, a native of Vance County who was nearing graduation from the State Normal. She began her work at Proximity Village. Within ten years the service had extended to the Revolution and White Oak communities and the services expanded to include a visiting nurse program. Frances C. Holman was the first nurse.

For forty one years Ms. Holman provided nursing services for the Proximity, Revolution and White Oak Communities. She instituted care of children and babysitting services. She provided medical as well as nursing care and assisted with 3500 births.

At the time of her retirement there was a nurse for each of the communities.

Greensboro's fifth hospital was built around the dynamic personality and the skill of a surgeon, Dr. John Wesley Long. By 1914 he had such a large practice that he bought the Merriman property in the third block of North Elm and converted it into a twenty bed surgical hospital. When he went to war he turned his hospital over to the Red Cross. He returned from war in 1926 and died the same year.

He opened a school of nursing in 1918 and it was closed in 1924. There are those who believe that lack of the presence of this remarkable man may be the major reason for the closure.

The most distinguished graduate of the school of nursing was Gilbert Muse McCaskill. She is credited as being the most powerful force in the success of the hospital. She was both superintendent and business manager. Her retirement came in 1942.

In 1932 the hospital was purchased by 12 physicians and in 1961 it was moved to its present location.

Nursing in the 20th Century

In 1903 North Carolina passed the first law in the nation to secure registration for nurses. The purpose was to:

--To provide for nurses a better education in practice and in theory—

The improvement in the education would enable the public to have more confidence in the registered nurses.

Dr. Wesley Long was appointed as a member of the First Board of Nurse Examiners. On May 22, 1904 he hosted a meeting here in Greensboro where the By Laws for the new Board were adopted.

As stated in the record of the N.C. Board of Nurse Examiners the major problems related to schools of nursing were:

Lack of a model or standards for nursing education
Unwholesome mushroom growth of training schools
Schools started without qualified students or teachers
Establishing schools of nursing as money making ventures
Students, promised an education, were working for little more than room and board
Very little change was made in nursing in Guilford County during the 20's and the 30's. Nursing in Guilford County was best recognized for the work in public health nursing.

Recognition is given to the fact that there were other hospitals and health care facilities but when the search revealed no data on nursing they are not mentioned.

World War II

Nurses in Guilford County, like nurses everywhere, went to war! The response was adequate, thus preventing a draft. The ones who remained behind carried many burdens. Some facilities had one nurse, students and volunteers.

After World War II there was a demand for staff nurses and more nurses chose to continue their education. Standards were improving and hospitals began to acknowledge that running a school of nursing was too expensive to continue.

In 1948 a Presidential Commission studying nursing recommended two ways of preparing nurses: 1) at the junior college level (like an LPN), and 2) at the senior college level for the professional.

The next moves in Guilford County were in keeping with these recommendations.

In 1949 the State of N.C. engaged in a study to determine the need for the state to become involved in the education of health professionals. As a result of the study the decision was made to:

- upgrade the two year medical school to four years
- establish a school of dentistry
- establish a school of pharmacy
- establish a school of public health
- establish a school of nursing

Many persons believed that the School of Nursing should be placed on the campus of the Woman's College of the University of the N.C. instead of on the Chapel Hill campus. Wisdom prevailed and the final decision was made to place all five schools in the same facility. The state would not have received the same benefits if health care professionals were being educated together except for nursing. The faculty and administration of the Woman's College made the decision to continue to work and plan for a four year degree program on the Greensboro campus.

When the four year program in nursing was placed on the Chapel Hill campus the black citizens were disturbed because they did not have a school of nursing on the campus of one of the black colleges. As a result of deliberations and political action schools of nursing were established at N.C. Central, Winston-Salem State and N.C. A&T College in Greensboro.

The school opened in 1953 under the able leadership of Dr. Willeta Jones. After several years she chose to return to New York and accepted a position on the staff of the American Nurses Association. Data were requested from the current administration, no response.

Many changes were being made in Greensboro during the early 1950's. Both St. Leo's and L. Richardson Hospitals closed their schools because of the expense. The public schools participated in a state-wide effort to train LPN's. Later these programs were moved to Guilford Technical Institute and in the late sixties G.T.I. began an Associate Degree Program.

