
early phn info new hanover

Letter from New Hanover County Public Health Nursing Director, Columbia Munds to New Hanover County Health Officer John Hamilton, 1929

Dr. John H. Hamilton,
County Health Officer,
Wilmington, N.C.

Dear Sir:

To a small group of interested and progressive persons, here in Wilmington, belongs the honor of putting on the first district nurse in North Carolina. This work was begun in 1904. Wilmington was the third Southern City to have a district nurse; Richmond was first in 1900 followed in 1902 by Charleston.

This group carried the work for two years, when it was taken over by the Ministering Circle of King's Daughters, who have been supporters of Public Health Nursing work continuously since that date.

Shortly after the organization of the Wilmington Chapter of the American Red Cross, the members showed their interest in tuberculosis. This interest was manifested both in employing a nurse (at that time a practical one), and in propaganda for a Tuberculosis Sanatorium. The Sanatorium was opened in 1912 through the efforts of the local Chapter.

On May 1, 1915, the Board of Health employed their first nurse. She did School and Infant Welfare Work. It was in line with the times as nearly all nursing services then were specialized.

The following December, the Ministering Circle of King's Daughters employed a second nurse, as a memorial to one of their members. The next March, 1918, the Red Cross Chapter entered into a contract with the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and a graduate registered nurse was engaged for the joint work.

The city was divided into districts for bedside nursing by the two King's Daughters Nurses, the other two nurses, working the same field and without supervision, necessarily found their work overlapping. During that fall, Dr. Low, the Health Officer, met with representatives of the groups employing nurses to discuss the question of a Public Health Nursing Organization. This was done, the city districted and on December the first 1918 a supervisor and four staff nurses began their work under the direction of the Health Officer. The contract with the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company was taken over by the Wilmington Public Health Nursing Association, and two cotton mills joining the organization enabled them to employ the fifth nurse.

A year later the Board of Health put on their second nurse, one for county work, our Board of Health being a consolidated one. This nurse also was placed under the direction of the Supervising Nurse.

The Jewish Women's Federated Charities decided in the spring of 1921 to sponsor a nurse. At first they wished a school nurse but later they put her on as a district nurse, taking one school as a part of her work.

Until 1923 we had no colored nurse, the white nurses giving nursing care to the colored people; no work was done in the colored schools. Several colored groups raised money for a colored school nurse that spring. Good work was done but the funds gave out and the work stopped after four months. The need for this nurse was shown so clearly that in June, 1924, one was put on permanently, the salary being paid by the Board of Health Nursing Organization.

Our ninth nurse, our second colored one, is supported by funds provided by the Board of Health. Having the two colored nurses has enabled us to make two districts in the most thickly settled, colored sections of the city and put these nurses also on a generalized service.

Our work embraces all types. Bedside care for the acutely ill, instructive as in Pre-Natal, Infant Welfare, Tuberculosis, etc., and educational. Since the money was appropriated to the Board of Health by the State Board of Health, for Maternity and Infancy work two years ago, we have been able to do almost twice as much work for expectant mothers and babies.

The Tubercular Survey among school children last fall, has been of great benefit to the children of the community. We find in practically all of the cases the mothers are most cooperative in every way to do what is best for the child. We feel that many children having positive cases or positive reaction will be entirely cured by the work opened up to us by this survey.

We are, of course, looking forward to the time when our nursing force will be increased as there are many things we need and wish to do, among them more time for work in the schools, both white and colored, and a nurse is needed for the High School. At present through lack of personnel, we do no work in that large group of young people. There is also need for a colored County nurse as the nurse doing that work cannot do all that should be done.

Figures are not, as a rule, entertaining reading. There is one comparison, however, we wish to make – the total number of Home visits in 1928 was over 21,000, 4,000 larger than the previous year, due to the influenza epidemic of the winter.

Respectfully submitted,

COLUMBIA MUNDS,
Supervising Nurse.

WILMINGTON PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING ASSOCIATION REPORT
FOR THE YEAR 1928

	This Year	Last Year	Co.	Districts						
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Old Patients	5674	3681	723	611	679	546	591	753	873	898
New Patients	4503	5140	369	448	733	417	615	839	602	480
Total No. Patients	10177	8821	1092	1059	1412	963	1206	1592	1475	1378
Home Visits										
Tuberculosis Visits (Old Patients)	295	283	40	47	18	7	95	----	35	53
Tuberculosis Visits (New Patients)	107	75	13	25	20	6	4	1	12	26
Anti-Partum Visits	1421	863	191	114	178	77	80	225	278	278
Post-Partum Visits	807	646	97	91	134	55	55	126	115	134
Infant Welfare Visits	4390	2625	603	390	664	394	393	533	737	676
Pre-school visits	3504	2841	150	428	380	492	494	1115	251	194
School child visits	4859	5204	242	565	764	484	617	1177	412	598
General Nursing Visits	3888	2538	213	646	761	374	555	596	313	430
Instructive Visits	1494	1490	95	235	270	191	186	200	132	185
Social Service Visits	745	934	63	207	86	111	108	58	51	61
Total Home Visits	21510	17497	1707	2748	3275	2191	2587	4031	2336	2635
School Work										
School Children Examined for Communicable Diseases	7384	5260	1735	119	1894	1576	321	752	493	494
Nurses' Visits to Schools	610	443	140	75	68	65	47	66	62	87

