

Presbyterian Hospital History

Presbyterian Hospital School of Nursing is the outgrowth of a little one nurse hospital on North Tryon Street established in 1898 by three of Charlotte's outstanding surgeons.

At least one event made the old hospital historic. It was there that x-ray was used for the first time, so far as research has revealed, in locating a foreign body in the trachea. Dr. Smith then Professor of Physics at Davidson College had personally assembled and perfected an x-ray apparatus. Upon request of the surgeon, Dr. Smith loaded his heavy x-ray equipment, came to the hospital, took the x-rays and located the foreign body, which proved to be a thimble. The surgeon removed it and the patient's life was saved.

It soon became necessary to seek larger quarters and the hospital moved to the old law building on North church Street opposite the First Presbyterian Church. Ten leading physicians purchased the hospital to expand it into a wider field of service. These physicians presented it to five Presbyterian Churches in the city and they immediately had the hospital incorporated into the laws of North Carolina and in 1903 it became the Presbyterian Hospital of Charlotte.

Expanding once again became necessary and the top floors of the Arlington Hotel on the corner of West Trade and South Mint Street was rented. Here, for more than a decade the hospital rendered a splendid service. Dr. James M. Alexander was made manager and Miss Ella MacNichols, Superintendent of Nurses, positions which they filled well for nearly twenty years.

The School was organized in 1903 with a class of only three students. These students have had practical experience in the hospital and because of this experience, the State Board of Nurse Examiners allowed them eighteen months on their three year course. They took the State Board Examination the first year it was organized, passed the examination and then the Presbyterian Hospital granted them a diploma. The student uniform was designed by Miss MacNichols. The blue and white striped long sleeve dress was topped with a long white bib and apron. The white collar and ruffs were detachable. The student wore black hose and above the ankle back boots.

At first, the bib was gathered in front but later Miss MacNichols changed it to the plain style that you see on our model. The gathered apron is two yards wide at the bottom. This was later changed to a gored apron because and I quote Miss MacNichols "These looked alright on the thin girls but one year we had a class of big girls and these aprons worried me."

Miss MacNichols states she had a hard time deciding upon a cap. After trying several types, she decided to use her own cap which was of the Women's Hospital of Philadelphia, one of the oldest schools in America. The design was adopted from caps worn by modest peasant folk of Normandy, a province of Western Europe.

The early classes used class pins which were different for each class. Miss MacNichols designed the hospital seal and this was adapted as the school pin. It is plain and stands for what the hospital represents. The pin is given to each student at graduation.

After this time, the classes slowly increased in number each year. Every member of each class always took the state board examination and they always passed. The State did not require mandatory licensure as they do today and graduates could nurse with just a diploma. Presbyterian was always proud to say all of our nurses are taking the Boards.

For a number of years the nurses were allowed and required by the hospital to go out to private homes on cases during their second and third years of training. They were so few graduate nurses to call in on special cases that the school felt they had to send students to meet this need. Also, they did twenty-four duties in the hospital which meant having a cot in the patient's room and getting as much as or little sleep as the case would allow. The senior nurses acted as supervisors in the different departments and did a splendid job. You can imagine how much this work interfered with class. The classes were at night and whenever the students could leave their patients, they attended these classes. They worked hard to keep up with their studies. They were interested to the extent of putting their work first and their own desires second. The classes were taught mostly by the doctors: however, Miss MacNichold taught ethics. "History of Nursing and Practical Procedures". Presbyterian Graduates were considered the best trained and most popular nurses in Charlotte and throughout this part of the state.

In 1916, a campaign was started to raise funds for building a fire proof hospital on that present site but due to the war, it was impossible to obtain the building supplies. The Executive Secretary of the American Hospital Association advised the purchase of Elizabeth College.

There were serious objections by some because there would be heavy indebtedness and they felt a building this large was not needed. However, the College was bought, remodeled and officially opened on February 25, 1918 with a capacity of 100 bed and 10 bassinets. This is the location where we are today.

At this time, the staff consisted of Miss MacNichols, one graduate and the students.

Dark days were ahead for the hospital but the generosity, special consideration and hard work given by many dedicated people and the local Presbyterian Churches thwarted the possibility of closure. The hospital auxiliary was organized at this time, and this organization has continued to donate great work and much money to Presbyterian Hospital. The management of the snack shop is just one of their services.

As economic conditions improved, plans were made for a new structure. In 1940 this new structure was opened adding an additional 160 beds and 27 bassinets.

As the hospital grew and developed, the School of Nursing also grew and developed. State Board stopped the hospital from using students on special duty and required the employment of a full-time instructor. The first full-time instructor was employed in 1927.

The uniform changed somewhat about 1925. The long sleeves became short but it continued to be blue and white striped with the white collar and cuffs. The bib and apron wore still white and the apron gored. The cap is the final one that Miss MacNichols decided upon and is the one worn today in a

smaller version. Black hose and shoes continued to be worn until 1936 when several of the students got infected feet. Drs. Fleming and Kennedy recommended that students, wear white hose and shoes to help correct this problem thus the changed occurred. Up until 1935 the student had received money, a stipend, each month they were at the school. The amount was \$5 per month when it was discontinued. However, if you had a broken a syringe or anything else that month, the cost of it was deducted from your stipend. One student recalled getting a stipend of 5 cents one month!