During the polio epidemic of 1948 Greensboro became a regional medical center and cared for patients from 11 counties. Of all the regions in the state the Guilford County area was the region with the most polio cases.

Local nurses were unable to handle the demands therefore a call for nurses from other parts of the state or surrounding states helped to relieve the burden. Red Cross nurses from other parts of the country responded to the call.

The community responded to the emergency by building the 125 bed Central Carolina Convalescent Hospital. The facility opened in 1948 and served the community for ten years. When the facility was no longer needed for convalescent purposes it became a long term facility.

By 1955 Greensboro had 400 R.N.'s and 75 LPN's. These health care workers were caring for the sick in an acceptable manner and in keeping with the nationwide trends.

In 1911 Mrs. Bertha Cone created a trust which at her death would make possible the creation of a hospital as a memorial to her husband, Moses. She lived 39 years after his death but when she died in 1947 plans for the hospital were announced. The Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital opened February 25, 1953. Today it is licensed for 543 acute care beds and 6 hospice beds. The Department of Nursing has 800 + FTE's, 81% for R.N.'s.

When the Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital opened they had counted on their supply of nurses coming from St. Leo's and L. Richardson. The numbers being graduated were small. For example, St. Leo's – 14 graduates, L. Richardson – 5 graduates and High Point Hospital – 4 graduates.

Mr. Cone, in his role as Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the hospital, had always dreamed and planned that the hospital would have its own diploma school. Nursing was moving toward the placement of Schools of Nursing into institutions of higher learning. The members of the Board were urged not to begin the development of a diploma school.

Early, in the decade of the 1950's the Kellogg Foundation agreed to fund seven new programs in nursing, located in various parts of the country. These programs were to be two years in length, technically based and located in Junior Colleges. These programs were billed as "technical, terminal programs".

N.C. was not chosen as one of the seven states to participate in the funded project. N.C. did not have its two year community college system in place which may be one of the reasons N.C. was not chosen.

Organized nursing was anxious to have the opportunity to learn about the new type of program and participate in the new undertaking. The N.C. State Nurses Association requested the Woman's College to establish and offer such a program on an experimental basis until the community college system was established and operational. The officers of the State Association had an appointment with Mereb Mossman who was Dean of the Faculty. She listened but made no commitment. She did share that the Woman's College still had some two year programs but they had no desire to seek state funding for new two year programs.

The final decision was that the Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital would give the money to the Woman's College to operate the program and the academic controls would rest with the college. The hospital viewed this undertaking as an opportunity to provide a source of nurse manpower and please those who had always wanted the hospital to have a school of nursing.

The program was approved and the first class was admitted in September 1957; the last class graduated in June 1967. The classes were small, the average size 20-25. The total number graduated was 170.

Due to the fact that the hospital funded the program it was often referred to as the Cone Program. Unofficial estimates are that the hospital provided a million dollars to the college for the program.

During the years of the two year program the faculty and administration remained steadfast in their desire for a degree program.

School of Nursing at UNC-G

The two year Associate Degree Program offered at the Woman's College was viewed by the administration as temporary especially so when the institution achieved university status in 1963 and the name was changed to the University of N.C. at Greensboro.

Throughout the years of the Associate Degree Program the administration had planned for the next step in the plans to have a baccalaureate program. At commencement on June 5, 1965 Governor Dan Moore made the announcement that monies were being made available to begin the B.S.N. program.

The search for the Dean began in July 1965 and in February 1966 Dr. Eloise R. Lewis was named Professor and Dean.

Certain decisions were made that related to the beginning of the new program. They were:

The two year program would be closed with the June 1967 graduation.

Faculty members in the two year program would have contracts terminated. They would be given the option to apply, if qualified, to the new program.

Major clinical facilities were contracted to determine their interest in working with the new program.

On September 1, 1966 the new Dean and thirty freshmen, who declared their intent to major in nursing, arrived on campus.

September 1967 the first seven faculty members arrived. During the 1967-68 academic years the faculty members spent one day each week in practice in their area of specialization. From the beginning the clinical agencies were supportive and made special contributions to the new program.

In September 1969 the school moved into its new building. April 1970 was a significant time when the school received national accreditation from the NLN before graduation of the first class. The first class of 18 students graduated in June 1970. This was the largest first class graduated in any of the baccalaureate programs in the state.