School Children Examined to School	829	1467	39	74	191	91	85	118	143	88
School Children Referred to Doctor	476	1003	40	38	94	57	46	68	60	73
School Children Weighed and Measured	9696	2427	1635	846	1478	1091	427	138	1307	1511
Defects Corrected										
Tonsils and Adenoids	80	67	7	14	10	11	10	17	47	4
Eyes	10	26	2	2	1	2	3	---	---	---
Teeth (1927 Dental Clinic)	37	1255	1	4	3	21	5	3	---	---
All Other	2	4	---	---	2	---	---	---	---	---
Total Defects Corrected	129	1332	10	20	17	33	18	20	7	4
Vaccinations										
Smallpox	1403	2240	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Typhoid	526	586	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Diphtheria Toxin—Anti-Toxin	268	244	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
All others	35	39	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Total Vaccinations	2235	3109	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Infant Welfare Work										
Nurses' Visits to Clinic	167	167	29	19	21	26	17	25	21	9
Old Patients Taken to Baby Clinic	190	356	---	30	41	35	57	23	3	1
New Patients Taken to Baby Clinic	113	204	6	22	31	19	19	14	2	---
Total	303	560	6	52	72	54	76	37	5	1
Milk Station										
No. Feedings Made	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
No. Babies Fed	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

COLUMBIA MUNDS, R.N.,
Supervising Nurse.

Wilmington Chapter of Red Cross

FIRST ACTIVITIES

From its very beginning and during the first six years of its existence, the Chapter, besides answering all calls for aid in national disasters issued from Headquarters, took up as its chief work and in a most vigorous manner the local anti-tuberculosis fight on educational as well as practical lines. In constant co-operation with the local Board of Health and by employing the professional services of a visiting nurse, a systematic method of treatment and prevention of the disease was adopted, statistics soon showing the benefits of this course.

The nurse employed by the Chapter -- a colored woman of remarkable ability and devotion to the cause, - Anna Bently - by her personal efforts greatly promoted the efficacy of this venture, especially among the colored people who readily responded to her intelligent and helpful advice. Her efforts were supplemented and the success of the method was materially furthered by the untiring zeal of an Interested Visiting Committee, composed of members of the Chapter, who by personal interviews with the patients and their families won their confidence and introduced sanitary measures both among the colored and the poorer classes of the white population; they also provided needful help in the shape of proper food, clothing and other comforts. Generous private donations and the sale of Red Cross Christmas Seals energetically carried on by the Chapter members furnished the funds for this work. Other local activities comprised providing the city and county schools with "First aid to the injured" outfits, assisting in communal sanitary movements and various hygienic matters.

THE INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC

Chapter activities were suddenly and for a period of about four weeks turned into new channels when, in September, 1918, our city was struck by a serious epidemic of Influenza which absorbed the full time and energy of all who were able to help. The value of Red Cross organization was abundantly proved in those days. As soon as the serious character of the outbreak became apparent, the Mayor of the city appointed a Relief Committee in which the Red Cross was represented by its Chairman of Military Relief and its Assistant Chairman of Education of Military Relief and its Assistant Chairman of Education. A force of emergency nurses from the Red Cross training classes was speedily organized and rendered admirable services, graduate nurses were being available. A Red Cross Emergency Ward for pneumonia patients was at once established at the James Walker Memorial Hospital and was taken in charge by Miss Elizabeth Haile, whose departure for France in Red Cross Nursing Service had been deferred, enabling her to continue at this post. A Soup Kitchen was also started at that time by Red Cross volunteers who worked energetically day and night during a period of over four weeks with an average daily output of three hundred gallons of soup, sixty gallons of milk, half of which they churned into buttermilk and large quantities of stewed fruit, jellies and other delicacies. Donations of money and materials, though bountiful and numerous, did not limit the extent of this work, and all remaining expenses were taken over by the Red Cross Relief Committee. In addition to this, the City High School Building was transformed into a Red Cross Emergency Hospital under direction of Dr. C.W. Stiles, Assistant Surgeon General, and Reserve, U.S. Public Health Service, who by that time had taken hold of the situation with the masterful hand of the expert. Finding the initial work done by the Red Cross pupils entirely of the right order, Dr. Stiles placed into the hands of the chapter, through the Assistant Chairman of its Education Committee, the entire task of supplying volunteer nurses for the emergency hospital nurses, is. A total of 118 volunteer nurses, including practically all the students who were not sick or at work in the homes of needy patients, were thus assigned to duty, in organized shifts, at four emergency hospitals, the Red Cross Pneumonia Wards, the High School Red Cross Hospital, the Liberty Ship Yard Hospital and the Carolina Ship Yard Hospital, totaling in all 231 beds and 623 patients. A strong committee of helpers organized under the guidance of Dr. Stiles supplemented this Hospital Nursing Service.

But Red Cross relief work was by no means confined to the services of these committees, nor to the Chapter's geographical limits. A Red Cross Automobile Service, going far beyond the County limits, carried nurses to rural populations, to instruct these in the treatment of the disease. Along its route, this expedition opened Soup Kitchens modeled after the one operated by the Chapter of Wilmington under directions given by Miss Mary C. Bennett, U.S. Army dietician, awaiting orders for service abroad.

A small force of volunteer Red Cross workers did very efficient nursing service at and around Masonboro and Greenville Sounds. And numberless Red Cross volunteers were on hand wherever needed and at all times, assisting in the care of the sick and the dying and represented in all phases of the work, the lowliest tasks being readily accepted by many.

Among the touching incidents of self-sacrifice in those days was the death of C.N. White, the youthful physical director of the Y.M.C.A., who ministered heroically to the sick, until he himself was fatally stricken and died in Red Cross service October 28, 1918.

Relief work during the epidemic led to the almost automatic formation of a volunteer motor corps, realizing a project which had long been contemplated. The services rendered by its members became a potent fact in facilitating the relief work.