In 1937 a second instructor was employed. The number of students had increased and also the education standards had been raised. One of the outstanding achievements in raising the educational standards of the school was the arrangement which was made with Queens College. A young woman wishing to take nursing training and complete her college work could in the course of six years complete the combined course. This course was among the first of its kind in the South. One of the young ladies in 1936 had the honor of receiving the B.S. in nursing from Queens College, having previously received their diploma from Presbyterian Hospital School of Nursing and successfully passing the North Carolina Board of Nursing Examination.

In 1940 a total of 30 nurses had graduated from Presbyterian Hospital School of Nursing. The high standard of the early years had continued. Miss Witherspoon, a 1940 graduate made the highest average on the North Carolina Board Examination of anyone taking it at the time.

Two classes per year were being admitted to the school. In the fall of 1942, forty-four students were admitted. This was the largest class that had been accepted up to this time. To the two full-time faculty staff, some part-time instructors had been added. Some were Head Nurses on units who lectured in their specialties and others helped with clinical supervision especially of the freshman. Doctors continued to do a great amount of teaching.

1945 marked the opening of another addition to Presbyterian Hospital, the B Wings from the Third to the Seventh Floors.

World War II, the increase of mass media and thus increased knowledge by the public of health and health care, the discovery and use of penicillin and other antimicrobial agents, plus the increased knowledge and equipment available for patient care all made it necessary for nurses to be better educated. The North Carolina Board of Nurses made very rigid standards for Schools of Nursing to follow if the school was to exist. For instance, each student had to attend the school 1096 days. If you were sick, you made the time up later. Also, a specific number of days were required for each specialty area of nursing. Presbyterian Hospital School of Nursing, of course, complied to these standards and thus in 1951 affiliation to other institutions for Psychiatric Nursing begun because we did not have facilities in this area. The first N.J. then we were affiliated was in Maryland, and in 1960, the affiliation began at Broughton, which we still use of part of the Psychiatric experience today.

1951, was an exciting time for student nurses because a new nurses's residence was opened for occupancy. It is the one you are now living in. The old Elizabeth College Building which had been the previous nurses residence was remodeled for hospital use.

By the 1960's television had become a common household object and the health care consumer became more aware of his health needs and rights for health care. He began demanding quality care and institutions, educating nurses as well as other health professionals, had to prepare the health personnel to meet these demands. By this time, State Board standards had become less specific and more freedom was given to the individual schools to plan their own curriculum. The role of educating nurses had become a tremendous task.

In 1963, a position for a Director of Nursing Education was made at Presbyterian Hospital, which no longer came under the Director of Nursing Service but was equal to this position. Also, about this time, accreditation by the National League for Nursing had become a desirable achievement and honor for Schools of Nursing. Presbyterian Hospital School of Nursing met the criteria for the NLN accreditation in 1964.

As medical knowledge increased, more instructors were added to the faculty and greater numbers of students were admitted to the school. In 1967, ninety-one students were accepted for admission, the largest class to have entered at this time. Most were high school graduates with no previous college. It was this year Presbyterian Hospital began affiliating in Central Piedmont Community College for the liberal arts and science which had been previously taught here.

In 1968, State Board required a minimum of a B.S. Degree to be on the faculty. The result was a larger number of well-prepared graduates.

During the student rioting days of the late 60's, Presbyterian Hospital felt very fortunate that the nursing students had no part of it. The student government worked diligently and maturely for the privileges which other students were rioting to get. The dorm atmosphere of one big family was a must. Sets of televisions, cooking utensils and other household items by the hospital auxiliary have made the dorm more like home.

1970 brought a new look to the students being admitted to our school. The uniform was changed from the short sleeve blue and white striped with the separate bib and apron to a solid trail blue fronted with a white panel all in one piece. White oxford shoes and hose have not changed. The mod fashion of high heels and opened heel shoes have not become an accepted style for student nurses at Presbyterian Hospital.

In 1971, Queens College approached the school about reestablishing the B.S. Program in nursing which had been discontinued in 1965 and affiliating with them for our Liberal Arts and Sciences during their program here. This was thought to be a positive move and then our relationship with Queens College was renewed.

One hospital has had an almost continuous building program.

1957-58 A&C Wings were built adding 75 beds per wing.

1966-67 Ambulant Care Units opened and added a total of 64 beds.

Feb. – 1976 Added New Diagnostic Center.

The present capacity of the hospital is 518 beds with 60 bassinets and the remodeling and building program continues.

The Class of 1979 was admitted Labor Day 1976. It is a unique class. It is the largest class ever to be admitted to Presbyterian Hospital School of Nursing – 96. Many have had previous college preparation and a few are older than the majority which come straight to use as high school graduates. Many of the instructors have their Masters Degree now and more are working on it. We hope to prepare each of you for a bright and fruitful nursing career.

The graduates of Presbyterian Hospital School of Nursing have served in many areas for the service of mankind. Some served in the Armed Service, dating back to World War I. Some as missionaries, and many in hospitals, health departments, doctors' offices, schools of nursing and in the many other areas available for health care today.

As of June, 1976, 2,147 students have graduated from this School. Presbyterian is proud of the progress that has been made in the hospital and school, thankful for their long tradition of high standards and confident that each of you will add positively to this history.