The year 1976 was celebrated as the 10th anniversary of the school with the induction of Gamma Zeta Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau. In addition, General Administration of the University of N.C. system sent a directive to the University to begin a master's program. The first class of 9 were graduated in 1977.

The faculty, students and graduates were having a major impact on the Greensboro health care community both in quality and quantity. Its influence was expanded in the late seventies when contracts were signed with both Greensboro and Northwest AHEC's to provide continuing education for practicing nurses.

In 1983 the School of Nursing and the Moses H. Cone Memorial Nursing Department developed a cooperative research undertaking. The purpose was to search for improved methods of patient care.

The post masters' residency program in Nursing Administration was developed between the school and Moses Cone Hospital Department of Nursing to provide graduates of the master's program experience in the practice setting. This undertaking has proved highly successful and meaningful to students.

When the first dean of the School of Nursing retired in 1985 there had been 1,611 graduates of the baccalaureate program and 228 from the master's program.

Nursing in Guilford County in the Decade of the 80's

During the decade of the 1980's nursing and nurses in Guilford County have moved to become a more valued resource and a necessary, positive part of the health care industry. The

image of the nurse, in white working in the acute hospital setting is changing—the placement and activities of the nurse defy description.

In 1955 there were 400 R.N.'s in Greensboro, today there are between 5-6,000 R.N's in Guilford County. The educational level has changed dramatically. In 1966 there was one nurse at the Health Department with a master's degree, one at Cone Hospital with a B.S.N. and a part time nurse at Wesley Long with a B.S.N. Today in all the health care agencies there are persons prepared at both the B.S.N. and M.S.N. levels. Moses Cone has 50 nurses with masters degrees and two with Ph.D.'s.

The community of Guilford has kept pace with the national trend in preparing professional nurses at the baccalaureate level –U.N.C.-G and N.C.A&T State University—and at the Associate Degree level at Guilford Technical Community College. There is ample proof to suggest that the improvement in educational preparation has had an impact on the quality of patient care. The reputation of the Nursing Department at the Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital places it at the top in N.C. and with a recognized and respected reputation in the south.

The leadership roles held by nurses in Guilford County are at the local, state, regional and national levels. The following are examples:

- Six past presidents of the N.C. Nurses Association
- Three past presidents of the N.C. League For Nursing
- Chairman of N.C. Board of Nursing
- Three members of the N.C. Board of Nursing
- One member of a hospital Board of Trustees—first in North Carolina
- Two members of Board of Trustees – Long term care facilities
- Members of U.S.O.A. Board
- Members (10) U.S.O.A. Advisory Committee
- Member (1) Board of Health
- Presidents of Hospice of N.C. (3)
- Members of Hospice of Greensboro Board
- Many nurses have national certification in area of specialty

Nurses in Guilford County are practicing in the following agencies:

- Hospitals
- Clinics – hospital based and free standing
- Long term health facilities
- Insurance agencies
- Drug companies
- Industries as certified nurse practitioner
- City health care system
- Prisons
- Schools
- HMO's

- Doctor's offices
- Health Department
- Home Health Agencies

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21. Jordon, pp. 88, 90-93, 161.
22. Wyche pp. 84, 116-125.
23. Arnett, pp. 403-407.
24. Jordon p. 99.
25. Wyche, pp. 130-131.
26. Arnett, pp. 407-414
27. Minutes of the Faculty Council of the Woman's College of the University of N.C. for the years 1942-52. Used by permission.
28. Fripp, pp. 127-128.
29. Arnett, p. 345
30. Interview with Merib Mossman, Dean of the Faculty at the Woman's College of the University of N.C. The writer of this paper was in the group of persons who had the interview with Miss Mossman in the fall of 1956.

31. Information from the official records of the Registrar's Office at the University of N.C. at Greensboro. Used by permission.

Education of the nurse is vividly described by Virginia Henderson who entered the Army School in 1918. She says:

“My basic training was largely in a general hospital where for the nurse, technical competence, speed of performance, and a professional manner (actually an impersonal one) was stressed. We were introduced to nursing as a series of almost unrelated procedures beginning with making an unoccupied bed and progressing to the aspirations of a body cavity. In this era, ability to catheterize a patient seems to qualify a student for night duty where without prior experience in the administration of a service she might have the entire care of 30 sick souls and bodies”.

She graduated in 1921, is still living and has made a distinguished contribution to nursing.

PUBLIC HEALTH

In the 1880's the citizens of Greensboro began to show some interest and concern for the health of the public. Concrete evidence of this was the designation of a superintendent of health.

In 1898 Clara Peck became an independent nurse. She had no training because none was available. She used her common sense and faithfully followed the doctor's orders.

She was well known and highly respected therefore it was not surprising that when a group of physicians established a hospital in 1901 she asked to serve as matron. When the hospital closed in 1906 she again became an independent nurse.

The doctors considered her indispensable and her care of the sick an example for all to follow. She again gave herself to community service and became known as the first district nurse.

She began to specialize in obstetric nursing and soon had more to do than she could handle. A distinctive aspect of her work was attention to the needs of the entire family. Her work to relieve the suffering of the poor was outstanding.

By 1914 Guilford County's first district nurse had made 7,757 calls and earned a salary of \$75.00 per month. She also earned the profound respect and gratitude of the entire community.

She became known as the Samaritan of Elm Street. An article appeared in the Daily News with the following quote:

“If you are poor and ill or friendless you know her. You know why every physician in Greensboro speaks of her with such whole-hearted respect, why certain ladies of the town are forever at her command, and why speaking disrespectfully of her in the poorer communities would be inviting personal violence.”

She worked to improve the care of tubercular patients and became the first superintendent of the Guilford County Sanatorium. Retirement came in 1925 and she died suddenly the following year.

Dr. Joseph L. Spruill who succeeded her as superintendent of the sanatorium paid the following tribute:

“She knew disease, its symptoms, and how to treat it, as well as most physicians. She brought more patients who were in the early stages of the disease for examination than any other person in the county... from time to time she resigned...I have missed her only once, and that has been all the time.”

The County Health Department, the first in the nation, opened in 1911. In 1925 the Greensboro Nursing Council introduced a new concept: a city-county campaign to reduce venereal disease, control tuberculosis, develop school health programs and preschool clinics. Ten nurses were employed and a Ms. Lambe was chosen to provide the supervision.

By 1937 there were eleven nurses, one part-time staff nurse and Mrs. Louis Raulston as the director. The nursing department was creative in meeting the needs of the citizens and became recognized throughout the state, region and nation for excellence. The Children and Youth Project received national attention.

Two public health nurses from Guilford played an important role in the development of public health nursing throughout the state. They were Ruth Council of High Point and Blanche Lambe of Greensboro who was the first school nurse.

World War I

At least seventeen Guilford County women, thirteen of whom were nurses served overseas during World War I. Suzanne Haskins of Summerfield, one of the first navy nurses in the country, set back her age by 15 years and enlisted with the Red Cross.

Dorothy Conyers, a graduate of St. Leo's, was loaned to the army by the Red Cross. She earned a distinguished career and four bronze stars. Ms. Annie Reveley, another St. Leo's graduate, died in 1918 of pneumonia. She is buried in France.

Dr. Anna Grove, resident physician at N.C. College for Women, now UNC-G., took a two year leave of absence to work with French children who had been displaced at the war.

After the war the Guilford Red Cross Volunteers cared for returning soldiers.

From 1920-1923 a major national study supported by the Rockefeller Foundation was conducted to determine how nurses were being educated and how nursing was developing in the U.S.

The major recommendation was that nursing education should be placed in institutions of higher learning.

L. Richardson Hospital

In 1923 work began on the L. Richardson Hospital which was completed in 1927. Patients began being admitted on May 15. A training school was begun in 1927 and 7 students were graduated in 1930. The training school was under the direction of Ms. Geneva Sitrena Collins, a graduate of St. Agnes in Raleigh. The largest class was in 1949 when 17 completed the course. The school closed in 1954.

Ms. Zodie Norris the first black nurse employed by Wesley Long Hospital was a graduate of L. Richardson Hospital School of Nursing. One of the reasons set forth for closing the school was the size of the practice area. The hospital had a capacity of 60 with a daily average census of 30. In addition A&T State University could now provide a baccalaureate education in nursing. A more appealing opportunity for the young person interested in nursing.